

**ADAMS COUNTY  
PROFESSIONAL SERVICE AGREEMENT**

THIS AGREEMENT ("Agreement") is made this 23 day of February 2017, by and between the Adams County Board of County Commissioners, located at 4430 South Adams County Parkway, Brighton, Colorado 80601, hereinafter referred to as the "County," and Joining Vision and Action LLC, located at 2465 Sheridan Blvd, Edgewater, Colorado 80214, hereinafter referred to as the "Contractor." The County and the Contractor may be collectively referred to herein as the "Parties".

The County and the Contractor, for the consideration herein set forth, agree as follows:

**1. SERVICES OF THE CONTRACTOR:**

- 1.1. All work shall be in accordance with the attached RFP 2016.720 and the Contractor's response to the RFP 2016.720 attached hereto as Exhibit A, and incorporated herein by reference. Should there be any discrepancy between Exhibit A and this Agreement the terms and conditions of this Agreement shall prevail.
- 1.2. Emergency Services: In the event the Adams County Board of County Commissioners declares an emergency, the County may request additional services (of the type described in this Agreement or otherwise within the expertise of the Contractor) to be performed by the Contractor. If the County requests such additional services, the Contractor shall provide such services in a timely fashion given the nature of the emergency, pursuant to the terms of this Agreement. Unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the parties, the Contractor shall bill for such services at the rates provided for in this Agreement.

**2. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COUNTY:** The County shall provide information as necessary or requested by the Contractor to enable the Contractor's performance under this Agreement.

**3. TERM:**

- 3.1. Term of Agreement: The Term of this Agreement shall be for one-year from the date on this agreement.
- 3.2. Renewal Option: The County, at its sole option, may offer to renew this Agreement as necessary for up to two, one year renewals providing satisfactory service is given and all terms and conditions of this Agreement have been fulfilled. Such renewals must be mutually agreed upon in writing by the County and the Contractor.

**4. PAYMENT AND FEE SCHEDULE:** The County shall pay the Contractor for services furnished under this Agreement, and the Contractor shall accept as full payment for those services, the sum of fifty-six thousand five hundred dollars (\$56,500.00).

- 4.1. Payment pursuant to this Agreement, whether in full or in part, is subject to and contingent upon the continuing availability of County funds for the purposes hereof. In the event that

funds become unavailable, as determined by the County, the County may immediately terminate this Agreement or amend it accordingly.

5. **INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR:** In providing services under this Agreement, the Contractor acts as an independent contractor and not as an employee of the County. The Contractor shall be solely and entirely responsible for his/her acts and the acts of his/her employees, agents, servants, and subcontractors during the term and performance of this Agreement. No employee, agent, servant, or subcontractor of the Contractor shall be deemed to be an employee, agent, or servant of the County because of the performance of any services or work under this Agreement. The Contractor, at its expense, shall procure and maintain workers' compensation insurance as required by law. Pursuant to the Workers' Compensation Act § 8-40-202(2)(b)(IV), C.R.S., as amended, the Contractor understands that it and its employees and servants are not entitled to workers' compensation benefits from the County. The Contractor further understands that it is solely obligated for the payment of federal and state income tax on any moneys earned pursuant to this Agreement.
  
6. **NONDISCRIMINATION:**
  - 6.1. **The Contractor shall not discriminate against any employee or qualified applicant for employment because of age, race, color, religion, marital status, disability, sex, or national origin. The Contractor agrees to post in conspicuous places, available to employees and applicants for employment, notices provided by the local public agency setting forth the provisions of this nondiscrimination clause. Adams County is an equal opportunity employer.**
    - 6.1.1. The Contractor will cause the foregoing provisions to be inserted in all subcontracts for any work covered by this Agreement so that such provisions will be binding upon each subcontractor, provided that the foregoing provisions shall not apply to contracts or subcontracts for standard commercial supplies or raw materials.
  
7. **INDEMNIFICATION:** The Contractor agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the County, its officers, agents, and employees for, from, and against any and all claims, suits, expenses, damages, or other liabilities, including reasonable attorney fees and court costs, arising out of damage or injury to persons, entities, or property, caused or sustained by any person(s) as a result of the Contractor's performance or failure to perform pursuant to the terms of this Agreement or as a result of any subcontractors' performance or failure to perform pursuant to the terms of this Agreement.
  
8. **INSURANCE:** The Contractor agrees to maintain insurance of the following types and amounts:
  - 8.1. **Commercial General Liability Insurance:** to include products liability, completed operations, contractual, broad form property damage and personal injury.
    - 8.1.1. Each Occurrence: \$1,000,000
    - 8.1.2. General Aggregate: \$2,000,000
  
  - 8.2. **Comprehensive Automobile Liability Insurance:** to include all motor vehicles owned, hired, leased, or borrowed.
    - 8.2.1. Bodily Injury/Property Damage: \$1,000,000 (each accident)

- 8.2.2. Personal Injury Protection: Per Colorado Statutes  
8.3. Workers' Compensation Insurance: Per Colorado Statutes

8.4. Professional Liability Insurance: to include coverage for damages or claims for damages arising out of the rendering, or failure to render, any professional services, as applicable.

8.4.1. Each Occurrence: \$1,000,000

8.4.2. This insurance requirement applies only to the Contractors who are performing services under this Agreement as professionals licensed under the laws of the State of Colorado, such as physicians, lawyers, engineers, nurses, mental health providers, and any other licensed professionals.

8.5. Adams County as "Additional Insured": The Contractor's commercial general liability, and comprehensive automobile liability, insurance policies and/or certificates of insurance shall be issued to include Adams County as an "additional insured" and shall include the following provisions:

8.5.1. Underwriters shall have no right of recovery or subrogation against the County, it being the intent of the parties that the insurance policies so affected shall protect both parties and be primary coverage for any and all losses resulting from the actions or negligence of the Contractor.

8.5.2. The insurance companies issuing the policy or policies shall have no recourse against the County for payment of any premiums due or for any assessments under any form of any policy.

8.5.3. Any and all deductibles contained in any insurance policy shall be assumed by and at the sole risk of the Contractor.

8.6. Licensed Insurers: All insurers of the Contractor must be licensed or approved to do business in the State of Colorado. Upon failure of the Contractor to furnish, deliver and/or maintain such insurance as provided herein, this Agreement, at the election of the County, may be immediately declared suspended, discontinued, or terminated. Failure of the Contractor in obtaining and/or maintaining any required insurance shall not relieve the Contractor from any liability under this Agreement, nor shall the insurance requirements be construed to conflict with the obligations of the Contractor concerning indemnification.

8.7. Endorsement: Each insurance policy herein required shall be endorsed to state that coverage shall not be suspended, voided, or canceled without thirty (30) days prior written notice by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the County.

8.8. Proof of Insurance: At any time during the term of this Agreement, the County may require the Contractor to provide proof of the insurance coverage or policies required under this Agreement.

## **9. DAMAGES ARISING FROM BREACH OF PERFORMANCE OBLIGATIONS**

9.1. Notwithstanding anything else set forth in this Agreement, if Contractor fails to comply with all terms of this contract, including but not limited to, its obligation to perform its work in a workmanlike manner in accordance with all codes, plans, specifications and industry standards, Contractor shall be liable to County for all damages arising from the breach,

including but not limited to, all attorney fees, costs and other damages.

#### **10. WARRANTY:**

10.1. The Contractor warrants and guarantees to the County that all work, equipment, and materials furnished under the Agreement are free from defects in workmanship and materials for a period of one year after final acceptance by the County. The Contractor further warrants and guarantees that the plans and specifications incorporated herein are free of fault and defect sufficient for Contractor to warrant the finished product after completion date. Should the Contractor fail to proceed promptly in accordance with this guarantee, the County may have such work performed at the expense of the Contractor. This section does not relieve the Contractor from liability for defects that become known after one year.

#### **11. TERMINATION:**

11.1. For Cause: If, through any cause, the Contractor fails to fulfill its obligations under this Agreement in a timely and proper manner, or if the Contractor violates any of the covenants, conditions, or stipulations of this Agreement, the County shall thereupon have the right to immediately terminate this Agreement, upon giving written notice to the Contractor of such termination and specifying the effective date thereof.

11.2. For Convenience: The County may terminate this Agreement at any time by giving written notice as specified herein to the other party, which notice shall be given at least thirty (30) days prior to the effective date of the termination. If this Agreement is terminated by the County, the Contractor will be paid an amount that bears the same ratio to the total compensation as the services actually performed bear to the total services the Contractor was to perform under this Agreement, less payments previously made to the Contractor under this Agreement.

#### **12. MUTUAL UNDERSTANDINGS:**

12.1. Jurisdiction and Venue: The laws of the State of Colorado shall govern as to the interpretation, validity, and effect of this Agreement. The parties agree that jurisdiction and venue for any disputes arising under this Agreement shall be with Adams County, Colorado.

12.2. Compliance with Laws: During the performance of this Agreement, the Contractor agrees to strictly adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules and regulations, including all licensing and permit requirements. The parties hereto aver that they are familiar with § 18-8-301, et seq., C.R.S. (Bribery and Corrupt Influences), as amended, and § 18-8-401, et seq., C.R.S. (Abuse of Public Office), as amended, , the Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. 7401-7671q), and the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1251-1387), as amended, and that no violation of such provisions are present. The Contractor warrants that it is in compliance with the residency requirements in §§ 8-17.5-101, et seq., C.R.S. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the Contractor expressly agrees to comply with the privacy and security requirements of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA).

12.3. OSHA: The Contractor shall comply with the requirements of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) and shall review and comply with the County's safety regulations while on



any County property. Failure to comply with any applicable federal, state or local law, rule, or regulation shall give the County the right to terminate this agreement for cause.

- 12.4. Record Retention: The Contractor shall maintain records and documentation of the services provided under this Agreement, including fiscal records, and shall retain the records for a period of three (3) years from the date this Agreement is terminated. Said records and documents shall be subject at all reasonable times to inspection, review, or audit by authorized Federal, State, or County personnel.
- 12.5. Assignability: Neither this Agreement, nor any rights hereunder, in whole or in part, shall be assignable or otherwise transferable by the Contractor without the prior written consent of the County.
- 12.6. Waiver: Waiver of strict performance or the breach of any provision of this Agreement shall not be deemed a waiver, nor shall it prejudice the waiving party's right to require strict performance of the same provision, or any other provision in the future, unless such waiver has rendered future performance commercially impossible.
- 12.7. Force Majeure: Neither party shall be liable for any delay or failure to perform its obligations hereunder to the extent that such delay or failure is caused by a force or event beyond the control of such party including, without limitation, war, embargoes, strikes, governmental restrictions, riots, fires, floods, earthquakes, or other acts of God.
- 12.8. Notice: Any notices given under this Agreement are deemed to have been received and to be effective: 1) Three (3) days after the same shall have been mailed by certified mail, return receipt requested; 2) Immediately upon hand delivery; or 3) Immediately upon receipt of confirmation that an E-mail was received. For the purposes of this Agreement, any and all notices shall be addressed to the contacts listed below:

Department: Adams County Human Services Specialty Programs  
Contact: Sue Bozinovski  
Address:  
City, State, Zip:  
Phone: 303.227.2253  
E-mail: Sbozinovski@adcogov.org

Department: Adams County Purchasing  
Contact: Shawn Hartmann  
Address: 4430 South Adams County Parkway  
City, State, Zip: Brighton, Colorado 80601  
Phone: 720.523.6279  
E-mail: Shartmann@adcogov.org

Department: Adams County Attorney's Office  
Address: 4430 South Adams County Parkway  
City, State, Zip: Brighton, Colorado 80601  
Phone: 720.523.6116

Contractor: Joining Vision and Action LLC  
Contact: Marshall Vanderburg  
Address: 2465 Sheridan Blvd  
City, State, Zip: Edgewater, Colorado 80214  
Phone: 720.407.8390  
E-mail: Marshall@joiningvisionandaction.com

- 12.9. Integration of Understanding: This Agreement contains the entire understanding of the parties hereto and neither it, nor the rights and obligations hereunder, may be changed, modified, or waived except by an instrument in writing that is signed by the parties hereto.
- 12.10. Severability: If any provision of this Agreement is determined to be unenforceable or invalid for any reason, the remainder of this Agreement shall remain in effect, unless otherwise terminated in accordance with the terms contained herein.
- 12.11. Authorization: Each party represents and warrants that it has the power and ability to enter into this Agreement, to grant the rights granted herein, and to perform the duties and obligations herein described.
- 12.12. Confidentiality: All documentation related to this Agreement will become the property of Adams County. All documentation maintained or kept by Adams County shall be subject to the Colorado Open Records Act, C.R.S. 24-72-201 *et seq.* ("CORA"). The County does not guarantee the confidentiality of any records.

### **13. AMENDMENTS, CHANGE ORDERS OR EXTENSIONS:**

- 13.1. Amendments or Change Orders: The County may, from time to time, require changes in the scope of the services of the Contractor to be performed herein including, but not limited to, additional instructions, additional work, and the omission of work previously ordered. The Contractor shall be compensated for all authorized changes in services, pursuant to the applicable provision in the Solicitation, or, if no provision exists, pursuant to the terms of the Amendment or Change Order.
- 13.2. Extensions: The County may, upon mutual written agreement by the parties, extend the time of completion of services to be performed by the Contractor.

### **14. COMPLIANCE WITH C.R.S. § 8-17.5-101, ET. SEQ. AS AMENDED 5/13/08:** Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statute (C.R.S.), § 8-17.5-101, *et. seq.*, as amended May 13, 2008, the Contractor shall meet the following requirements prior to signing this Agreement (public contract for service) and for the duration thereof:

- 14.1. The Contractor shall certify participation in the E-Verify Program (the electronic employment verification program that is authorized in 8 U.S.C. § 1324a and jointly administered by the United States Department of Homeland Security and the Social Security Administration, or its successor program) or the Department Program (the employment verification program

established by the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment pursuant to C.R.S. § 8-17.5-102(5)) on the attached certification.

- 14.2. The Contractor shall not knowingly employ or contract with an illegal alien to perform work under this public contract for services.
- 14.3. The Contractor shall not enter into a contract with a subcontractor that fails to certify to the Contractor that the subcontractor shall not knowingly employ or contract with an illegal alien to perform work under this public contract for services.
- 14.4. At the time of signing this public contract for services, the Contractor has confirmed the employment eligibility of all employees who are newly hired for employment to perform work under this public contract for services through participation in either the E-Verify Program or the Department Program.
- 14.5. The Contractor shall not use either the E-Verify Program or the Department Program procedures to undertake pre-employment screening of job applicants while this public contract for services is being performed.
- 14.6. If the Contractor obtains actual knowledge that a subcontractor performing work under this public contract for services knowingly employs or contracts with an illegal alien, the Contractor shall: notify the subcontractor and the County within three (3) days that the Contractor has actual knowledge that the subcontractor is employing or contracting with an illegal alien; and terminate the subcontract with the subcontractor if within three days of receiving the notice required pursuant to the previous paragraph, the subcontractor does not stop employing or contracting with the illegal alien; except that the Contractor shall not terminate the contract with the subcontractor if during such three (3) days the subcontractor provides information to establish that the subcontractor has not knowingly employed or contracted with an illegal alien.
- 14.7. Contractor shall comply with any reasonable requests by the Department of Labor and Employment (the Department) made in the course of an investigation that the Department is undertaking pursuant to the authority established in C.R.S. § 8-17.5-102(5).
- 14.8. If Contractor violates this Section, of this Agreement, the County may terminate this Agreement for breach of contract. If the Agreement is so terminated, the Contractor shall be liable for actual and consequential damages to the County.

The remainder of this page is left blank intentionally.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Parties have caused their names to be affixed hereto:

**County Manager**

Todd Leopold 2/23/17  
Todd Leopold Date

**Joining Vision and Action LLC**

Janine Vanderburg 02/17/2017  
Signature Date

JANINE VANDERBURG PRESIDENT/CEO  
Printed Name Title

**Attest:**

Stan Martin, Clerk and Recorder [Signature]  
Deputy Clerk

Approved as to Form: [Signature]  
Adams County Attorney's Office

**NOTARIZATION OF CONTRACTOR'S SIGNATURE:**

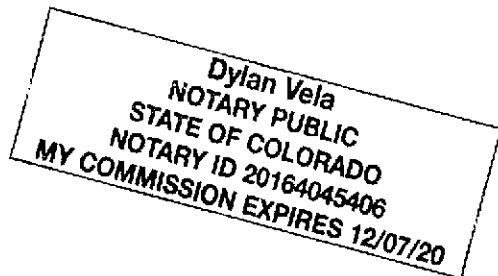
COUNTY OF Jefferson

STATE OF Colorado )SS.

Signed and sworn to before me this 17<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2017,

by Janine Vanderburg,

[Signature]  
Notary Public



My commission expires on: 12-07-20

## CONTRACTOR'S CERTIFICATION OF COMPLIANCE

Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statute, § 8-17.5-101, *et. seq.*, as amended 5/13/08, as a prerequisite to entering into a contract for services with Adams County, Colorado, the undersigned Contractor hereby certifies that at the time of this certification, Contractor does not knowingly employ or contract with an illegal alien who will perform work under the attached contract for services and that the Contractor will participate in the E-Verify Program or Department program, as those terms are defined in C.R.S. § 8-17.5-101, *et. seq.* in order to confirm the employment eligibility of all employees who are newly hired for employment to perform work under the attached contract for services.

### CONTRACTOR:

JOINING VISION AND ACTION  
Company Name

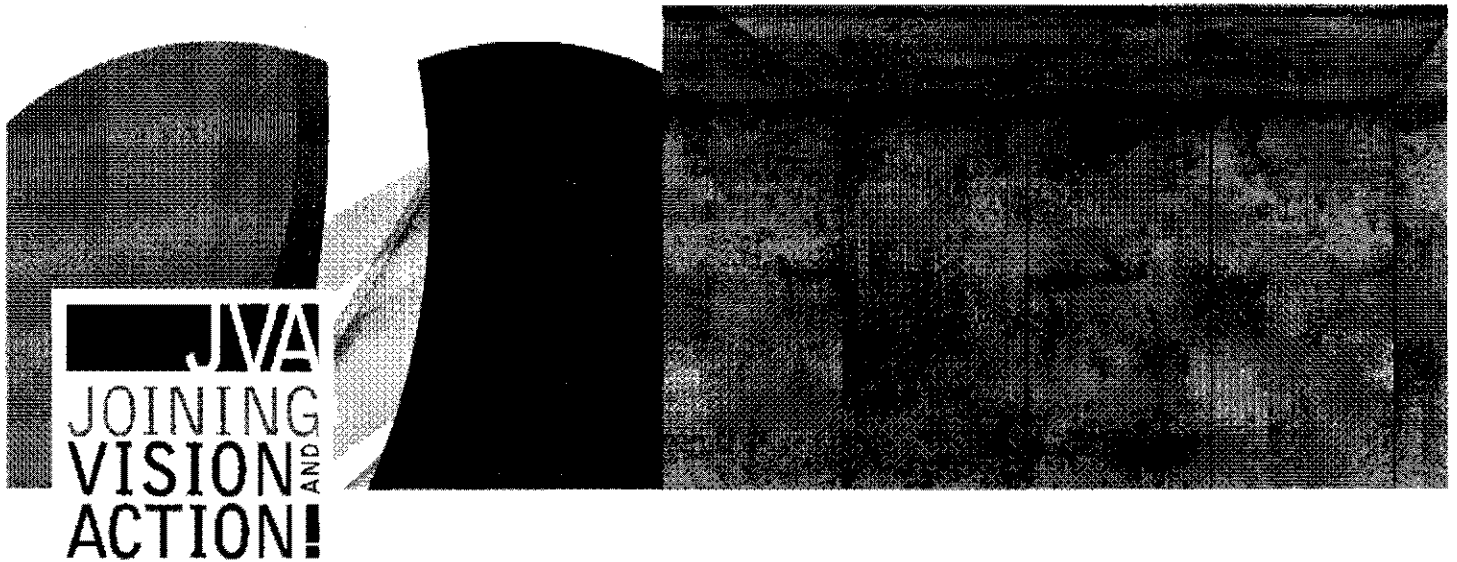
02/17/2017  
Date

Janine Vandenburg  
Signature

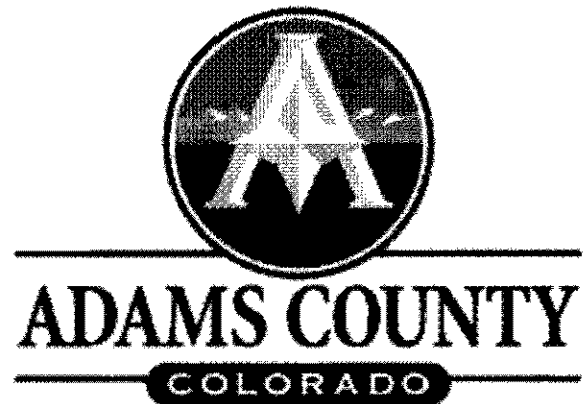
JANINE VANDENBURG  
Name (Print or Type)

PRESIDENT/CEO  
Title

Note: Registration for the E-Verify Program can be completed at: <https://www.vis-dhs.com/employerregistration>. It is recommended that employers review the sample "memorandum of understanding" available at the website prior to registering



"Vision without action is merely a dream.  
Action without vision is merely passing time.  
But *vision* with *action* can change the world."  
*Nelson Mandela*



**Response to Adams County Formal Request for Proposal 2016.720,  
CSBG Needs Assessment**

**Prepared for: Adams County, Colorado**

**Prepared by: Joining Vision and Action**

**2a. Summary Statement**

Joining Vision and Action (JVA) is pleased to submit this proposal to Adams County to provide a Community Needs Assessment for the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). Through this work, JVA will analyze and identify key findings and will present results in a final report examining the causes and conditions of poverty and the needs in Adams County.

Understanding that the purpose of this work is to assist government agencies, nonprofits and community members in their efforts to improve services to residents of Adams County, JVA's approach will employ a mixed methods bilingual approach (including surveys and focus groups) designed to identify community needs, assets, and any gaps in and priorities for services to lower income residents. JVA will undertake activities designed to gather quantitative and qualitative input from a number of key sources, including demographic data and existing literature, Adams County residents, and representatives from community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, private sector, public sector and educational institutions. Specifically, JVA's approach will meet the assessment goals in the following ways:

<b>APPROACH</b>	Demographic and document review	Resident survey	Resident focus groups	Provider survey	Community inventory	Final report	Facilitated study session
Identify the causes and conditions of poverty in Adams County	X	X	X	X			
Determine the needs of low-income persons	X	X	X	X			
Determine how well the needs of low-income persons are being met		X	X	X	X		
Identify organization and client-based barriers to serving residents		X	X	X	X		
Identify community strengths and assets		X	X	X	X		
Solicit recommendations of solutions to address barriers			X	X	X	X	X
Identify outcomes for development of a Community Action Plan						X	X

Ultimately, this approach will enable a deeper understanding of the causes and conditions of poverty in Adams County and the most pressing needs. To develop, implement and manage this project, JVA will engage its diversely skilled evaluation team to design a plan for how best to conduct this research. The evaluation team is made up of skilled social scientists with advanced degrees and coursework in social psychology, international studies and social work. The JVA team's track record includes previously conducting the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) needs assessments for Adams County and the Denver Department of Health and Human Services, plus assessments to determine needs and address issues within communities across Colorado . Some of the questions we have answered through community



assessments include: how should the community act to improve food security in the Montbello neighborhood; what do young people in Denver need to succeed; and what is the best way to embrace diversity and aid in youth development and educational success in the Aspen to Parachute region, in a way that achieves broad community impact. These projects have informed communities, foundations and organizations about how best to engage diverse communities and ensure that services and action plans promote the growth and wellbeing of all community members. Our team is sophisticated in the quantitative and qualitative methods and analysis required to satisfy these projects. Sections 2b-2e will further detail the qualifications of the JVA evaluation team.





***2b. Statement of project team qualifications and project administration***

The JVA team has extensive experience in developing rigorous evaluations and assessments grounded in best practices and designed to inform service provision, program implementation, and filling gaps in community needs. JVA's expertise is in gathering culturally appropriate community feedback from diverse communities and underrepresented groups, while taking large amounts of rich data in different formats from various sources, and synthesizing results. This approach ensures that our report provides clear implications for the County. Relevant to this work, JVA's research and evaluation team provides the following services:

**Demographic analysis.** JVA has experience analyzing data from numerous sources to develop demographic profiles which inform the community assessment process. For example, in 2010 JVA created an extensive demographic profile of Adams County residents for the Adams County community needs assessment.

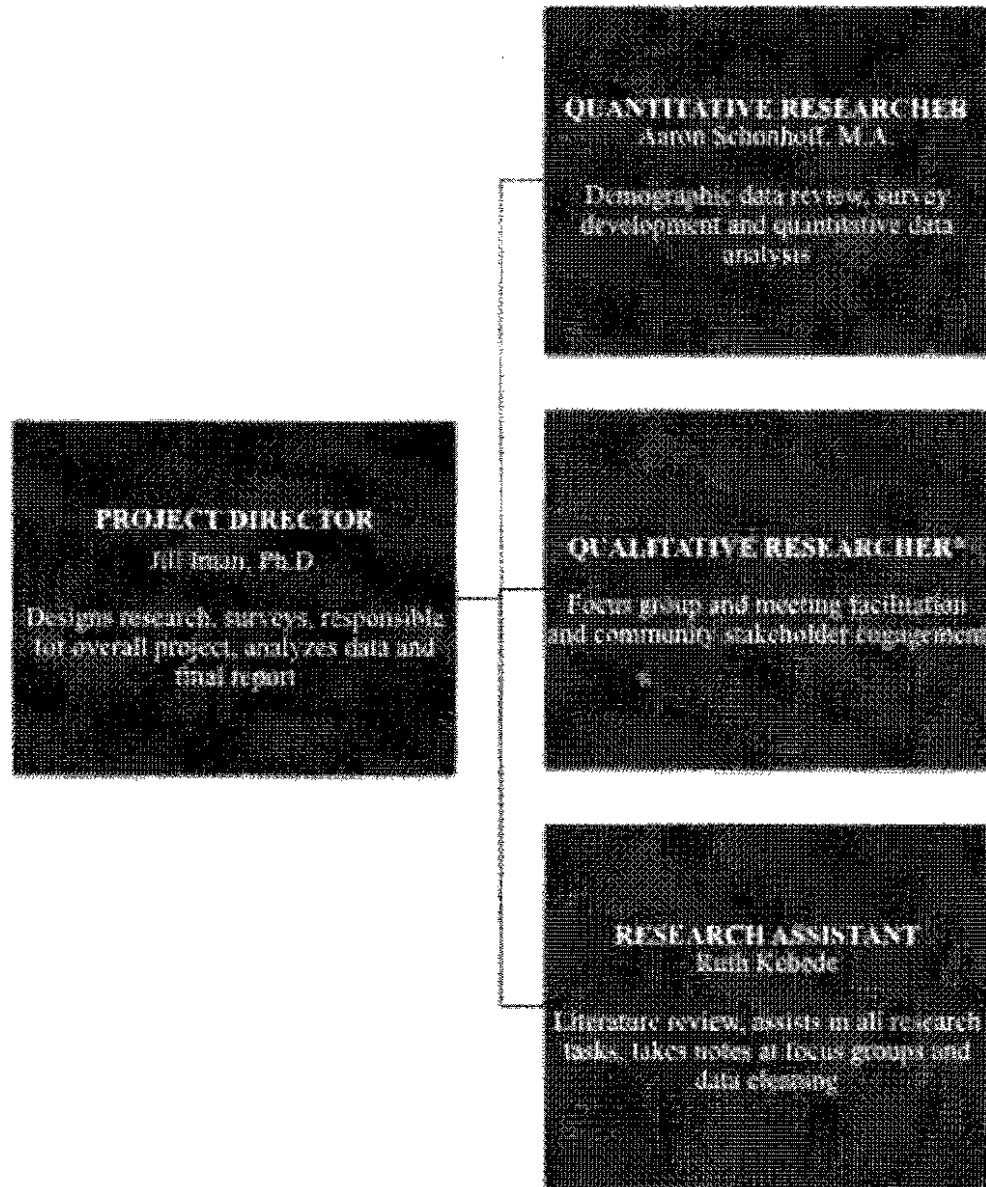
**Surveys.** JVA's team is particularly skilled in tailoring surveys and their administration to reach culturally, socioeconomically, demographically and linguistically diverse constituencies. For example, in the last year, JVA administered over 1,000 surveys to lower income Coloradans in English and in Spanish for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). Additionally, JVA reached and surveyed almost 1,600 Colorado women to identify gaps in resources on behalf of The Women's Foundation of Colorado. Furthermore, JVA successfully surveyed 216 young, at-risk adults living in the Tri-County area to determine current access and need for health services.

**Focus groups and key informant interviews.** JVA's professional research and facilitation team conducts all of our focus groups and key informant interviews to ensure the highest level of quality, consistency and depth in the resulting qualitative information. A significant factor in the design of the focus group and interview process within JVA is our cultural competence and understanding of diverse communities. Whether JVA is surveying diverse community members and leaders for the Adams County needs assessment, surveying lower income families for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) project, or conducting numerous school- and community-based evaluations, these methods have proven remarkably successful in generating rich qualitative data.

JVA's experience in community needs assessments developed in response to its early grantwriting and strategic planning work in the early 1990s, resulting in nearly 25 years of experience. Our expertise regarding the scope of work for this project includes a deep understanding of the community, high-level community-based research skills and a specific understanding and interest in this type of work, as demonstrated by previous, successful CSBG needs assessment work. This prior experience, coupled with individual and organizational passion for this type of work, ensures a well-run project and a thorough final report. The project will be administered by a project director who brings several years of experience in managing and overseeing short- and long-term research projects and who will be supported by JVA associates and administrative staff.



2c. Organizational Chart



\* JVA is in the process of hiring a Qualitative Research Associate. Dr. Iman, Mr. Schonhoff and Ms. Kebede are also trained and skilled in qualitative data collection.



## ***2d. Contact Information for Project Lead***

**Jill Iman, Ph.D.**

Director of Research and Evaluation

2465 Sheridan Blvd, Denver, CO 80214

**Phone:** 303-477-4896

**Fax:** 303-477-7524

**Email:** [Jill@joiningvisionandaction.com](mailto:Jill@joiningvisionandaction.com)

**Web Address:** [JoiningVisionandAction.com](http://JoiningVisionandAction.com)

## ***2e. Individuals Participating in the Project Team***

**Jill Iman, Ph.D., Director of Research and Evaluation.** Jill will be the project director and primary client liaison, and will provide oversight on all instrument development, will be responsible for all written deliverables, and will oversee quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis.

**General Qualifications and Experience:** Management of community strengths and needs assessments, collaborating with multidisciplinary teams, evaluation and research design, quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis.

**Specific Qualifications and Experience:** In addition to being the project lead for the Denver Health and Human Services CSBG Needs Assessment, previous experience includes: conducting demographic and document reviews for clients such as the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Center for Nonprofit Excellence at the Community Foundation for Monterey County; creating and implementing resident surveys and focus groups for the Women's Foundation of Colorado and the Denver Indian Center, Inc.; conducting provider surveys for Oral Health Colorado and Denver Public Schools; supporting community inventory work for the Piton Foundation and The Arts Center at Willits; and producing comprehensive final reports with clear recommendations for future strategy for the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Finance and the Colorado Library Consortium.

**Aaron Schonhoff, M.A., Research and Evaluation Associate.** Aaron will be the primary quantitative research associate on this project. He will manage quantitative data collection, design and analysis.

**General Qualifications and Experience:** Evaluation design, instrument development, quantitative methods and analysis.

**Specific Qualifications and Experience:** As the inaugural research assistant at the Crossley Center for Public Opinion Research, Aaron fine-tuned his understanding of how to turn opinions into actionable data. At JVA, Aaron contributes to the research and evaluation team's efforts through implementing data-driven research and ensuring evaluation efforts are comprehensive and based on measurable outcomes. Aaron has assisted National Civic League's efforts to implement Truth and Racial Healing Transformation principles into its annual All America City programming; he has worked as part of a team in synthesizing input from stakeholders in developing a comprehensive and collaborative strategic plan for Baby Bear Hugs in its efforts to apply for a Colorado LAUNCH Together grant. Aaron has also facilitated meetings and conducted research for the Montbello Organizing Committee's neighborhood research project and analyzed



data for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment around improving WIC user experience and messaging. Additionally, he is a consultant for the Denver Health and Human Services CSBG Needs Assessment.

**Ruth Kebede, B.A, Research and Evaluation Assistant.** Ruth will be a research assistant for this project. She will support quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis.

**General Qualifications and Experience:** Evaluation design, quantitative and qualitative methods and analysis. With a background in psychology, sociology and law enforcement, Ruth works with individuals, organizations and communities to promote social change. Ruth is currently in a Masters of Social Work Program.

**Specific Qualifications and Experience:** Ruth's experience includes: collaborating on research and interviews designed to assess the needs of community members on a project for the Montbello Organizing Committee, developing survey materials for the National Civic League, and synthesizing and analyzing data on behalf of Clínica Tepeyac and Boomers Leading Change in Health. She has also has contributed to research regarding reading and language comprehension, teens in halfway houses, and domestic violence.



**3. Schedule of Deliverables and Project Approach**

The following table provides information detailing key project tasks and subtasks, the anticipated date of submission of each deliverable in terms of weeks from project initiation and formats of each deliverable.

SCHEDULE OF DELIVERABLES	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST
<b>PROJECT MANAGEMENT</b>						
Kickoff Meeting with Community Needs Assessment Project Advisory Committee ( <i>deliverable: finalized work plan</i> )	One week after project start					
Meetings with Community Needs Assessment Project Advisory Committee ( <i>deliverable: status report handout/meeting agenda</i> )	Twice a month for project period					
<b>DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS</b>						
Demographic Data and Document Review ( <i>deliverable: summary to be included in final report</i> )	Four weeks after project start					
Resident Surveys ( <i>deliverables: survey for review, analysis and summary to be included in final report</i> )	Develop	Launch: Five weeks from project start	Close: 11 weeks from project start	Analyze		
Resident Focus Groups ( <i>deliverables: moderator guide for review, analysis and summary to be included in final report</i> )		Start: Seven weeks from project start	End: 12 weeks from project start	Analyze		
Provider Survey ( <i>deliverables: survey for review, analysis and summary to be included in final report</i> )		Develop	Launch: 9 weeks from project start	Close: 13 weeks from project start		
Community Resources and Assets Inventory ( <i>deliverable: interactive map and inventory</i> )				16 weeks after project start		
<b>FINAL REPORT</b>						
Final Report ( <i>deliverables: five bound copies of Community Needs Assessment and a flash drive including appendices and literature review</i> )				16 weeks after project start		
<b>COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN</b>						
Study Session for Community Action Plan and Consultation ( <i>deliverables: meeting agenda, meeting presentation [i.e., a PowerPoint presentation including key findings and recommendations] and meeting notes; ongoing support with development of Community Action Plan</i> )						Complete: 24 weeks from project start



## **Project Approach**

JVA envisions a community assessment that collaboratively engages Adams County community leaders, stakeholders and residents. Our proposed process and plan will ensure that data is gathered and analyzed to identify the needs, strengths and challenges of low-income individuals in Adams County to identify the causes and conditions of poverty, determine the needs of low-income persons, determine how well the needs of low-income persons are being met, identify organization and client-based barriers to serving residents, identify community strengths and assets, solicit recommendations of solutions to address barriers, identify outcomes for development of a department Community Action Plan, as well as enable a better understanding of the individuals and families that Adams County serves and determine the potential for community partnerships and other opportunities to better serve the community.

**Kickoff meeting and project communication.** To ensure coordination across all efforts, JVA will assign a project director who will oversee all elements of the assessment and coordinate efforts between JVA and Adams County. JVA will host a kickoff meeting with staff members and other key stakeholders to understand its goals and priorities, review the timeline, as well as provide a detailed overview of the community assessment process. Additionally, JVA will conduct regular phone meetings to review progress with the community needs assessment Project Advisory Committee, identify problems and opportunities, and gather feedback on the project design, instrument development, data collection, and analysis. These status reports will be conducted twice a month.

**Data collection and analysis.** To lay the foundation for the community needs assessment, JVA will work with the Project Advisory Committee to develop clear research questions to guide the program design. JVA anticipates that the following research questions may serve as a foundation for this work:

- What are the characteristics of Adams County's low-income residents?
- What do low-income residents need? What strengths do they possess? What are the key barriers they face? How do these strengths, issues and challenges align with the federal objectives of the CSBG?
- What services and supports are currently provided to low-income residents? How is Adams County meeting the needs of the community? What could be done differently?
- Are there gaps in services and supports, and if so, what are potential solutions?
- What are the transportation and mobility needs within Adams County? Are there ways in which those needs not being met?

To gather and analyze data relevant to these questions, JVA will employ a mixed-method, bilingual approach to data collection and analysis. All data collection instruments will be designed to accurately capture responses from a statistically valid sample of Adams County low-income residents and community service providers for Adams County.

JVA will rely on quantitative and qualitative data collected through a review of existing demographic data and documents and through the implementation and analysis of surveys and focus groups. JVA will pull from these various data collection methods to also identify, map and inventory community resources and assets in target neighborhoods by using existing data, reports, maps and survey findings gathered within the last year.



**Demographic data and document review.** JVA will examine demographic data through sources such as the U.S. Census and American Community Survey to better understand Adams County residents. Examples of data that will be examined include income, insurance, housing, employment, ethnicity, age and education. Additionally, JVA will work with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment to obtain data pertaining to types of services available for low-income residents (such as Medicaid and nutrition services) and the extent to which they are utilized. JVA will also examine relevant data currently collected by Adams County. Furthermore, JVA will ascertain geographic areas with high populations of low-income residents to better inform data collection through the other methods. JVA will additionally review existing reports and studies that have been completed recently about Adams County's low-income residents to build on existing knowledge and resources.

**Resident survey.** JVA will develop and administer a survey instrument for Adams County residents to get their direct feedback about their needs and challenges, the services and supports that they utilize and access, and the extent to which services, specifically those offered by the County, are meeting their needs. JVA will rely on our deep community connections to disseminate in-person and online surveys to residents. JVA proposes administering surveys in-person to low-income residents through the following methods: on-site at Adams County Human Services Department and through online and paper surveys distributed in partnership with community organizations that JVA has existing relationships with, such as Cultivando, Kids First Health Care, Stout Street Foundation, Community Housing Partners and Mile High Behavioral Healthcare. JVA will ensure the survey is available in both English and Spanish and is culturally responsive to Adams County residents. To disseminate the Spanish version of the survey, JVA will promote the survey using social media and in collaboration with community-based organizations serving Spanish individuals and families in Adams County. These partners will be offered a financial incentive to share the survey with those that they serve.

**Resident focus groups.** JVA will conduct six (6) focus groups with Adams County residents to collect in-depth qualitative feedback about their needs and challenges, the services they utilize, community strengths and assets, and how the County and other community agencies can better address their needs. Focus groups will be offered in both English (4) and Spanish (2), and JVA will design recruitment to attract a diverse range of individuals representing different racial and ethnic backgrounds, ages, family compositions, and areas of residency within Adams County. Focus groups will last approximately one and one-half hours and will be facilitated by one of JVA's facilitators. JVA will also provide a note taker. JVA will ensure that transportation and mobility needs are taken into account when selecting focus group sites. JVA will provide refreshments appropriate to the time of day for participants, onsite childcare, as well as a \$30 gift card to a local grocery store as an incentive.

**Provider survey.** JVA will develop a survey for community agencies providing services to low-income residents to better understand the agencies' services and gaps as well as possible solutions to address barriers. The survey will be administered online and JVA will collaborate with Adams County to identify appropriate agencies for the survey and to compile email addresses.

**Community inventory.** JVA will work with Adams County to identify relevant existing data, reports, maps and survey findings to compile and inform the development of a community resources and assets map and inventory. This inventory will be interactive, so stakeholders can focus on target neighborhoods and/or sort by specific service area.

**Data analysis.** JVA's professional research and evaluation team also conducts all of its data analysis to ensure proper use of methods for data gathered. Specific quantitative techniques include, but are not limited to, descriptive, univariate and multivariate analyses and interpretation, including factor analysis,

scale reliability, ANOVA, ANCOVA, MANOVA, MANCOVA, multiple linear regression, logistic regression, and structural equation modeling and path analysis. Qualitative analysis techniques include thematic pattern matching, content analysis and grounded theory analysis.

The data collection tools will be specifically created with the nine federal objectives of the CSBG in mind, so that the overall assessment will enable the County to examine issues and challenges facing the community and make informed decisions in the development and improvement of services in a manner aligned with the needs and priorities of community members and service providers. JVA will review all forms of data collected through the assessment and analyze the data using the professional research strategies. JVA will triangulate the data to summarize findings and draw conclusions. JVA will use the information collected, and the feedback gathered from Adams County residents and key leaders, to inform conclusions and recommendations. This approach will ensure that the data is being connected to the need in an informed and comprehensive way.

**Final Report and Community Action Plan.** The CSBG needs assessment will be analyzed and the results of the assessment will be presented in a final report. JVA will synthesize all information gathered for a final report to the County and summarize data analysis results. This report will provide guidance on the next steps that the County can take to assist government agencies, nonprofits, and community members in improving services to residents. The report will also examine the needs identified specifically by low-income residents, potential gaps in services, opportunities for service improvement and needs identified in low-income neighborhoods. The recommendations in the report will be based on the data accumulated. The report will go through JVA's content review and editing system before being sent to the County for one round of feedback. JVA will incorporate this feedback and finalize the report.

Upon completion of the final report, JVA will facilitate an action planning study session to support the development the Adams County Community Action Plan. This will allow the Board of County Commissioners to make decisions about how to address the needs of low-income residents and how to prioritize current challenges facing the Adams County community.





#### 4. Exhibits

The work that we do for clients is always confidential. However, some clients have allowed us to share their reports at the following link: <https://joiningvisionandaction.com/reports-publications/>

**Especially of note are the following projects:**

Montbello Market Scan for the Montbello Organizing Committee

Reducing Food Waste in Denver for the Natural Resource Defense Council

Community Assessment of Latino Older Adults for Colorado Latino Age Wave

The Aspen to Parachute *Cradle to Career Initiative* for Aspen Community Foundation

Opportunity Youth in Denver: Environmental Scan for Rose Community Foundation

Client Correspondence Research Findings (Phase One) Report for the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, Colorado Department of Humans Services, Connect for Health Colorado and the Governor's Office of Information Technology

Throughout much of its work, JVA also brings **multi-lingual competency**. JVA is particularly skilled in tailoring surveys and their administration to reach diverse constituencies. JVA has regularly conducted bilingual and multicultural outreach and evaluation. For example, in order to develop a market scan for the Montbello Organizing Committee, evaluators made sure to engage with Montbello's large Latino community for neighborhood insights. For Rose Community Foundation's Opportunity Youth project, JVA engaged with Denver's young people to explore the experiences of the population, of which a significant cohort spoke Spanish. JVA's work with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment on WIC usage gathered feedback from Spanish speakers through both a statewide survey and focus groups. For both the Colorado Latino Age Wave and California Latino Age Wave, JVA engaged in community assessments of Latino Older Adults, many of whom spoke Spanish as a primary language. As part of the Aspen Community Foundation's *Cradle to Career Initiative*, JVA surveyed 100 Spanish-speaking individuals working in Aspen's ski and tourist industry by riding the bus from Aspen to Parachute with them. Multi-lingual and multi-cultural research is integral to JVA's community engagement, and is critical to understanding diverse communities in places like Colorado and beyond.

**In addition to the above reports, the following examples** illustrate JVA's strong ability to create comprehensive and useful products for diverse populations and within the CSBG federal objectives:

**Education.** JVA has a long-standing relationship with Denver Public Schools (DPS) and completed a five-year evaluation of the Urban Principal Leadership Program. JVA has also supported the work of programs serving specific demographics, such as the Asian Pacific Development program and English language learners. These projects included the collection and analysis of current secondary student-level data, as well as primary data collected from principals, teachers, counselors and parents (2015).

**Emergency Services.** In addition to its work supporting Denver Health and Human Services, JVA has supported Focus Points Family Resource Center and Mile High United Way, and emergency health and behavioral healthcare providers such as Clínica Tepeyac and Mile High Behavioral Health Care. Data for this work was gathered from beneficiaries, organizational partners and secondary data sources.

**Employment.** JVA has provided services to organizations working on employment and workforce development, such as Denver Office of Economic Development, Denver Indian Center and Work Options for Women. Data sources (2016) have included direct feedback from program participants and from community stakeholders through facilitated meetings and focus groups.

**Health.** JVA has worked with organizations addressing health and healthcare needs of low-income residents, including Clínica Tepeyac, the Center for African American Health, Tri-County Health Department and Colorado Access. Data gathered through these efforts was sourced from the U.S. Census (2010-2015) coupled with original data collection through surveys, focus groups and interviews.

**Housing.** JVA has worked with organizations such as Brothers Redevelopment, Inc. and Habitat for Humanity of Pueblo. These projects have entailed gathering current data from community stakeholders, staff and board members to inform strategic directions and services provided by the organizations.

**Income Management.** This work of strategic guidance and consultation is fundamental to all of JVA's work to help its clients succeed, sustain and scale. JVA does this through all of its planning engagements, including to the City and County of Denver (though facilitated strategic grants planning, fundraising governance committee participation, and facilitated capital projects prioritization work).

**Linkages with other programs.** JVA has provided services to The Women's Foundation of Colorado, Baby Bear Hugs and Adams County to identify and map access and use of resources and services. Data for this work was gathered from beneficiaries, organizational partners and secondary data sources to create current geographic profiles and identify demographic trends (e.g., U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2007 through 2015, Colorado State Demography Office Forecasts 2014, KidsCount Data Center 2016).

**Nutrition.** JVA has worked with CDPHE, Re:Vision, the Montbello community and the Larimer County Office on Aging to address issues of nutrition and hunger for low-income families and individuals. Data sources for this work include original data collection from community members through surveys and focus groups, as well as data analyzed from the Data Initiatives Denver Metro database 2014 and the U.S. Census.

**Self-sufficiency.** JVA has worked with organizations working to ensure self-sufficiency, including WorkLife Partnership, the Denver Indian Center and the Denver Department of Human Services. These projects have collected original data through surveys and focus groups from community stakeholders and program participants and incorporated demographic data and trends from a number of reports published between 2010 and 2014 (e.g., CDPHE, Colorado Fiscal Institute, and City of Denver's Agency for Human Rights and Community Relations).



## 5. References

**Catherine Cox Blair**, Senior Policy Advocate, Urban Solutions  
**Natural Resources Defense Council**  
[ccoxblair@nrdc.org](mailto:ccoxblair@nrdc.org), (303) 861-1420

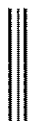
In 2016, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) engaged with JVA to facilitate stakeholder conversations to convene strategic partners, including Denver's Mayoral staff, food policy council members, city council members and local practitioners to gain consensus and create collaborative strategies on how to reduce, rescue and recycle otherwise wasted food in Denver.

**Julie Hinkson**, Former chair of the CSBG advisor committee for Mesa County and Executive Director  
**United Way of Mesa County**  
[julie@uwmesacounty.org](mailto:julie@uwmesacounty.org), 970.243.5364

In 2015, JVA supported Mesa County Department of Human Services' allocation of Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) funding by developing an allocation strategy, informed by literature review, policy, demographic and programs research, interviews and meetings with the community, committees and businesses that focused on early childhood literacy needs for children and families living in poverty. These efforts yielded a CSBG grant plan for the Mesa County Department of Human Services.

**Ben Levek**, Grants Manager  
**Denver Department of Human Services**  
[Ben.Levak@denvergov.org](mailto:Ben.Levak@denvergov.org), 720.944.2875

In 2012, JVA conducted a study for the Denver Department of Human Services (DDHS) Community Services Block Grant Program. For this work, JVA engaged with low-income community members to discover the needs, resources and gaps of services they experience, and in turn made recommendations for how the city could improve this population's information of, access to, and reception of services. DDHS has reengaged with JVA to do this work again in 2017.



**APPENDIX: RESUMES**



## **JILL IMAN, Ph.D.**

*Joining Vision and Action, LLC, 2465 Sheridan Blvd., Denver, CO 80214, 303-477-4896*

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

#### **Director of Research, Evaluation and Implementation Science, Joining Vision and Action (JVA), 2014–present**

Utilizes research and evaluation to inform JVA's areas of practice and client work, integrating best practices and basic research into work. Provides expertise in research design, survey methodology and quantitative and qualitative analysis. Focuses on synthesizing data to identify implications for strategy, concentrating on tangible takeaways for programmatic implementation and organizational capacity. Manages and collaborates on multiple short-term and long-term projects, including outcome and process evaluations, business, communications and strategic planning, community needs assessment and feasibility research.

### SAMPLE ENGAGEMENTS

- Lead consultant, **Second Acts for Strong Communities, Alliance for Strong Families and Communities (ASFC)**—managing the development and implementation of an evaluation designed to assess the impact of a national effort across 10 organizations incorporating Second Act talent (aka Encore talent) into nonprofit workforces.
- Lead consultant, **The Center for Nonprofit Excellence (CNE) at The Community Foundation for Monterey County**—Developing a comprehensive evaluation system and guide designed to enable CNE to conduct ongoing process and outcome evaluation examining organizational impact on the capacity of the nonprofit community in the Monterey Bay Region.
- Lead researcher, **The Women's Foundation of Colorado (WFCO)**—conducted research for a year-long strategic planning process by creating four different tools designed to gather feedback on challenges and assets from underrepresented voices around the state, key informants, organizational stakeholders and board members. Analyzed data using an intersectional lens to identify specific areas for WFCO's focus.
- Lead consultant, **Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE)**—managed statewide project to collect feedback through surveys and focus groups on current use of nutrition programs among lower income families. Analyzed data to identify challenges and barriers to use and access, evaluate current knowledge and awareness, perceived value of participation and implications for communication strategy.
- Lead researcher, **Early Milestones Colorado**—informed strategic and business planning through data collection and analysis designed to examine similar and dissimilar operating models and to gather feedback from a diverse set of key local, state and national stakeholders.
- Lead researcher, **Education Commission of the States (ECS)**—facilitated stakeholder feedback process designed to gather input from staff, national commissioners and organizational competitors on information relevant to the formation of ECS' strategic plan.
- Lead consultant, **Denver Indian Center, Inc. (DIC)**—designed comprehensive evaluation plan and data collection tools for a five-year, federally funded Responsible Fatherhood grant in close collaboration with the Native community. Managing ongoing tool implementation, analysis and reporting.



- Lead consultant, **Colorado Child Care Contribution Tax Credit (CCTC)**— managed a year-long project focused on developing messaging to increase statewide usage of the CCTC. Coordinated development and implementation of several data collection tools including focus groups, interview protocols and surveys, designed to determine most effective messaging with diverse stakeholders. Created strategic communications report, and managed coalition of state leaders through implementation of recommended strategies.
- Lead consultant, **Re:Vision**—directed a multi-year, federally grant-funded project designed to assess the impact of Re:Vision's gardening and farming programs on families that reside within a low-income community. Collaborated on implementation and analysis of annual data collected via focus groups and surveys.

#### EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

- Research and policy analyst, **U.S. Senator Michael F. Bennet**, Denver, CO, 2013–2014. Managed the development and implementation of a project examining the effectiveness of federal funding designed to meet the needs of children from low income families, as well as issues affecting access to and use of these programs. Engaged community partners and a broad range of stakeholders to better meet the needs of children across multiple domains, including early childhood and K-12 education, health and mental health, and housing and homelessness.
- Research lab leader, doctoral student and college course instructor, **University of Michigan**, Ann Arbor, MI, 2008–2013. Led and organized a sustaining lab group composed of students and volunteers to work on a consistent body of research for five years. Collaborated on several cross-discipline projects and conducted independent research. Completed advanced coursework in research design and statistical analysis. Taught five courses at the University of Michigan and served as a visiting professor at Colorado College.
- Policy fellow, **U.S. Senator Michael F. Bennet**, Denver, CO, 2012. Devised and implemented statewide survey examining student veteran education benefit experiences; provided recommendations for future policies. Produced issue briefs for Senator Bennet and senate staff; drafted talking points and senate memorandums.

#### EDUCATION

**Ph.D., Social Psychology**, University of Michigan, 2013  
**Master of Science, Psychology**, University of Michigan, 2010  
**Bachelor of Arts, Psychology**, Colorado College, 2008

#### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- Associate board member, **Women Employed**, Chicago, 2016-2017
- Tutor, **Tutoring Chicago**, Chicago, 2016-2017
- Volunteer, **Women's Treatment Center**, Chicago, 2015-2016
- Volunteer, **The Crossing**, Denver, 2014-2015



## MEMBERSHIPS

American Evaluation Association

## SELECT PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

- “Beyond assessing effectiveness: Using mixed-methods evaluation to inform strategy across disciplines.” Presentation to the annual meeting of the American Evaluation Association, Atlanta, GA, 2016.
- “Expanding the Promotora Model—Integrating Evaluation into Communities through Collaboration.” Presentation to the annual meeting of the American Evaluation Association, Chicago, IL, 2015.
- Facilitator, “Advocacy and Policy Primer,” training session, JVA, 2015.
- Facilitator, “Incorporating Advocacy”, “Advocacy and Policy Primer” and “Goal Setting and Action Planning” training sessions, JVA, 2015-2016.
- LaCosse, J., Sekaquaptewa, D., & Bennett Iman, J. (2016). STEM stereotypic attribution bias among women in an unwelcoming science setting. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 40, 378-397.
- Bennett Iman, J. & Sekaquaptewa, D. (2014). Setting an egalitarian social norm in the classroom: Improving attitudes towards diversity among male engineering students. *Social Psychology of Education*, 17, 343-355.
- Bennett Iman, J. (2013). Social class identity: The role of identity changeability perceptions on the relationship between beliefs about intelligence and stereotype-relevant outcomes. Deep Blue, University of Michigan Dissertations.



## **Ruth Kebede, B.A.**

*Joining Vision and Action, LLC, 2465 Sheridan Blvd., Denver, CO 80214, 303-477-4896*

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

#### **Evaluation Associate, Joining Vision and Action, May 2015-Present**

Assist in providing research and interview strategies.

### SAMPLE ENGAGEMENTS

- Research Associate, **Montbello Organizing Committee**, Montbello Community. Collaborated research and interviews to assess the needs of community members for increasing food markets and retail in the community.
- Evaluation associate, **National Civic League**. Recreated a survey to assess the change in awareness of individuals attending a conference.
- Research Associate, **Douglas County Library**. Identified available grants and best practices for an online career high school.

### EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

- MSW Inter/Case Manager, **The Action Center**, Denver, CO, 2015-2016. Developed goals and pathways to self-sufficiency based on the needs and requests of a client as their Pathway case manager.
- Sr. Phone Support Consultant, **University Technology Services (UTS)**, Denver, CO, 2014-Present. Assist members of the University of Denver community in troubleshooting problems with their computers and network connections.
- Research Assistant, **DU Psychology Department**, Denver, CO, 2013-2015. Collaborated research for presentations, analyzed, transcribed, coded and filed records for genetic reading and language comprehension of twins, and prepared testing environments.
- Intern Representative, **Southwest Gas Corporation**, Las Vegas, NV, 2011. Organized focus groups for satisfaction of services, and managed press releases.

### EDUCATION

**Master of Social Work**, Organization Leadership, 2015-Present  
Graduate School of Social Work, University of Denver, Denver, CO  
**Bachelor of Arts, Psychology and Sociology**, 2015  
University of Denver, Denver, CO

### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Ethiopian Community Fellowship Church





## AARON SCHONHOFF, M.A.

*Joining Vision and Action, LLC, 2465 Sheridan Blvd., Denver, CO 80214, 303-477-4896*

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

#### **Research and Evaluation Associate, Joining Vision and Action, April 2016–Present**

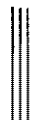
Provides data-driven research and evaluation best-practices so that JVA clients can maximize their social impact

### SAMPLE ENGAGEMENTS

- Evaluation associate. Designing and building an evaluation system to help the **Center for Nonprofit Excellence at the Community Foundation of Monterey County** monitor, in real time, their progress and inform future improvements to their service offerings.
- Evaluation associate. Assisting in designing and implementing an ongoing national evaluation for the **Alliance for Strong Families** to extract best practices in including older adults as a viable human capital strategy for nonprofits.
- Project lead. Collected, analyzed and synthesized data from both survey and focus groups regarding the **Douglas County Library's** redesigned website.
- Evaluation associate. Assisted in collecting, analyzing and synthesizing data from the **Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing** project to improve client correspondence.
- Associate consultant. Providing support and expertise in updating and analyzing the **National Civic League's** efforts to implement and evaluate efforts to incorporate Truth and Racial Healing Transformation principles into its annual All America City programming.
- Evaluation associate. Assisted in facilitating meetings and conducting research for the **Montbello Organizing Committee's** neighborhood research project.
- Associate consultant. Worked as part of a team in synthesizing input from stakeholders in developing a comprehensive and collaborative strategic plan for **Baby Bear Hugs** in their efforts to apply for a Colorado LAUNCH Together grant.
- Associate consultant. Analyzed data for the **Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment** to facilitate discussions around improving the WIC programs user experience and messaging.

### EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

- Research Assistant, **Crossley Center for Public Opinion Research: University of Denver**, September 2013-June 2015. Inaugural research assistant. Worked as part of a team in: establishing fledgling program; conducting research; and presenting findings at conferences.
- Teacher, **Malcom Price Laboratory School: Iowa's Research, Development, Demonstration, and Dissemination School at the University of Northern Iowa**, August 2010–May 2012. Taught secondary social science courses, mentored pre-service teachers, assisted in planning and conducting research regarding technology in the classroom.



**EDUCATION**

**Master of Arts, International Studies, 2015**

Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver, Denver, CO

**Bachelor of Science, History and Secondary Education**

Iowa State University, Ames, IA

**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Iowa Special Olympics, Summer Games volunteer, 2007-2010. Gold-medal winning soccer team coach, 2011-2013; soccer skills coach, 2015.



## B. Project Cost Proposal

### 1. Estimates of hours to be worked and hourly rates for each staff or classification of staff to be assigned to the project

The budget below includes the following rates and estimated hours to be worked:

Staff Classification	Estimated Project Hours	Project Rate
Project director	76 hours	\$125/hour
Quantitative researcher	140 hours	\$100/hour
Qualitative researcher	150 hours	\$95/hour
Research assistant	140 hours	\$50/hour
Administrative coordinator	26 hours	\$50/hour
Editor	10 hours	\$95/hour

### 2. Estimates of direct (mileage, printing, etc.) and indirect costs

Estimated <b>direct costs</b> (to include: food for focus groups at \$150 per group [including Action Plan meeting], gift cards for focus group participation at \$30 per participant, child care for focus groups at \$200 per group, survey incentive at \$500, survey recruitment and marketing [including partner payments] at \$4,485, mileage at \$105)	\$9,500
Estimated <b>indirect costs</b> (outlined in greater detail below)	\$47,000

### 3. Project total

ACTIVITY	COST
Demographic and Document Review	\$3,900
Resident Focus Groups	\$7,300
Community Resources and Assets Inventory	\$3,350
Community Action Plan Study Session (and ongoing support)	\$3,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$56,500</b>

**ADAMS COUNTY FORMAL REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL  
2016.720**

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**CSBG Needs Assessment**

**All documents and Addendum related to this RFP  
will be posted on the Rocky Mountain Bid System at:  
<http://www.bidnetdirect.com/colorado/solicitations/open-bids>**

**Written questions will be accepted through January 6, 2016**

**An Addendum to answer submitted questions will be  
issued no later than January 13, 2016**

**Proposal Opening Date: January 27, 2016  
Time: 2:00 pm**

**Location: Adams County Government Center  
4430 South Adams County Parkway  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor, C4000A  
Brighton, CO 80601**



## GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

1. The Adams County Board of Commissioners by and through its Purchasing Division of the Finance Department is accepting proposals for CSBG Needs Assessment.
2. **All documents related to this RFP will be posted on the Rocky Mountain Bid System at:**  
<http://www.bidnetdirect.com/colorado/solicitations/open-bids>
  - 2.1. Interested parties must register with this service to receive these documents.
  - 2.2. This service is offered free or with an annual fee for automatic notification services.
3. Written questions may be submitted through January 6, 2016. All questions are to be submitted to Shawn Hartmann, Purchasing Agent II by email at [Shartmann@adcogov.org](mailto:Shartmann@adcogov.org).
4. An Addendum to answer all questions will be issued no later than January 13, 2016.
5. Proposals
  - 5.1. Sealed proposals for consideration will be received at the office of the Purchasing Division of the Finance Department at the Adams County Government Center, 4430 South Adams County Parkway, Front Lobby Reception, Brighton Colorado 80601, up to 2:00 p.m. on January 27, 2016.
  - 5.2. The proposal opening time shall be according to our clock.
  - 5.3. Proposals will be publicly opened and the names of the companies submitting proposals will be read aloud.
  - 5.4. Proposals may be mailed or delivered in person and **must be** in a sealed envelope clearly labeled with Company Name, Proposal Number and Project Title.
  - 5.5. No proposals will be accepted after the time and date established above except by written addenda.
  - 5.6. The proposal must be submitted on a CD or Flash Drive in a single PDF file not to exceed 30 pages. Brochures or other supportive documents may be included with the proposal narrative.
  - 5.7. The two proposal signature pages "**CONTRACTOR'S CERTIFICATION OF COMPLIANCE**" pursuant to Colorado Revised Statute (C.R.S.), § 8-17.5-101, *et. seq.*, as amended 5/13/08, and the "**PROPOSAL FORM**" acknowledging the receipt of addendum(s) must be signed and included as hard copy with the CD or Flash Drive. These are the **last two pages of the RFP**.

- 5.8. Proposals may not be withdrawn after date and hour set for closing. Failure to enter contract or honor the purchase order will be cause for removal of supplier's name from the Vendor's List for a period of twelve (12) months from the date of this opening.
- 5.9. In submitting the proposal, the vendor agrees that acceptance of any or all proposals by the Purchasing Manager within a reasonable time or period constitutes a contract. No delivery shall become due or be accepted unless a purchase order shall first have been issued by the Purchasing Division.
- 5.10. The County assumes no responsibility for late deliveries of mail on behalf of the United States Post Office or any other delivery system.
- 5.11. The County assumes no responsibility for a proposal being either opened early or improperly routed if the envelope is not clearly marked on the outside: CSBG Needs Assessment and 2016.720.
- 5.12. In the event of a situation severe enough to cause the Adams County Board of Commissioners to close the County offices for any reason, the Purchasing Manager has the prerogative of rescheduling the proposal opening time and date. No proposal will be considered above all other proposals by having met the proposal opening time and date requirements to the exclusion of those who were unable to present their proposal due to a situation severe enough to cause the Board of Commissioners to close the County offices.
- 5.13. Proposal must be submitted in the format supplied and/or described by the County. Failure to submit in the format provided may be cause for rejection of the proposal. Proposals must be furnished exclusive of taxes.
- 5.14. No award will be made to any person, firm, or corporation, which is in arrears upon any obligation to the County.
- 5.15. If submitting a joint venture proposal or a proposal involving a partnership arrangement, articles of partnership stating each partner's responsibilities shall be furnished and submitted with the proposal.
- 5.16. The County reserves the right to waive any irregularities or informalities, and the right to accept or reject any and all proposals, including but not limited to:
  - 5.16.1. Any Proposal which does not meet bonding requirements, or,
  - 5.16.2. Proposals which do not furnish the quality, or,
  - 5.16.3. Offer the availability of materials, equipment or services as required by the specifications, description or scope of services, or,
  - 5.16.4. Proposals from offerors who lack experience or financial responsibility, or,
  - 5.16.5. Proposals which are not made to form.

- 5.17. The Board of County Commissioners may rescind the award of any proposal within one week thereof or at its next regularly scheduled meeting; whichever is later, when the public interest will be served thereby.
  - 5.18. Issuance of this solicitation does not commit the County to award any Agreement or to procure or Agreement for any equipment, materials or services.
  - 5.19. If a formal Agreement is required, the Contractor agrees and understands that a Notice of Award does not constitute an Agreement or create a property interest of any nature until an Agreement is signed by the Awardee and the Board of County Commissioners and/or their authorized designee.
  - 5.20. Only sealed proposals received by the Purchasing Division of the Finance Department will be accepted; proposals submitted telephone, email, or facsimile machines are not acceptable.
  - 5.21. All documentation submitted in response to this solicitation will become the property of Adams County. All documentation maintained or kept by Adams County shall be subject to the Colorado Open Records Act, C.R.S. 24-72-201 *et. seq.* ("CORA"). Accordingly, respondents are discouraged from providing information that they consider confidential, privileged, and/or trade secrets as part of a response to this solicitation. Any portions of submissions that are reasonably considered confidential should be clearly marked. The County does not guarantee the confidentiality of any records.
6. Adams County is an equal opportunity employer.
  7. The County ensures that disadvantaged business enterprises will be afforded full opportunity to submit bids in response to all invitations and will not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, color, national origin, age, gender, or disability in consideration for an award.
  8. **COOPERATIVE PURCHASING:** Adams County encourages cooperative purchasing in an effort to assist other agencies to reduce their cost of bidding and to make better use of taxpayer dollars through volume purchasing. Contractor(s) may, at their discretion, agree to extend the prices and/or terms of the resulting award to other state or local government agencies, school districts, or political subdivisions in the event they would have a need for the same product/service. Usage by any entity shall not have a negative impact on Adams County in the current term or in any future terms.

The Contractor(s) must deal directly with any governmental agency concerning the placement of purchase orders/agreements, freight/delivery charges, contractual disputes, invoices, and payments. Adams County shall not be liable for any costs or damages incurred by any other entity.

9. **INSURANCE:** The Contractor agrees to maintain insurance of the following types and amounts:

9.1. Commercial General Liability Insurance: to include products liability, completed operations, contractual, broad form property damage and personal injury.

9.1.1. Each Occurrence \$1,000,000

9.1.2. General Aggregate \$2,000,000

9.2. Comprehensive Automobile Liability Insurance: to include all motor vehicles owned, hired, leased, or borrowed.

9.2.1. Bodily Injury/Property Damage \$1,000,000 (each accident)

9.2.2. Personal Injury Protection Per Colorado Statutes

9.3. Workers' Compensation Insurance: Per Colorado Statutes

9.4. Professional Liability Insurance: to include coverage for damages or claims for damages arising out of the rendering, or failure to render, any professional services.

9.4.1. Each Occurrence \$1,000,000

9.4.2. This insurance requirement applies only to Contractors who are performing services under this Agreement as professionals licensed under the laws of the State of Colorado, such as physicians, lawyers, engineers, nurses, mental health providers, and any other licensed professionals.

9.5. The Contractor's commercial general liability, and comprehensive automobile liability insurance policies and/or certificates of insurance shall be issued to include Adams County as an "additional insured," and shall include the following provisions:

9.5.1. Underwriters shall have no right of recovery or subrogation against the County, it being the intent of the parties that the insurance policies so affected shall protect both parties and be primary coverage for any and all losses resulting from the actions or negligence of the Contractor.

9.5.2. The insurance companies issuing the policy or policies shall have no response against the County for payment of any premiums due or for any assessments under any form of any policy.

9.5.3. Any and all deductibles contained in any insurance policy shall be assumed by and at the sole risk of the Contractor.

9.6. All insurers of the Contractor must be licensed or approved to do business in the State of Colorado. Upon failure of the Contractor to furnish, deliver and/or maintain such insurance as provided herein, this Agreement, at the election of the County, may be immediately declared suspended, discontinued, or terminated. Failure of the Contractor in obtaining and/or maintaining any required insurance shall not relieve the Contractor from any liability under this Agreement, nor shall the insurance requirements be construed to conflict with the obligations of the Contractor concerning indemnification.



- 9.7. Each insurance policy herein required shall be endorsed to state that coverage shall not be suspended, voided, or canceled without thirty (30) days prior written notice by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the County.
  - 9.8. At any time during the term of this Agreement, the County may require the Contractor to provide proof of the insurance coverage's or policies required under this Agreement.
  - 9.9. The Contractor shall not commence work under this contract until they have submitted to the County and received approval thereof, certificates of insurance showing that they have complied with the foregoing insurance.
  - 9.10. All referenced insurance policies and/or certificates of insurance shall be issued to include Adams County as an "additional insured." The name of the proposal or project must appear on the certificate of insurance.
  - 9.11. Underwriters shall have no right of recovery or subrogation against the County; it being the intent of the parties that the insurance policies so affected shall protect both parties and be primary coverage for any and all losses covered by the described insurance.
  - 9.12. The clause entitled "Other Insurance Provisions" contained in any policy including the County as an additional insured shall not apply to The County.
  - 9.13. If any of the said policies shall be or at any time become unsatisfactory to the County as to form or substance, or if a company issuing any such policy shall be or at any time become unsatisfactory to the County, the Contractor shall promptly obtain a new policy, submit the same to the Purchasing Manager of Adams County for approval and thereafter submit a certificate of insurance as herein above provided. Upon failure of the Contractor to furnish, deliver and maintain such insurance as provided herein, this contract, at the election of the County, may be immediately declared suspended, discontinued or terminated.
10. Contractor shall comply with the requirements of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) and shall review and comply with the County's safety regulations while on any County property. Failure to comply with any applicable federal, state or local law, rule, or regulation shall give the County the right to terminate this agreement for cause.
  11. COMPLIANCE WITH C.R.S. § 8-17.5-101, ET. SEQ. AS AMENDED 5/13/08: Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statute (C.R.S.), § 8-17.5-101, *et. seq.*, as amended 5/13/08, the Contractor shall meet the following requirements prior to signing this Agreement (public contract for service) and for the duration thereof:
    - 11.1. The Contractor shall certify participation in the E-Verify Program (the electronic employment verification program that is authorized in 8 U.S.C. § 1324a and jointly administered by the United States Department of Homeland Security and the Social Security Administration, or its successor program) or the Department Program (the

employment verification program established by the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment pursuant to C.R.S. § 8-17.5-102(5)) on the attached certification.

- 11.2. The Contractor shall not knowingly employ or contract with an illegal alien to perform work under this public contract for services.
- 11.3. The Contractor shall not enter into a contract with a subcontractor that fails to certify to the Contractor that the subcontractor shall not knowingly employ or contract with an illegal alien to perform work under this public contract for services.
- 11.4. At the time of signing this public contract for services, the Contractor has confirmed the employment eligibility of all employees who are newly hired for employment to perform work under this public contract for services through participation in either the E-Verify Program or the Department Program.
- 11.5. The Contractor shall not use either the E-Verify Program or the Department Program procedures to undertake pre-employment screening of job applicants while this public contract for services is being performed.
- 11.6. If Contractor obtains actual knowledge that a subcontractor performing work under this public contract for services knowingly employs or contracts with an illegal alien, the Contractor shall: notify the subcontractor and the County within three days that the Contractor has actual knowledge that the subcontractor is employing or contracting with an illegal alien; and terminate the subcontract with the subcontractor if within three days of receiving the notice required pursuant to the previous paragraph, the subcontractor does not stop employing or contracting with the illegal alien; except that the Contractor shall not terminate the contract with the subcontractor if during such three days the subcontractor provides information to establish that the subcontractor has not knowingly employed or contracted with an illegal alien.
- 11.7. Contractor shall comply with any reasonable requests by the Department of Labor and Employment (the Department) made in the course of an investigation that the Department is undertaking pursuant to the authority established in C.R.S. § 8-17.5-102(5).
- 11.8. If Contractor violates this Section, of this Agreement, the County may terminate this Agreement for breach of contract. If the Agreement is so terminated, the Contractor shall be liable for actual and consequential damages to the County.

### **End General Information**

The remainder of this page is left blank intentionally.

## Scope of Work

### 12. Introduction

Adams County is requesting that qualified consultants submit a proposal for developing a Community Needs Assessment. The Community Needs Assessment will identify the key findings on the causes and conditions of poverty and the needs in Adams County. The assessment will then be analyzed and the results of the assessment will be presented in a final report. The proposal for this project shall include a description of qualifications, key persons, references, an approach to the project, detailed scope, estimate of costs, and a timeline (by task).

#### A. Background

In 2001, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (“USHHS”) issued Information Memorandum 49, requiring eligible entities to conduct needs assessments and use the results to design programs to meet community needs. In 2015, USHHS issued Information Memorandum No. 138 establishing Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Organizational Standards requiring eligible public entities to conduct a Community Needs Assessment and develop a Community Action Plan to address the needs identified. Adams County currently receives funding to implement a CSBG program and seeks an independent consultant to design and execute the Community Needs Assessment.

#### B. Purpose

The purpose of the Adams County CSBG Community Needs Assessment is to assist government agencies, non-profits, and community members in improving services to residents. Additionally, the assessment will examine needs identified specifically by low-income residents, potential gaps in services, opportunities for service improvement and needs identified in low-income neighborhoods.

#### C. Design

1. The CSBG Community Needs Assessment will meet the following requirements established by the Organizational Standards:

**Standard Summary of CSBG Community Needs Assessment Requirements**

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| <b>1.1</b> | The department utilizes information gathered from key sectors of the community in assessing needs and resources, during the community assessment process or other times. These sectors will include at minimum: community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, private sector, public sector and educational institutions |
| <b>1.2</b> | Conduct it every 3 years   |
| <b>1.3</b> | Collects current poverty data and its prevalence related to gender, age, and race/ethnicity  |
| <b>1.4</b> | Collects and analyzes both qualitative and quantitative data on its service areas  |
| <b>1.5</b> | Includes key findings on the causes and conditions of poverty and the needs  |
| <b>1.6</b> | Governing board formally accepts the completed assessment  |

2. It is expected that the implementation of the CSBG Community Needs Assessment will include:

- a. Survey/Interview data
- b. Focus groups

**3. Assessment Goals:**

- a. Identify the causes and conditions of poverty in Adams County
- b. Determine the needs of low-income persons
- c. Determine how well the needs of low-income persons are being met
- d. Identify (organization-based and client-based) barriers to serving residents
- e. Identify community strengths and assets
- f. Solicit recommendations of solutions to address barriers
- g. Identify outcomes for development of a department Community Actions Plan

**4. Project Approach:**

The activities of the CSBG Community Needs Assessment are anticipated as follows:

Through a process that may involve county agencies, non-profits, neighborhood groups and community leaders, plan and implement a county-wide Needs Assessment that will identify community needs, assets, gaps in-services, and priorities, specifically among low income residents. It is anticipated that the assessment will consist of the following:

- 1) Regular meetings with Community Needs Assessment Project Advisory Committee (composed of CSBG staff, Manager and Board) to review progress. Conduct status reports twice a month describing substantive progress, identifying the extent to which each task has been completed. Identify problems and opportunities potentially affecting future progress.
- 2) Administer a survey instrument to accurately capture responses from a statistically valid sample of Adams County low-income residents and service providers for Adams County through interviews, telephone surveying, on-line or mailed surveys.
- 3) Identify, map and inventory community resources and assets in target neighborhoods by using existing data, reports, maps and survey findings gathered within the last year.
- 4) Include a component of transportation and mobility needs within the County
- 5) Assist CSBG staff for commissioner study session and presentations

**5. Project Deliverables:**

Final Needs Assessment shall be submitted within 4 (four) months of project initiation with an additional 2 (months) to assist CSBG staff for joint study session and consultation. Deliverables will include:

- a. 5 bound copies of the Community Needs Assessment and a flash drive that includes all appendices and literature review
- b. A power point presentation included on the flash drive of the key findings and recommendations

- c. Assistance as needed for study session and consultation on development of department Community Action Plan

**13. Request for Proposal Technical Submittals:**

- A. The Proposal shall include a Scope of Services detailing how, at a minimum, the consultant will accomplish the CSBG Community Needs Assessment and the specific design.
  - 1. The consultant shall submit in a three-ring binder five (5) copies of the proposal not to exceed (30) sheets, submitted only on single sided, single column typed 8.5" x 11" size. The sheet count limitation applies to the actual technical proposal contained in the submittal. There is a minimum twelve (12)-point font requirement for the basic text of the entire submittal. Any charts, graphs, table of organizations, etc., must be of readable size. Appendices of relevant information may supplement the proposal.
  - 2. To speed and simplify the technical proposal evaluation and to assure each technical proposal receives the same orderly review; all technical proposals must follow the format described below.
    - a. **Summary Statement:** The proposal shall contain an opening statement summarizing how the proposal will accomplish the purposes of the project, and summarizing the roles and qualifications of the project team.
    - b. **Statement of project team qualifications and project administration.**
    - c. **An organizational chart shall be provided to describe the reporting and review relationships among members of the project team.**
    - d. **Contact information, including name, title, street and mailing addresses, telephone, fax, email and web site addresses shall be provided for the lead members of the project team.**
    - e. **The proposal shall identify the individuals participating in the project team. General qualifications and experience relevant to this study shall be described, and specific qualifications and experience relative to this project shall be described for each individual assigned to the project (not including individuals serving in administrative or technical support roles). Individual team member résumés may be provided in appendices, although the primary basis for evaluating proposals will be the content of the technical proposal.**
- 3. **Schedule of Deliverables:**

The technical proposal shall include a table or chart defining and describing the deliverables associated with each task order and subtask, the anticipated date of submission of each deliverable in terms of weeks from project initiation, and format(s) of each deliverable. Deliverables may include presentations and associated materials such as PowerPoint files, websites, display boards and handouts.
- 4. **Exhibits:**

Exhibits of prior relevant projects, particularly survey research, community needs assessments, asset surveys, neighborhood revitalization studies etc., may be included in

print or digital formats. Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate capacity and experience in multi-lingual competency.

**5. References:**

Please provide contact information for three (3) references associated with prior relevant work by the project team or its lead members.

**B. Project Cost Proposal: (The cost proposal must be in a separate envelope)**

- 1. Estimates of hours to be worked and hourly rates for each staff or classification of staff to be assigned to the project**
- 2. Estimates of direct (mileage, printing, etc.) and indirect costs**
- 3. Project total**
- 4. Adams County is looking for a cost proposal that best reflects the county's schedule to complete tasks described herein, within or under budget. If the county is unable to negotiate an acceptable fee with the selected highest-ranked preferred consultant, the county reserves the right to enter into negotiations with the next highest-ranked consultant.**
- 5. The price shall be paid based on percentage complete for the required services. Partial payments shall be made based on work progress. Partial payments shall be based upon percentage of work completed, broken down into direct labor, labor overhead, direct costs, sub-contract expense (also broken down) and a fee. The fee is a percentage factor applied to labor and labor overhead costs.**

## **Submittal Checklist**

- Response to RFP
- Vendor Information Form
- W-9
- Contractor's Certification of Compliance
- Proposal Form/Contractor's Statement
- References
- 5 number of paper copies
- One CD or Flash Drive of submitted proposal in a single PDF document

**CONTRACTOR'S CERTIFICATION OF COMPLIANCE**

Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statute, § 8-17.5-101, *et.seq.*, as amended 5/13/08, as a prerequisite to entering into a contract for services with Adams County, Colorado, the undersigned Contractor hereby certifies that at the time of this certification, Contractor does not knowingly employ or contract with an illegal alien who will perform work under the attached contract for services and that the Contractor will participate in the E-Verify Program or Department program, as those terms are defined in C.R.S. § 8-17.5-101, *et. seq.* in order to confirm the employment eligibility of all employees who are newly hired for employment to perform work under the attached contract for services.

CONTRACTOR:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Company Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Print or Type)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

Note: Registration for the E-Verify Program can be completed at: <https://www.vis-dhs.com/employerregistration>. It is recommended that employers review the sample "memorandum of understanding" available at the website prior to registering





**PROPOSAL FORM**  
CSBG Needs Assessment

**CONTRACTOR'S STATEMENT**

I have read and fully understand all the special conditions herein set forth in the foregoing paragraphs, and by my signature set forth hereunder, I hereby agree to comply with all said special conditions as stated or implied. In consideration of the above statement, the following proposal is hereby submitted.

\_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Written Amount Amount

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, HEREBY ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF

Addenda # \_\_\_\_\_ Addenda # \_\_\_\_\_  
If None, Please write NONE.

_____	_____
Company Name	Date
_____	_____
Address	Signature
_____	_____
City, State, Zip Code	Printed Name
_____	_____
County	Title
_____	_____
Telephone	Fax
_____	_____
Email Address	_____

## **SAMPLE OF PURCHASE OF SERVICE AGREEMENT**

THIS AGREEMENT ("Agreement") is made this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2016, by and between the Adams County Board of County Commissioners, located at 4430 South Adams County Parkway, Brighton, Colorado 80601, hereinafter referred to as the "County," and Winner123, located at Address123, hereinafter referred to as the "Contractor." The County and the Contractor may be collectively referred to herein as the "Parties".

The County and the Contractor, for the consideration herein set forth, agree as follows:

### **1. SERVICES OF THE CONTRACTOR:**

- 1.1. All work shall be in accordance with the attached RFP xxxxx and the Contractor's response to the RFP xxxxx attached hereto as Exhibit A, and incorporated herein by reference. Should there be any discrepancy between Exhibit A and this Agreement the terms and conditions of this Agreement shall prevail.
- 1.2. Emergency Services: In the event the Adams County Board of County Commissioners declares an emergency, the County may request additional services (of the type described in this Agreement or otherwise within the expertise of the Contractor) to be performed by the Contractor. If the County requests such additional services, the Contractor shall provide such services in a timely fashion given the nature of the emergency, pursuant to the terms of this Agreement. Unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the parties, the Contractor shall bill for such services at the rates provided for in this Agreement.

**2. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COUNTY:** The County shall provide information as necessary or requested by the Contractor to enable the Contractor's performance under this Agreement.

### **3. TERM:**

- 3.1. Term of Agreement: The Term of this Agreement shall be for one-year from the date of this Agreement.
- 3.2. Extension Option: The County, at its sole option, may offer to extend this Agreement as necessary for up to two, one year extensions providing satisfactory service is given and all terms and conditions of this Agreement have been fulfilled. Such extensions must be mutually agreed upon in writing by the County and the Contractor.

**4. PAYMENT AND FEE SCHEDULE:** The County shall pay the Contractor for services furnished under this Agreement, and the Contractor shall accept as full payment for those services, the sum of:

- 4.1. Payment pursuant to this Agreement, whether in full or in part, is subject to and contingent upon the continuing availability of County funds for the purposes hereof. In the event that funds become unavailable, as determined by the County, the County may immediately terminate this Agreement or amend it accordingly.

**5. INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR:** In providing services under this Agreement, the Contractor acts as an independent contractor and not as an employee of the County. The Contractor shall be solely and entirely responsible for his/her acts and the acts of his/her employees, agents, servants, and subcontractors during the term and performance of this Agreement. No employee, agent, servant, or subcontractor of the Contractor shall be deemed to be an employee, agent, or servant of the County because of the performance of any services or work under this Agreement. The Contractor, at its expense, shall procure and maintain workers' compensation insurance as required by law. **Pursuant to the Workers' Compensation Act § 8-40-202(2)(b)(IV), C.R.S., as amended, the Contractor understands that it and its employees and servants are not entitled to workers' compensation benefits from the County. The Contractor further understands that it is solely obligated for the payment of federal and state income tax on any moneys earned pursuant to this Agreement.**

**6. NONDISCRIMINATION:**

**6.1. The Contractor shall not discriminate against any employee or qualified applicant for employment because of age, race, color, religion, marital status, disability, sex, or national origin. The Contractor agrees to post in conspicuous places, available to employees and applicants for employment, notices provided by the local public agency setting forth the provisions of this nondiscrimination clause. Adams County is an equal opportunity employer.**

6.1.1. The Contractor will cause the foregoing provisions to be inserted in all subcontracts for any work covered by this Agreement so that such provisions will be binding upon each subcontractor, provided that the foregoing provisions shall not apply to contracts or subcontracts for standard commercial supplies or raw materials.

**7. INDEMNIFICATION:** The Contractor agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the County, its officers, agents, and employees for, from, and against any and all claims, suits, expenses, damages, or other liabilities, including reasonable attorney fees and court costs, arising out of damage or injury to persons, entities, or property, caused or sustained by any person(s) as a result of the Contractor's performance or failure to perform pursuant to the terms of this Agreement or as a result of any subcontractors' performance or failure to perform pursuant to the terms of this Agreement.

**8. INSURANCE:** The Contractor agrees to maintain insurance of the following types and amounts:

8.1. Commercial General Liability Insurance: to include products liability, completed operations, contractual, broad form property damage and personal injury.

8.1.1. Each Occurrence: \$1,000,000

8.1.2. General Aggregate: \$2,000,000

8.2. Comprehensive Automobile Liability Insurance: to include all motor vehicles owned, hired, leased, or borrowed.

8.2.1. Bodily Injury/Property Damage: \$1,000,000 (each accident)

8.2.2. Personal Injury Protection: Per Colorado Statutes

8.3. Workers' Compensation Insurance: Per Colorado Statutes

8.4. Professional Liability Insurance: to include coverage for damages or claims for damages arising out of the rendering, or failure to render, any professional services, as applicable.

8.4.1. Each Occurrence: \$1,000,000

8.4.2. This insurance requirement applies only to the Contractors who are performing services under this Agreement as professionals licensed under the laws of the State of Colorado, such as physicians, lawyers, engineers, nurses, mental health providers, and any other licensed professionals.

8.5. Adams County as "Additional Insured": The Contractor's commercial general liability, comprehensive automobile liability, and professional liability insurance policies and/or certificates of insurance shall be issued to include Adams County as an "additional insured" and shall include the following provisions:

8.5.1. Underwriters shall have no right of recovery or subrogation against the County, it being the intent of the parties that the insurance policies so affected shall protect both parties and be primary coverage for any and all losses resulting from the actions or negligence of the Contractor.

8.5.2. The insurance companies issuing the policy or policies shall have no recourse against the County for payment of any premiums due or for any assessments under any form of any policy.

8.5.3. Any and all deductibles contained in any insurance policy shall be assumed by and at the sole risk of the Contractor.

8.6. Licensed Insurers: All insurers of the Contractor must be licensed or approved to do business in the State of Colorado. Upon failure of the Contractor to furnish, deliver and/or maintain such insurance as provided herein, this Agreement, at the election of the County, may be immediately declared suspended, discontinued, or terminated. Failure of the Contractor in obtaining and/or maintaining any required insurance shall not relieve the Contractor from any liability under this Agreement, nor shall the insurance requirements be construed to conflict with the obligations of the Contractor concerning indemnification.

8.7. Endorsement: Each insurance policy herein required shall be endorsed to state that coverage shall not be suspended, voided, or canceled without thirty (30) days prior written notice by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the County.

8.8. Proof of Insurance: At any time during the term of this Agreement, the County may require the Contractor to provide proof of the insurance coverage or policies required under this Agreement.

## 9. TERMINATION:

9.1. For Cause: If, through any cause, the Contractor fails to fulfill its obligations under this Agreement in a timely and proper manner, or if the Contractor violates any of the covenants, conditions, or stipulations of this Agreement, the County shall thereupon have the right to immediately terminate this Agreement, upon giving written notice to the Contractor of such termination and specifying the effective date thereof.

9.2. For Convenience: The County may terminate this Agreement at any time by giving

written notice as specified herein to the other party, which notice shall be given at least thirty (30) days prior to the effective date of the termination. If this Agreement is terminated by the County, the Contractor will be paid an amount that bears the same ratio to the total compensation as the services actually performed bear to the total services the Contractor was to perform under this Agreement, less payments previously made to the Contractor under this Agreement.

## **10. MUTUAL UNDERSTANDINGS:**

- 10.1. **Jurisdiction and Venue:** The laws of the State of Colorado shall govern as to the interpretation, validity, and effect of this Agreement. The parties agree that jurisdiction and venue for any disputes arising under this Agreement shall be with Adams County, Colorado.
- 10.2. **Compliance with Laws:** During the performance of this Agreement, the Contractor agrees to strictly adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules and regulations, including all licensing and permit requirements. The parties hereto aver that they are familiar with § 18-8-301, et seq., C.R.S. (Bribery and Corrupt Influences), as amended, and § 18-8-401, et seq., C.R.S. (Abuse of Public Office), as amended, and that no violation of such provisions are present. The Contractor warrants that it is in compliance with the residency requirements in §§ 8-17.5-101, et seq., C.R.S. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the Contractor expressly agrees to comply with the privacy and security requirements of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA).
- 10.3. **OSHA:** The Contractor shall comply with the requirements of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) and shall review and comply with the County's safety regulations while on any County property. Failure to comply with any applicable federal, state or local law, rule, or regulation shall give the County the right to terminate this agreement for cause.
- 10.4. **Record Retention:** The Contractor shall maintain records and documentation of the services provided under this Agreement, including fiscal records, and shall retain the records for a period of three (3) years from the date this Agreement is terminated. Said records and documents shall be subject at all reasonable times to inspection, review, or audit by authorized Federal, State, or County personnel.
- 10.5. **Assignability:** Neither this Agreement, nor any rights hereunder, in whole or in part, shall be assignable or otherwise transferable by the Contractor without the prior written consent of the County.
- 10.6. **Waiver:** Waiver of strict performance or the breach of any provision of this Agreement shall not be deemed a waiver, nor shall it prejudice the waiving party's right to require strict performance of the same provision, or any other provision in the future, unless such waiver has rendered future performance commercially impossible.
- 10.7. **Force Majeure:** Neither party shall be liable for any delay or failure to perform its obligations hereunder to the extent that such delay or failure is caused by a force or event beyond the control of such party including, without limitation, war, embargoes, strikes, governmental restrictions, riots, fires, floods, earthquakes, or other acts of God.

10.8. Notice: Any notices given under this Agreement are deemed to have been received and to be effective: 1) Three (3) days after the same shall have been mailed by certified mail, return receipt requested; 2) Immediately upon hand delivery; or 3) Immediately upon receipt of confirmation that an email was received. For the purposes of this Agreement, any and all notices shall be addressed to the contacts listed below:

Department: Adams County (department name)

Contact:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

Phone:

Email:

Department: Adams County Purchasing

Contact:

Address: 4430 South Adams County Parkway

City, State, Zip: Brighton, Colorado 80601

Phone:

Email:

Department: Adams County Attorney's Office

Address: 4430 South Adams County Parkway

City, State, Zip: Brighton, Colorado 80601

Phone: 720.523.6116

Email:

Contractor: Winner123

Contact:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

Phone:

Email:

10.9. Integration of Understanding: This Agreement contains the entire understanding of the parties hereto and neither it, nor the rights and obligations hereunder, may be changed, modified, or waived except by an instrument in writing that is signed by the parties hereto.

10.10. Severability: If any provision of this Agreement is determined to be unenforceable or invalid for any reason, the remainder of this Agreement shall remain in effect, unless otherwise terminated in accordance with the terms contained herein.

10.11. Authorization: Each party represents and warrants that it has the power and ability to enter into this Agreement, to grant the rights granted herein, and to perform the duties and obligations herein described.

## **11. CHANGE ORDERS OR EXTENSIONS:**

11.1. Change Orders: The County may, from time to time, require changes in the scope of

the services of the Contractor to be performed herein including, but not limited to, additional instructions, additional work, and the omission of work previously ordered. The Contractor shall be compensated for all authorized changes in services, pursuant to the applicable provision in the Invitation to Bid, or, if no provision exists, pursuant to the terms of the Change Order.

11.2. Extensions: The County may, upon mutual written agreement by the parties, extend the time of completion of services to be performed by the Contractor.

**12. COMPLIANCE WITH C.R.S. § 8-17.5-101, ET. SEQ. AS AMENDED 5/13/08:** Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statute (C.R.S.), § 8-17.5-101, *et. seq.*, as amended May 13, 2008, the Contractor shall meet the following requirements prior to signing this Agreement (public contract for service) and for the duration thereof:

12.1. The Contractor shall certify participation in the E-Verify Program (the electronic employment verification program that is authorized in 8 U.S.C. § 1324a and jointly administered by the United States Department of Homeland Security and the Social Security Administration, or its successor program) or the Department Program (the employment verification program established by the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment pursuant to C.R.S. § 8-17.5-102(5)) on the attached certification.

12.2. The Contractor shall not knowingly employ or contract with an illegal alien to perform work under this public contract for services.

12.3. The Contractor shall not enter into a contract with a subcontractor that fails to certify to the Contractor that the subcontractor shall not knowingly employ or contract with an illegal alien to perform work under this public contract for services.

12.4. At the time of signing this public contract for services, the Contractor has confirmed the employment eligibility of all employees who are newly hired for employment to perform work under this public contract for services through participation in either the E-Verify Program or the Department Program.

12.5. The Contractor shall not use either the E-Verify Program or the Department Program procedures to undertake pre-employment screening of job applicants while this public contract for services is being performed.

12.6. If the Contractor obtains actual knowledge that a subcontractor performing work under this public contract for services knowingly employs or contracts with an illegal alien, the Contractor shall: notify the subcontractor and the County within three (3) days that the Contractor has actual knowledge that the subcontractor is employing or contracting with an illegal alien; and terminate the subcontract with the subcontractor if within three days of receiving the notice required pursuant to the previous paragraph, the subcontractor does not stop employing or contracting with the illegal alien; except that the Contractor shall not terminate the contract with the subcontractor if during such three (3) days the subcontractor provides information to establish that the subcontractor has not knowingly employed or contracted with an illegal alien.

12.7. Contractor shall comply with any reasonable requests by the Department of Labor and Employment (the Department) made in the course of an investigation that the

Department is undertaking pursuant to the authority established in C.R.S. § 8-17.5-102(5).

- 12.8. If Contractor violates this Section, of this Agreement, the County may terminate this Agreement for breach of contract. If the Agreement is so terminated, the Contractor shall be liable for actual and consequential damages to the County.

SAMPLE



IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Parties have caused their names to be affixed hereto:

**Board of County Commissioners**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Winner123**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

**Attest:**

Stan Martin, Clerk and Recorder

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Clerk

Approved as to Form:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Adams County Attorney's Office

**NOTARIZATION OF CONTRACTOR'S SIGNATURE:**

COUNTY OF \_\_\_\_\_ )

STATE OF \_\_\_\_\_ )SS.

Signed and sworn to before me this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2016,

by \_\_\_\_\_,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public

My commission expires on: \_\_\_\_\_

**CONTRACTOR'S CERTIFICATION OF COMPLIANCE**

Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statute, § 8-17.5-101, *et.seq.*, as amended 5/13/08, as a prerequisite to entering into a contract for services with Adams County, Colorado, the undersigned Contractor hereby certifies that at the time of this certification, Contractor does not knowingly employ or contract with an illegal alien who will perform work under the attached contract for services and that the Contractor will participate in the E-Verify Program or Department program, as those terms are defined in C.R.S. § 8-17.5-101, *et. seq.* in order to confirm the employment eligibility of all employees who are newly hired for employment to perform work under the attached contract for services.

**CONTRACTOR:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Company Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Print or Type)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

Note: Registration for the E-Verify Program can be completed at: <https://www.vis-dhs.com/employerregistration>. It is recommended that employers review the sample "memorandum of understanding" available at the website prior to registering

**Addendum #1  
2016.720**

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## **CSBG Needs Assessment**

**All documents and Addendum related to this RFP  
will be posted on the Rocky Mountain Bid System at:  
<http://www.rockymountainbidsystem.com/Bids/ViewOpenSolicitations.asp>**

**Proposal Opening Date: January 27, 2017  
Time: 2:00pm**

**Location: Adams County Government Center  
4430 South Adams County Parkway  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor, C4000A  
Brighton, CO 80601**



## **CSBG Needs Assessment - RFP#2016.720**

1. Who conducted the last two needs assessments? Were they acceptable to the county's governing board?

A.1 The last needs assessment in 2014 was completed internally; however, most of the data was obtained and used from the Community Development Block Grant's (CDBG) similar needs assessment called Consolidated Plan. The one previous to that was completed in 2009 by JVA Consulting, LLC but also included additional community needs assessments for the County (Head Start and CDBG).

2. If outsourced, how much did the county pay to conduct the last two needs assessments? Is the budget for this needs assessment expected to be similar?

A.2 2014 – internally 2009 - \$138,922 – but it included 2 other needs assessments

3. The RFP mentions a Professional Liability Insurance requirement for certain professions. We assume that Community Development professionals are not included as this is not a licensed line of work on Colorado?

A.3 If they feel they do not fall under this requirement, that is something that we can look at removing from the agreement if they are awarded.

4. Can you elaborate on the request for assistance in conducting a study session and consultation on development of the Community Action Plan? Would just one or multiple study sessions be involved? What types of consultation would be requested or desired for the CAP?

A.4 There will be 1 study session with the Adams County Board of County Commissioners. We are planning for this to be a collaborative effort between Adams County CSBG staff and the Consulting Agency to present around the data collection and findings. For the Community Action Plan, the Adams County CSBG staff would be the leads in putting it together, but will turn to the Consulting Agency for input on their data collections/findings for the Community Needs Assessment.

5. The technical submittals indicate that five copies of the proposal should be submitted in a three ring binder. Is this one binder for each copy, or one binder for all five copies?

A.5 One binder for each copy, so five binders.

6. The RFP mentions a desire to keep project costs within the desired budget. Is there a specific budget that the county would like to stay within?

A.6 The approximate budget will be between \$40,000 - \$60,000.

7. Under section 4. Project Approach, the RFP requests a survey of low-income residents and service providers. Will the County be able to supply a list of service providers as well as contact information (either mailing address or email) for each? Also, does the County have a list of contact information for low-income residences or will the consultant be responsible for identifying these households?

A.7 The County can supply a list of service providers and contact information. No, the County cannot provide a list of contact information for low-income residents. The consultant will be responsible for identifying these households through already established programs and agencies in Adams County that serves that population.

8. Under section 4. Project Approach, the RFP states a need for a component of transportation and mobility needs within the County. Are you able to provide more specifics about what the County is looking for regarding this component? Also, is this specific to needs of low-income residents or is this for all residents?

A.8 Adams County would like the Community Needs Assessment to gather data around the need for transportation for older adults and mobility impaired within Adams County, specifically for low-income.

9. Under section 4. Project Approach, the RFP states the consultant needs to assist CSBG staff with presentations. What does this entail? Will the consultant need to create the presentation and present the findings or would the consultant just need to be available for questions? Also, approximately how many presentations is the consultant required to attend?

A.9 There will be 1 study session with the Adams County Board of County Commissioners. We are planning for this to be a collaborative effort between Adams County CSBG staff and the Consulting Agency to present around the data collection and findings, however, section 5b, states a Power Point presentation is required from the Consultant. There will also be a presentation to our tri-partite board.

10. What is the anticipated budget for this project?

A.10 Please See A.6

11. Is the study to focus solely on low income households or community needs in general?

A.11 It is focused on low income households.

12. The county conducts a quality of life survey that should have been sufficient to examine low-income households. Why does the RFP require another survey? Can an alternative approach to a survey be offered?

A.12 The RFP is requiring a Community Needs Assessment – to include a survey to gather information that is not part of the 2014 Quality of Life Survey as well as to gather more current data. Consulting Agencies can include alternative approach description in their application.

13. Will the raw data from the quality of life survey be made available to the contractor for further analysis as may be required?

A.13 The Consulting Agency can contact the corresponding County department for that information; however, the majority of that information is not sufficient and is not current.

14. The RFP states that the study is to be done every three years. May we have a copy of the most recent study, and will any raw survey data from that report be made available for further analysis as may be required?

A.14 Yes, the previous Community Needs Assessment can be shared. Once a Consulting Agency is chosen, we plan to go over what was done in the past and what the expectations are for the current Community Needs Assessment as they are different this year.

15. If an outside contractor was used in the previous study, what contractor and were they selected via full and open competition, limited competition (3 bids, etc.), or sole-sourced?

A.15 The 2014 Community Needs Assessment was mainly done internally.

16. If an outside contractor was used in the previous study, what was the budget for that study?

A.16 It was done internally.

17. Aside from past community needs assessments, has the county developed materials in the past three years such as resource inventories, population risk assessments, community surveys, low-income population studies, or other components to this community needs assessment? If so, may we have a copy of those materials?

A.17 Various departments within Adams County and other agencies have gathered data that will be useful in our Community Needs Assessment. The selected Consulting Agency will need to work with those various departments and agencies to gather that data. Please see Section 4 – Project Approach.

18. Aside from past community needs assessments, has the county have any outside firms been used to develop materials such as resource inventories, population risk assessments, community surveys, low-income population studies, or other components to this community needs assessment? If so, what firms, and were those firms selected via full and open competition, limited competition (3 bids, etc.), or sole-sourced? And what was the budget for those reports?

A.18 We are unaware of what other departments are currently doing.

19. What is the budget allocation for this project?

A.19 Please see A.6

20. What county department will be in charge of the project?

A.20 Adams County Human Services – CSBG Program

21. What county departments will be involved in the project, on either an advisory or management role?

A.21 Adams County Human Services – CSBG Program

22. What county departments will be involved in selecting a contractor?

A.22 Adams County Human Services – CSBG Program

23. Will external agencies be involved in the project, on either an advisory or management role? If so, what agencies?

A.23 No

24. Will external agencies be involved in selecting a contractor? If so, what agencies?

A.24 No



"Vision without action is merely a dream.  
Action without vision is merely passing time.  
But **vision** with **action** can change the world."  
*Nelson Mandela*



**Response to Adams County Formal Request for Proposal 2016.720,  
CSBG Needs Assessment**

**Prepared for: Adams County, Colorado**

**Prepared by: Joining Vision and Action**



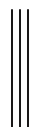
**2a. Summary Statement**

Joining Vision and Action (JVA) is pleased to submit this proposal to Adams County to provide a Community Needs Assessment for the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). Through this work, JVA will analyze and identify key findings and will present results in a final report examining the causes and conditions of poverty and the needs in Adams County.

Understanding that the purpose of this work is to assist government agencies, nonprofits and community members in their efforts to improve services to residents of Adams County, JVA’s approach will employ a mixed methods bilingual approach (including surveys and focus groups) designed to identify community needs, assets, and any gaps in and priorities for services to lower income residents. JVA will undertake activities designed to gather quantitative and qualitative input from a number of key sources, including demographic data and existing literature, Adams County residents, and representatives from community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, private sector, public sector and educational institutions. Specifically, JVA’s approach will meet the assessment goals in the following ways:

<b>APPROACH</b>	Demographic and document review	Resident survey	Resident focus groups	Provider survey	Community inventory	Final report	Facilitated study session
Identify the causes and conditions of poverty in Adams County	X	X	X	X			
Determine the needs of low-income persons	X	X	X	X			
Determine how well the needs of low-income persons are being met		X	X	X	X		
Identify organization and client-based barriers to serving residents		X	X	X	X		
Identify community strengths and assets		X	X	X	X		
Solicit recommendations of solutions to address barriers			X	X	X	X	X
Identify outcomes for development of a Community Action Plan						X	X

Ultimately, this approach will enable a deeper understanding of the causes and conditions of poverty in Adams County and the most pressing needs. To develop, implement and manage this project, JVA will engage its diversely skilled evaluation team to design a plan for how best to conduct this research. The evaluation team is made up of skilled social scientists with advanced degrees and coursework in social psychology, international studies and social work. The JVA team’s track record includes previously conducting the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) needs assessments for Adams County and the Denver Department of Health and Human Services, plus assessments to determine needs and address issues within communities across Colorado . Some of the questions we have answered through community



assessments include: how should the community act to improve food security in the Montbello neighborhood; what do young people in Denver need to succeed; and what is the best way to embrace diversity and aid in youth development and educational success in the Aspen to Parachute region, in a way that achieves broad community impact. These projects have informed communities, foundations and organizations about how best to engage diverse communities and ensure that services and action plans promote the growth and wellbeing of all community members. Our team is sophisticated in the quantitative and qualitative methods and analysis required to satisfy these projects. Sections 2b-2e will further detail the qualifications of the JVA evaluation team.



***2b. Statement of project team qualifications and project administration***

The JVA team has extensive experience in developing rigorous evaluations and assessments grounded in best practices and designed to inform service provision, program implementation, and filling gaps in community needs. JVA's expertise is in gathering culturally appropriate community feedback from diverse communities and underrepresented groups, while taking large amounts of rich data in different formats from various sources, and synthesizing results. This approach ensures that our report provides clear implications for the County. Relevant to this work, JVA's research and evaluation team provides the following services:

**Demographic analysis.** JVA has experience analyzing data from numerous sources to develop demographic profiles which inform the community assessment process. For example, in 2010 JVA created an extensive demographic profile of Adams County residents for the Adams County community needs assessment.

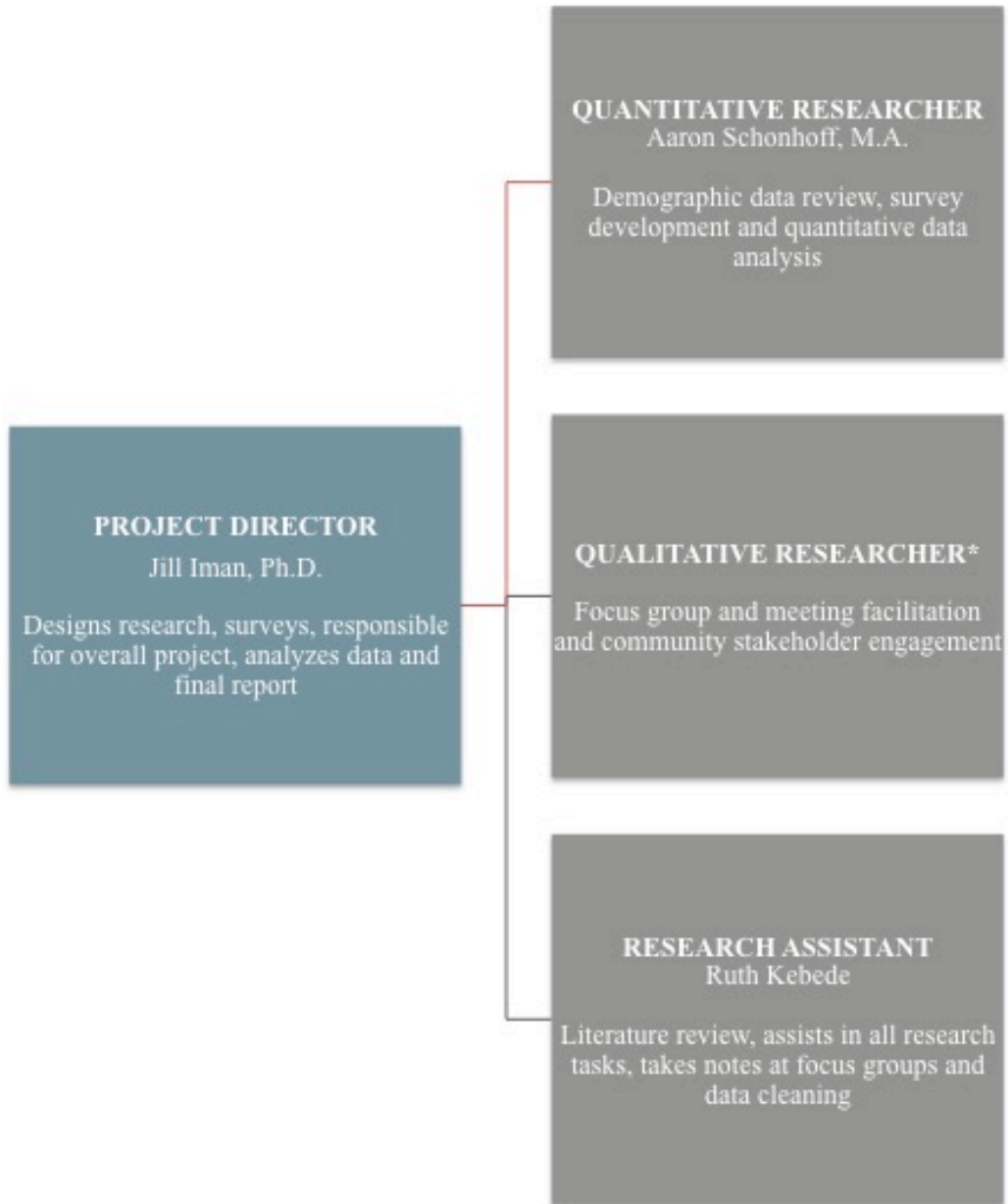
**Surveys.** JVA's team is particularly skilled in tailoring surveys and their administration to reach culturally, socioeconomically, demographically and linguistically diverse constituencies. For example, in the last year, JVA administered over 1,000 surveys to lower income Coloradans in English and in Spanish for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). Additionally, JVA reached and surveyed almost 1,600 Colorado women to identify gaps in resources on behalf of The Women's Foundation of Colorado. Furthermore, JVA successfully surveyed 216 young, at-risk adults living in the Tri-County area to determine current access and need for health services.

**Focus groups and key informant interviews.** JVA's professional research and facilitation team conducts all of our focus groups and key informant interviews to ensure the highest level of quality, consistency and depth in the resulting qualitative information. A significant factor in the design of the focus group and interview process within JVA is our cultural competence and understanding of diverse communities. Whether JVA is surveying diverse community members and leaders for the Adams County needs assessment, surveying lower income families for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) project, or conducting numerous school- and community-based evaluations, these methods have proven remarkably successful in generating rich qualitative data.

JVA's experience in community needs assessments developed in response to its early grantwriting and strategic planning work in the early 1990s, resulting in nearly 25 years of experience. Our expertise regarding the scope of work for this project includes a deep understanding of the community, high-level community-based research skills and a specific understanding and interest in this type of work, as demonstrated by previous, successful CSBG needs assessment work. This prior experience, coupled with individual and organizational passion for this type of work, ensures a well-run project and a thorough final report. The project will be administered by a project director who brings several years of experience in managing and overseeing short- and long-term research projects and who will be supported by JVA associates and administrative staff.



2c. Organizational Chart



\* JVA is in the process of hiring a Qualitative Research Associate. Dr. Iman, Mr. Schonhoff and Ms. Kebede are also trained and skilled in qualitative data collection.



## ***2d. Contact Information for Project Lead***

### **Jill Iman, Ph.D.**

Director of Research and Evaluation  
2465 Sheridan Blvd, Denver, CO 80214  
**Phone:** 303-477-4896  
**Fax:** 303-477-7524  
**Email:** Jill@joiningvisionandaction.com  
**Web Address:** JoiningVisionandAction.com

## ***2e. Individuals Participating in the Project Team***

**Jill Iman, Ph.D., Director of Research and Evaluation.** Jill will be the project director and primary client liaison, and will provide oversight on all instrument development, will be responsible for all written deliverables, and will oversee quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis.

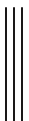
**General Qualifications and Experience:** Management of community strengths and needs assessments, collaborating with multidisciplinary teams, evaluation and research design, quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis.

**Specific Qualifications and Experience:** In addition to being the project lead for the Denver Health and Human Services CSBG Needs Assessment, previous experience includes: conducting demographic and document reviews for clients such as the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Center for Nonprofit Excellence at the Community Foundation for Monterey County; creating and implementing resident surveys and focus groups for the Women's Foundation of Colorado and the Denver Indian Center, Inc.; conducting provider surveys for Oral Health Colorado and Denver Public Schools; supporting community inventory work for the Piton Foundation and The Arts Center at Willits; and producing comprehensive final reports with clear recommendations for future strategy for the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Finance and the Colorado Library Consortium.

**Aaron Schonhoff, M.A., Research and Evaluation Associate.** Aaron will be the primary quantitative research associate on this project. He will manage quantitative data collection, design and analysis.

**General Qualifications and Experience:** Evaluation design, instrument development, quantitative methods and analysis.

**Specific Qualifications and Experience:** As the inaugural research assistant at the Crossley Center for Public Opinion Research, Aaron fine-tuned his understanding of how to turn opinions into actionable data. At JVA, Aaron contributes to the research and evaluation team's efforts through implementing data-driven research and ensuring evaluation efforts are comprehensive and based on measurable outcomes. Aaron has assisted National Civic League's efforts to implement Truth and Racial Healing Transformation principles into its annual All America City programming; he has worked as part of a team in synthesizing input from stakeholders in developing a comprehensive and collaborative strategic plan for Baby Bear Hugs in its efforts to apply for a Colorado LAUNCH Together grant. Aaron has also facilitated meetings and conducted research for the Montbello Organizing Committee's neighborhood research project and analyzed



data for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment around improving WIC user experience and messaging. Additionally, he is a consultant for the Denver Health and Human Services CSBG Needs Assessment.

**Ruth Kebede, B.A, Research and Evaluation Assistant.** Ruth will be a research assistant for this project. She will support quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis.

**General Qualifications and Experience:** Evaluation design, quantitative and qualitative methods and analysis. With a background in psychology, sociology and law enforcement, Ruth works with individuals, organizations and communities to promote social change. Ruth is currently in a Masters of Social Work Program.

**Specific Qualifications and Experience:** Ruth's experience includes: collaborating on research and interviews designed to assess the needs of community members on a project for the Montbello Organizing Committee, developing survey materials for the National Civic League, and synthesizing and analyzing data on behalf of Clínica Tepeyac and Boomers Leading Change in Health. She has also has contributed to research regarding reading and language comprehension, teens in halfway houses, and domestic violence.



### 3. Schedule of Deliverables and Project Approach

The following table provides information detailing key project tasks and subtasks, the anticipated date of submission of each deliverable in terms of weeks from project initiation and formats of each deliverable.

SCHEDULE OF DELIVERABLES	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST
<b>PROJECT MANAGEMENT</b>						
Kickoff Meeting with Community Needs Assessment Project Advisory Committee ( <i>deliverable: finalized work plan</i> )	One week after project start					
Meetings with Community Needs Assessment Project Advisory Committee ( <i>deliverable: status report handout/meeting agenda</i> )	Twice a month for project period					
<b>DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS</b>						
Demographic Data and Document Review ( <i>deliverable: summary to be included in final report</i> )	Four weeks after project start					
Resident Surveys ( <i>deliverables: survey for review, analysis and summary to be included in final report</i> )	Develop	Launch: Five weeks from project start	Close: 11 weeks from project start	Analyze		
Resident Focus Groups ( <i>deliverables: moderator guide for review, analysis and summary to be included in final report</i> )		Start: Seven weeks from project start	End: 12 weeks from project start	Analyze		
Provider Survey ( <i>deliverables: survey for review, analysis and summary to be included in final report</i> )		Develop	Launch: 9 weeks from project start	Close: 13 weeks from project start		
Community Resources and Assets Inventory ( <i>deliverable: interactive map and inventory</i> )				16 weeks after project start		
<b>FINAL REPORT</b>						
Final Report ( <i>deliverables: five bound copies of Community Needs Assessment and a flash drive including appendices and literature review</i> )				16 weeks after project start		
<b>COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN</b>						
Study Session for Community Action Plan and Consultation ( <i>deliverables: meeting agenda, meeting presentation [i.e., a PowerPoint presentation including key findings and recommendations] and meeting notes; ongoing support with development of Community Action Plan</i> )						Complete: 24 weeks from project start



## Project Approach

JVA envisions a community assessment that collaboratively engages Adams County community leaders, stakeholders and residents. Our proposed process and plan will ensure that data is gathered and analyzed to identify the needs, strengths and challenges of low-income individuals in Adams County to identify the causes and conditions of poverty, determine the needs of low-income persons, determine how well the needs of low-income persons are being met, identify organization and client-based barriers to serving residents, identify community strengths and assets, solicit recommendations of solutions to address barriers, identify outcomes for development of a department Community Action Plan, as well as enable a better understanding of the individuals and families that Adams County serves and determine the potential for community partnerships and other opportunities to better serve the community.

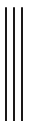
**Kickoff meeting and project communication.** To ensure coordination across all efforts, JVA will assign a project director who will oversee all elements of the assessment and coordinate efforts between JVA and Adams County. JVA will host a kickoff meeting with staff members and other key stakeholders to understand its goals and priorities, review the timeline, as well as provide a detailed overview of the community assessment process. Additionally, JVA will conduct regular phone meetings to review progress with the community needs assessment Project Advisory Committee, identify problems and opportunities, and gather feedback on the project design, instrument development, data collection, and analysis. These status reports will be conducted twice a month.

**Data collection and analysis.** To lay the foundation for the community needs assessment, JVA will work with the Project Advisory Committee to develop clear research questions to guide the program design. JVA anticipates that the following research questions may serve as a foundation for this work:

- What are the characteristics of Adams County's low-income residents?
- What do low-income residents need? What strengths do they possess? What are the key barriers they face? How do these strengths, issues and challenges align with the federal objectives of the CSBG?
- What services and supports are currently provided to low-income residents? How is Adams County meeting the needs of the community? What could be done differently?
- Are there gaps in services and supports, and if so, what are potential solutions?
- What are the transportation and mobility needs within Adams County? Are there ways in which those needs not being met?

To gather and analyze data relevant to these questions, JVA will employ a mixed-method, bilingual approach to data collection and analysis. All data collection instruments will be designed to accurately capture responses from a statistically valid sample of Adams County low-income residents and community service providers for Adams County.

JVA will rely on quantitative and qualitative data collected through a review of existing demographic data and documents and through the implementation and analysis of surveys and focus groups. JVA will pull from these various data collection methods to also identify, map and inventory community resources and assets in target neighborhoods by using existing data, reports, maps and survey findings gathered within the last year.





**Demographic data and document review.** JVA will examine demographic data through sources such as the U.S. Census and American Community Survey to better understand Adams County residents. Examples of data that will be examined include income, insurance, housing, employment, ethnicity, age and education. Additionally, JVA will work with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment to obtain data pertaining to types of services available for low-income residents (such as Medicaid and nutrition services) and the extent to which they are utilized. JVA will also examine relevant data currently collected by Adams County. Furthermore, JVA will ascertain geographic areas with high populations of low-income residents to better inform data collection through the other methods. JVA will additionally review existing reports and studies that have been completed recently about Adams County's low-income residents to build on existing knowledge and resources.

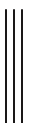
**Resident survey.** JVA will develop and administer a survey instrument for Adams County residents to get their direct feedback about their needs and challenges, the services and supports that they utilize and access, and the extent to which services, specifically those offered by the County, are meeting their needs. JVA will rely on our deep community connections to disseminate in-person and online surveys to residents. JVA proposes administering surveys in-person to low-income residents through the following methods: on-site at Adams County Human Services Department and through online and paper surveys distributed in partnership with community organizations that JVA has existing relationships with, such as Cultivando, Kids First Health Care, Stout Street Foundation, Community Housing Partners and Mile High Behavioral Healthcare. JVA will ensure the survey is available in both English and Spanish and is culturally responsive to Adams County residents. To disseminate the Spanish version of the survey, JVA will promote the survey using social media and in collaboration with community-based organizations serving Spanish individuals and families in Adams County. These partners will be offered a financial incentive to share the survey with those that they serve.

**Resident focus groups.** JVA will conduct six (6) focus groups with Adams County residents to collect in-depth qualitative feedback about their needs and challenges, the services they utilize, community strengths and assets, and how the County and other community agencies can better address their needs. Focus groups will be offered in both English (4) and Spanish (2), and JVA will design recruitment to attract a diverse range of individuals representing different racial and ethnic backgrounds, ages, family compositions, and areas of residency within Adams County. Focus groups will last approximately one and one-half hours and will be facilitated by one of JVA's facilitators. JVA will also provide a note taker. JVA will ensure that transportation and mobility needs are taken into account when selecting focus group sites. JVA will provide refreshments appropriate to the time of day for participants, onsite childcare, as well as a \$30 gift card to a local grocery store as an incentive.

**Provider survey.** JVA will develop a survey for community agencies providing services to low-income residents to better understand the agencies' services and gaps as well as possible solutions to address barriers. The survey will be administered online and JVA will collaborate with Adams County to identify appropriate agencies for the survey and to compile email addresses.

**Community inventory.** JVA will work with Adams County to identify relevant existing data, reports, maps and survey findings to compile and inform the development of a community resources and assets map and inventory. This inventory will be interactive, so stakeholders can focus on target neighborhoods and/or sort by specific service area.

**Data analysis.** JVA's professional research and evaluation team also conducts all of its data analysis to ensure proper use of methods for data gathered. Specific quantitative techniques include, but are not limited to, descriptive, univariate and multivariate analyses and interpretation, including factor analysis,

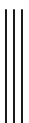


scale reliability, ANOVA, ANCOVA, MANOVA, MANCOVA, multiple linear regression, logistic regression, and structural equation modeling and path analysis. Qualitative analysis techniques include thematic pattern matching, content analysis and grounded theory analysis.

The data collection tools will be specifically created with the nine federal objectives of the CSBG in mind, so that the overall assessment will enable the County to examine issues and challenges facing the community and make informed decisions in the development and improvement of services in a manner aligned with the needs and priorities of community members and service providers. JVA will review all forms of data collected through the assessment and analyze the data using the professional research strategies. JVA will triangulate the data to summarize findings and draw conclusions. JVA will use the information collected, and the feedback gathered from Adams County residents and key leaders, to inform conclusions and recommendations. This approach will ensure that the data is being connected to the need in an informed and comprehensive way.

**Final Report and Community Action Plan.** The CSBG needs assessment will be analyzed and the results of the assessment will be presented in a final report. JVA will synthesize all information gathered for a final report to the County and summarize data analysis results. This report will provide guidance on the next steps that the County can take to assist government agencies, nonprofits, and community members in improving services to residents. The report will also examine the needs identified specifically by low-income residents, potential gaps in services, opportunities for service improvement and needs identified in low-income neighborhoods. The recommendations in the report will be based on the data accumulated. The report will go through JVA's content review and editing system before being sent to the County for one round of feedback. JVA will incorporate this feedback and finalize the report.

Upon completion of the final report, JVA will facilitate an action planning study session to support the development the Adams County Community Action Plan. This will allow the Board of County Commissioners to make decisions about how to address the needs of low-income residents and how to prioritize current challenges facing the Adams County community.



#### 4. Exhibits

The work that we do for clients is always confidential. However, some clients have allowed us to share their reports at the following link: <https://joiningvisionandaction.com/reports-publications/>

**Especially of note are the following projects:**

[Montbello Market Scan](#) for the Montbello Organizing Committee

[Reducing Food Waste in Denver](#) for the Natural Resource Defense Council

[Community Assessment of Latino Older Adults](#) for Colorado Latino Age Wave

[The Aspen to Parachute Cradle to Career Initiative](#) for Aspen Community Foundation

[Opportunity Youth in Denver: Environmental Scan](#) for Rose Community Foundation

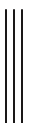
[Client Correspondence Research Findings \(Phase One\)](#) Report for the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, Colorado Department of Humans Services, Connect for Health Colorado and the Governor's Office of Information Technology

Throughout much of its work, JVA also brings **multi-lingual competency**. JVA is particularly skilled in tailoring surveys and their administration to reach diverse constituencies. JVA has regularly conducted bilingual and multicultural outreach and evaluation. For example, in order to develop a market scan for the Montbello Organizing Committee, evaluators made sure to engage with Montbello's large Latino community for neighborhood insights. For Rose Community Foundation's Opportunity Youth project, JVA engaged with Denver's young people to explore the experiences of the population, of which a significant cohort spoke Spanish. JVA's work with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment on WIC usage gathered feedback from Spanish speakers through both a statewide survey and focus groups. For both the Colorado Latino Age Wave and California Latino Age Wave, JVA engaged in community assessments of Latino Older Adults, many of whom spoke Spanish as a primary language. As part of the Aspen Community Foundation's *Cradle to Career Initiative*, JVA surveyed 100 Spanish-speaking individuals working in Aspen's ski and tourist industry by riding the bus from Aspen to Parachute with them. Multi-lingual and multi-cultural research is integral to JVA's community engagement, and is critical to understanding diverse communities in places like Colorado and beyond.

**In addition to the above reports, the following examples** illustrate JVA's strong ability to create comprehensive and useful products for diverse populations and within the CSBG federal objectives:

**Education.** JVA has a long-standing relationship with Denver Public Schools (DPS) and completed a five-year evaluation of the Urban Principal Leadership Program. JVA has also supported the work of programs serving specific demographics, such as the Asian Pacific Development program and English language learners. These projects included the collection and analysis of current secondary student-level data, as well as primary data collected from principals, teachers, counselors and parents (2015).

**Emergency Services.** In addition to its work supporting Denver Health and Human Services, JVA has supported Focus Points Family Resource Center and Mile High United Way, and emergency health and behavioral healthcare providers such as Clínica Tepeyac and Mile High Behavioral Health Care. Data for this work was gathered from beneficiaries, organizational partners and secondary data sources.



**Employment.** JVA has provided services to organizations working on employment and workforce development, such as Denver Office of Economic Development, Denver Indian Center and Work Options for Women. Data sources (2016) have included direct feedback from program participants and from community stakeholders through facilitated meetings and focus groups.

**Health.** JVA has worked with organizations addressing health and healthcare needs of low-income residents, including Clínica Tepeyac, the Center for African American Health, Tri-County Health Department and Colorado Access. Data gathered through these efforts was sourced from the U.S. Census (2010-2015) coupled with original data collection through surveys, focus groups and interviews.

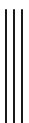
**Housing.** JVA has worked with organizations such as Brothers Redevelopment, Inc. and Habitat for Humanity of Pueblo. These projects have entailed gathering current data from community stakeholders, staff and board members to inform strategic directions and services provided by the organizations.

**Income Management.** This work of strategic guidance and consultation is fundamental to all of JVA's work to help its clients succeed, sustain and scale. JVA does this through all of its planning engagements, including to the City and County of Denver (though facilitated strategic grants planning, fundraising governance committee participation, and facilitated capital projects prioritization work).

**Linkages with other programs.** JVA has provided services to The Women's Foundation of Colorado, Baby Bear Hugs and Adams County to identify and map access and use of resources and services. Data for this work was gathered from beneficiaries, organizational partners and secondary data sources to create current geographic profiles and identify demographic trends (e.g., U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2007 through 2015, Colorado State Demography Office Forecasts 2014, KidsCount Data Center 2016).

**Nutrition.** JVA has worked with CDPHE, Re:Vision, the Montbello community and the Larimer County Office on Aging to address issues of nutrition and hunger for low-income families and individuals. Data sources for this work include original data collection from community members through surveys and focus groups, as well as data analyzed from the Data Initiatives Denver Metro database 2014 and the U.S. Census.

**Self-sufficiency.** JVA has worked with organizations working to ensure self-sufficiency, including WorkLife Partnership, the Denver Indian Center and the Denver Department of Human Services. These projects have collected original data through surveys and focus groups from community stakeholders and program participants and incorporated demographic data and trends from a number of reports published between 2010 and 2014 (e.g., CDPHE, Colorado Fiscal Institute, and City of Denver's Agency for Human Rights and Community Relations).



## 5. References

**Catherine Cox Blair**, Senior Policy Advocate, Urban Solutions  
**Natural Resources Defense Council**  
[ccoxblair@nrdc.org](mailto:ccoxblair@nrdc.org), (303) 861-1420

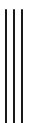
In 2016, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) engaged with JVA to facilitate stakeholder conversations to convene strategic partners, including Denver's Mayoral staff, food policy council members, city council members and local practitioners to gain consensus and create collaborative strategies on how to reduce, rescue and recycle otherwise wasted food in Denver.

**Julie Hinkson**, Former chair of the CSBG advisor committee for Mesa County and Executive Director  
**United Way of Mesa County**  
[julie@uwmesacounty.org](mailto:julie@uwmesacounty.org), 970.243.5364

In 2015, JVA supported Mesa County Department of Human Services' allocation of Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) funding by developing an allocation strategy, informed by literature review, policy, demographic and programs research, interviews and meetings with the community, committees and businesses that focused on early childhood literacy needs for children and families living in poverty. These efforts yielded a CSBG grant plan for the Mesa County Department of Human Services.

**Ben Levek**, Grants Manager  
**Denver Department of Human Services**  
[Ben.Levak@denvergov.org](mailto:Ben.Levak@denvergov.org), 720.944.2875

In 2012, JVA conducted a study for the Denver Department of Human Services (DDHS) Community Services Block Grant Program. For this work, JVA engaged with low-income community members to discover the needs, resources and gaps of services they experience, and in turn made recommendations for how the city could improve this population's information of, access to, and reception of services. DDHS has reengaged with JVA to do this work again in 2017.



## **APPENDIX: RESUMES**



## **JILL IMAN, Ph.D.**

*Joining Vision and Action, LLC, 2465 Sheridan Blvd., Denver, CO 80214, 303-477-4896*

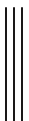
### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

#### **Director of Research, Evaluation and Implementation Science, Joining Vision and Action (JVA), 2014–present**

Utilizes research and evaluation to inform JVA's areas of practice and client work, integrating best practices and basic research into work. Provides expertise in research design, survey methodology and quantitative and qualitative analysis. Focuses on synthesizing data to identify implications for strategy, concentrating on tangible takeaways for programmatic implementation and organizational capacity. Manages and collaborates on multiple short-term and long-term projects, including outcome and process evaluations, business, communications and strategic planning, community needs assessment and feasibility research.

### SAMPLE ENGAGEMENTS

- Lead consultant, **Second Acts for Strong Communities, Alliance for Strong Families and Communities (ASFC)**—managing the development and implementation of an evaluation designed to assess the impact of a national effort across 10 organizations incorporating Second Act talent (aka Encore talent) into nonprofit workforces.
- Lead consultant, **The Center for Nonprofit Excellence (CNE) at The Community Foundation for Monterey County**—Developing a comprehensive evaluation system and guide designed to enable CNE to conduct ongoing process and outcome evaluation examining organizational impact on the capacity of the nonprofit community in the Monterey Bay Region.
- Lead researcher, **The Women's Foundation of Colorado (WFCO)**—conducted research for a year-long strategic planning process by creating four different tools designed to gather feedback on challenges and assets from underrepresented voices around the state, key informants, organizational stakeholders and board members. Analyzed data using an intersectional lens to identify specific areas for WFCO's focus.
- Lead consultant, **Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE)**—managed statewide project to collect feedback through surveys and focus groups on current use of nutrition programs among lower income families. Analyzed data to identify challenges and barriers to use and access, evaluate current knowledge and awareness, perceived value of participation and implications for communication strategy.
- Lead researcher, **Early Milestones Colorado**—informed strategic and business planning through data collection and analysis designed to examine similar and dissimilar operating models and to gather feedback from a diverse set of key local, state and national stakeholders.
- Lead researcher, **Education Commission of the States (ECS)**—facilitated stakeholder feedback process designed to gather input from staff, national commissioners and organizational competitors on information relevant to the formation of ECS' strategic plan.
- Lead consultant, **Denver Indian Center, Inc. (DICI)**—designed comprehensive evaluation plan and data collection tools for a five-year, federally funded Responsible Fatherhood grant in close collaboration with the Native community. Managing ongoing tool implementation, analysis and reporting.





- Lead consultant, **Colorado Child Care Contribution Tax Credit (CCTC)**— managed a year-long project focused on developing messaging to increase statewide usage of the CCTC. Coordinated development and implementation of several data collection tools including focus groups, interview protocols and surveys, designed to determine most effective messaging with diverse stakeholders. Created strategic communications report, and managed coalition of state leaders through implementation of recommended strategies.
- Lead consultant, **Re:Vision**—directed a multi-year, federally grant-funded project designed to assess the impact of Re:Vision’s gardening and farming programs on families that reside within a low-income community. Collaborated on implementation and analysis of annual data collected via focus groups and surveys.

## EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

- Research and policy analyst, **U.S. Senator Michael F. Bennet**, Denver, CO, 2013–2014. Managed the development and implementation of a project examining the effectiveness of federal funding designed to meet the needs of children from low income families, as well as issues affecting access to and use of these programs. Engaged community partners and a broad range of stakeholders to better meet the needs of children across multiple domains, including early childhood and K-12 education, health and mental health, and housing and homelessness.
- Research lab leader, doctoral student and college course instructor, **University of Michigan**, Ann Arbor, MI, 2008–2013. Led and organized a sustaining lab group composed of students and volunteers to work on a consistent body of research for five years. Collaborated on several cross-discipline projects and conducted independent research. Completed advanced coursework in research design and statistical analysis. Taught five courses at the University of Michigan and served as a visiting professor at Colorado College.
- Policy fellow, **U.S. Senator Michael F. Bennet**, Denver, CO, 2012. Devised and implemented statewide survey examining student veteran education benefit experiences; provided recommendations for future policies. Produced issue briefs for Senator Bennet and senate staff; drafted talking points and senate memorandums.

## EDUCATION

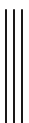
**Ph.D., Social Psychology**, University of Michigan, 2013

**Master of Science, Psychology**, University of Michigan, 2010

**Bachelor of Arts, Psychology**, Colorado College, 2008

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- Associate board member, Women Employed, Chicago, 2016-2017
- Tutor, Tutoring Chicago, Chicago, 2016-2017
- Volunteer, Women’s Treatment Center, Chicago, 2015-2016
- Volunteer, The Crossing, Denver, 2014-2015



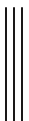


## MEMBERSHIPS

American Evaluation Association

## SELECT PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

- “Beyond assessing effectiveness: Using mixed-methods evaluation to inform strategy across disciplines.” Presentation to the annual meeting of the American Evaluation Association, Atlanta, GA, 2016.
- “Expanding the Promotora Model—Integrating Evaluation into Communities through Collaboration.” Presentation to the annual meeting of the American Evaluation Association, Chicago, IL, 2015.
- Facilitator, “Advocacy and Policy Primer,” training session, JVA, 2015.
- Facilitator, “Incorporating Advocacy”, “Advocacy and Policy Primer” and “Goal Setting and Action Planning” training sessions, JVA, 2015-2016.
- LaCosse, J., Sekaquaptewa, D., & Bennett Iman, J. (2016). STEM stereotypic attribution bias among women in an unwelcoming science setting. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 40, 378-397.
- Bennett Iman, J. & Sekaquaptewa, D. (2014). Setting an egalitarian social norm in the classroom: Improving attitudes towards diversity among male engineering students. *Social Psychology of Education*, 17, 343-355.
- Bennett Iman, J. (2013). Social class identity: The role of identity changeability perceptions on the relationship between beliefs about intelligence and stereotype-relevant outcomes. Deep Blue, University of Michigan Dissertations.



## Ruth Kebede, B.A.

*Joining Vision and Action, LLC, 2465 Sheridan Blvd., Denver, CO 80214, 303-477-4896*

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

#### **Evaluation Associate, Joining Vision and Action, May 2015-Present**

Assist in providing research and interview strategies.

### SAMPLE ENGAGEMENTS

- Research Associate, **Montbello Organizing Committee**, Montbello Community. Collaborated research and interviews to assess the needs of community members for increasing food markets and retail in the community.
- Evaluation associate, **National Civic League**. Recreated a survey to assess the change in awareness of individuals attending a conference.
- Research Associate, **Douglas County Library**. Identified available grants and best practices for an online career high school.

### EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

- MSW Inter/Case Manager, **The Action Center**, Denver, CO, 2015-2016. Developed goals and pathways to self-sufficiency based on the needs and requests of a client as their Pathway case manager.
- Sr. Phone Support Consultant, **University Technology Services (UTS)**, Denver, CO, 2014-Present. Assist members of the University of Denver community in troubleshooting problems with their computers and network connections.
- Research Assistant, **DU Psychology Department**, Denver, CO, 2013-2015. Collaborated research for presentations, analyzed, transcribed, coded and filed records for genetic reading and language comprehension of twins, and prepared testing environments.
- Intern Representative, **Southwest Gas Corporation**, Las Vegas, NV, 2011. Organized focus groups for satisfaction of services, and managed press releases.

### EDUCATION

**Master of Social Work**, Organization Leadership, 2015-Present

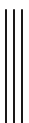
Graduate School of Social Work, University of Denver, Denver, CO

**Bachelor of Arts, Psychology and Sociology**, 2015

University of Denver, Denver, CO

### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Ethiopian Community Fellowship Church



## AARON SCHONHOFF, M.A.

*Joining Vision and Action, LLC, 2465 Sheridan Blvd., Denver, CO 80214, 303-477-4896*

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

#### **Research and Evaluation Associate, Joining Vision and Action, April 2016–Present**

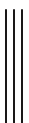
Provides data-driven research and evaluation best-practices so that JVA clients can maximize their social impact

### SAMPLE ENGAGEMENTS

- Evaluation associate. Designing and building an evaluation system to help the **Center for Nonprofit Excellence at the Community Foundation of Monterey County** monitor, in real time, their progress and inform future improvements to their service offerings.
- Evaluation associate. Assisting in designing and implementing an ongoing national evaluation for the **Alliance for Strong Families** to extract best practices in including older adults as a viable human capital strategy for nonprofits.
- Project lead. Collected, analyzed and synthesized data from both survey and focus groups regarding the **Douglas County Library's** redesigned website.
- Evaluation associate. Assisted in collecting, analyzing and synthesizing data from the **Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing** project to improve client correspondence.
- Associate consultant. Providing support and expertise in updating and analyzing the **National Civic League's** efforts to implement and evaluate efforts to incorporate Truth and Racial Healing Transformation principles into its annual All America City programming.
- Evaluation associate. Assisted in facilitating meetings and conducting research for the **Montbello Organizing Committee's** neighborhood research project.
- Associate consultant. Worked as part of a team in synthesizing input from stakeholders in developing a comprehensive and collaborative strategic plan for **Baby Bear Hugs** in their efforts to apply for a Colorado LAUNCH Together grant.
- Associate consultant. Analyzed data for the **Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment** to facilitate discussions around improving the WIC programs user experience and messaging.

### EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

- Research Assistant, **Crossley Center for Public Opinion Research: University of Denver**, September 2013-June 2015. Inaugural research assistant. Worked as part of a team in: establishing fledgling program; conducting research; and presenting findings at conferences.
- Teacher, **Malcom Price Laboratory School: Iowa's Research, Development, Demonstration, and Dissemination School at the University of Northern Iowa**, August 2010–May 2012. Taught secondary social science courses, mentored pre-service teachers, assisted in planning and conducting research regarding technology in the classroom.



EDUCATION

**Master of Arts, International Studies, 2015**

Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver, Denver, CO

**Bachelor of Science, History and Secondary Education**

Iowa State University, Ames, IA

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Iowa Special Olympics, Summer Games volunteer, 2007-2010. Gold-medal winning soccer team coach, 2011-2013; soccer skills coach, 2015.



## B. Project Cost Proposal

### 1. Estimates of hours to be worked and hourly rates for each staff or classification of staff to be assigned to the project

The budget below includes the following rates and estimated hours to be worked:

Staff Classification	Estimated Project Hours	Project Rate
Project director	76 hours	\$125/hour
Quantitative researcher	140 hours	\$100/hour
Qualitative researcher	150 hours	\$95/hour
Research assistant	140 hours	\$50/hour
Administrative coordinator	26 hours	\$50/hour
Editor	10 hours	\$95/hour

### 2. Estimates of direct (mileage, printing, etc.) and indirect costs

Estimated <b>direct costs</b> (to include: food for focus groups at \$150 per group [including Action Plan meeting], gift cards for focus group participation at \$30 per participant, child care for focus groups at \$200 per group, survey incentive at \$500, survey recruitment and marketing [including partner payments] at \$4,485, mileage at \$105)	\$9,500
Estimated <b>indirect costs</b> (outlined in greater detail below)	\$47,000

### 3. Project total

ACTIVITY	COST
Kickoff Meeting and Project Communication	\$6,800
Demographic and Document Review	\$3,900
Resident Survey	\$9,400
Resident Focus Groups	\$7,300
Provider Survey	\$2,300
Community Resources and Assets Inventory	\$3,350
Final Report	\$10,950
Community Action Plan Study Session (and ongoing support)	\$3,000
Direct Costs (outlined above)	\$9,500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$56,500</b>



# Client Correspondence Research Findings (Phase One)



Report for the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF), Colorado Department of Humans Services (CDHS), Connect for Health Colorado (C4) and the Governor's Office of Information Technology (OIT)

Prepared by Joining Vision and Action (JVA)

May 18, 2016

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# Introduction

## Background

In March 2016, the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF), Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), Connect for Health Colorado (C4) and the Governor's Office of Information Technology (OIT) contracted with Joining Vision and Action (JVA) to conduct an evaluation of the current client correspondence letters that are sent throughout Colorado, reporting on the essential status of food assistance and medical assistance. These letters, the Notice of Action (NOA), the Income and Eligibility verification System (IEVS), the Redetermination/Recertification Notice (RRR) and the Verification Checklist (VCL) were provided to JVA as template letters that are often used in client correspondence. The team of HCPF, CDHS, C4 and OIT recognized the need for updated letters that reflect desired changes by those who see them (the end-user/reader) and those who are set to help them across the state (stakeholders).

In this phase of the research, the team partnered with JVA for Phase One—to gather valuable input from stakeholders on these particular letter-types in order to ensure future communication sent through the state is more accessible, understood by more individuals, and leads to less confusion and more action. The main aspects that were examined were:

- Readability
  - Defined as the words used are easy to understand, sentences are easy to understand, concepts are familiar to readers, enough (but not excessive) text provided
- Navigation and Layout
  - Defined as the introduction, instructions, clearly defined sections, font size and type, visual layout (whitespace and images) that help the reader better understand the content of the letter
- Tone and Usability
  - Defined as a friendly tone, clearly describing next steps, appeals and legal section clarity (NOA only), culturally appropriate

## Research Methods

JVA utilized the following methods for this phase of the research, details of which follows by research type.

- Key informant interviews
- Client and User Integrative Project Team (IPT) meeting
- Stakeholder survey

### *Key Informant Interviews*

Ten key informant interviews were hosted as a way to reach targeted individuals that could speak to the strengths and weaknesses of the various correspondence types.

These individuals were identified by the key workgroup of representatives from HCPF, C4, OIT and CDHS. The goals for the interviews were to evaluate overall perceptions of client correspondence, gather feedback on client correspondence challenges, and identify key areas for improvement and potential modifications

### **Interview Protocol**

The project team helped with the identification and recruitment of the 10 interviews. The interviews were scheduled for 30 minutes between April 18-28, 2016. These conversations were recorded and a detailed summary was created for each interview (see Appendix C for the summary report). The interviews were semi-structured, with the same questions asked to each interviewee, while maintaining an emphasis on flexibility that allows for adjustments based on different perspectives and enables the interviewer to draw out items that are of particular interest to certain respondents based on their expertise.

Ten (10) interviews consisted of:

- 3 county directors
- 1 Healthy Communities or medical assistance site lead
- 1 Connect for Health Colorado assistance site lead/broker
- 1 CDHS county food assistance team lead
- 1 CDHS county cash assistance team lead
- 1 Spanish-speaking assistance site leader
- 1 member of the legislature
- 1 legal advocacy organization representative

### ***Client and User Integrative Project Team Meeting (IPT)***

On May 4, 2016, JVA hosted approximately 40 IPT members in a solutions-focused stakeholder meeting. This meeting was facilitated in a “world café” style to ensure all participants were able to contribute ideas and create a feeling of agreement on the client correspondence suggestions. This method utilized the stakeholder’s experience and expertise to come up with specific recommendations for improvement. See Appendix D for the summary of this meeting.

### ***Stakeholder Surveys***

The stakeholder survey was designed to reach out to the statewide stakeholders in an efficient manner and gather their input on their perceptions and experiences with the client eligibility correspondence. Hosted by JVA, this survey was conducted online only and remained confidential for all participants. The survey was specifically looking at how to improve the language, look and feel of these letters. The survey was directed to brokers, certified application counselors, consumer advocates, County Departments of Social/Human Services, customer service agents, health coverage guides, Medical Assistance Sites, State agency employees (HCPF, CDHS, OIT), state workforce training center employees and other stakeholder with an interest in correspondence.

## Survey Protocol

The online survey remained open for about two weeks during April 2016 (April 14-28), and participants were recruited through direct outreach from HCPF, CDHS, C4 and OIT. HCPF and partners estimate that approximately 10,000 individuals comprise the total population who could have provided input on the survey (e.g., are consumer advocates, health coverage guides or work in a county department of social/human services; see below for sample breakdown). This means that with a sample of 635 participants completing the majority of the survey, the response rate had a  $\pm 3.76$  confidence interval, a more than acceptable range for this type of research.<sup>1</sup>

## Survey Response

The survey was opened 990 times, however, 44 of those did not answer any of the questions resulting a final sample of  $n = 946$ . Importantly, the survey was structured so that all participants saw and responded to feedback questions on the NOA first, followed in order by the IEVS, the RRR and the VCL. This order meant that many people responded to the NOA, but that participation tended to decrease on each of the following client correspondence types. Of those that took the survey, 807 responded to quantitative questions regarding the NOA, 689 responded to the IEVS quantitative questions, 666 to the questions about the RRR, and 635 to the VCL quantitative questions.<sup>2</sup> This suggests that about 67% of respondents completed the entire survey.

## Demographic Information

As part of the survey, participants were asked several questions designed to understand the perspective from which they were providing feedback on the client correspondence types and to allow for the analysis of potential differences between groups on their perceptions of the correspondence types.

### *Colorado Benefits Management System*

Participants were asked to indicate whether they directly used the Colorado Benefits Management System (CBMS) in their work. Of those that responded, 78.1% indicated that they did use CBMS directly in their work

### *Relationship to Client Correspondence*

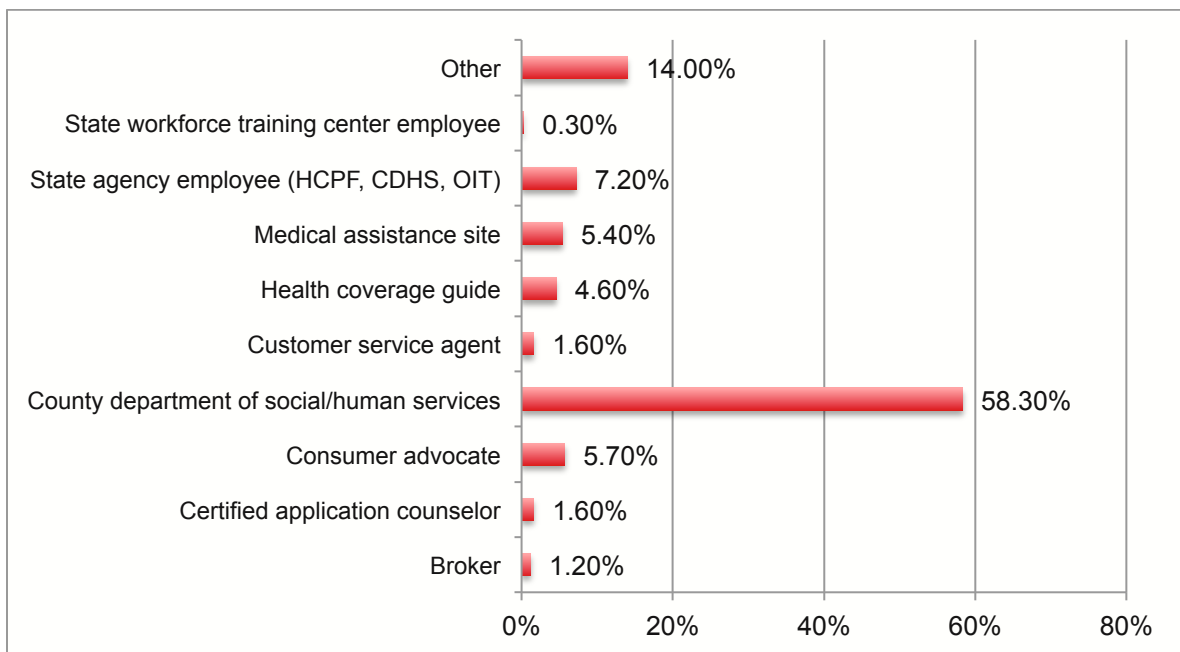
Participants were asked to indicate their relationship to the NOA, the IEVS, the RRR and the VCL (see Figure 1). More than half of respondents (58.3%) indicated that they worked at a county department of social/human services.

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<sup>1</sup> This confidence interval means that percentages included in this report can be understood to be within  $\pm 3.76\%$  of the response rate (i.e., margin of error is  $\pm 3.76\%$ ).

<sup>2</sup> With multiple quantitative questions per letter-type, this number represents the highest number of respondents. Some questions by letter had fewer responses.

Figure 1: Participant Relationship to Client Correspondences



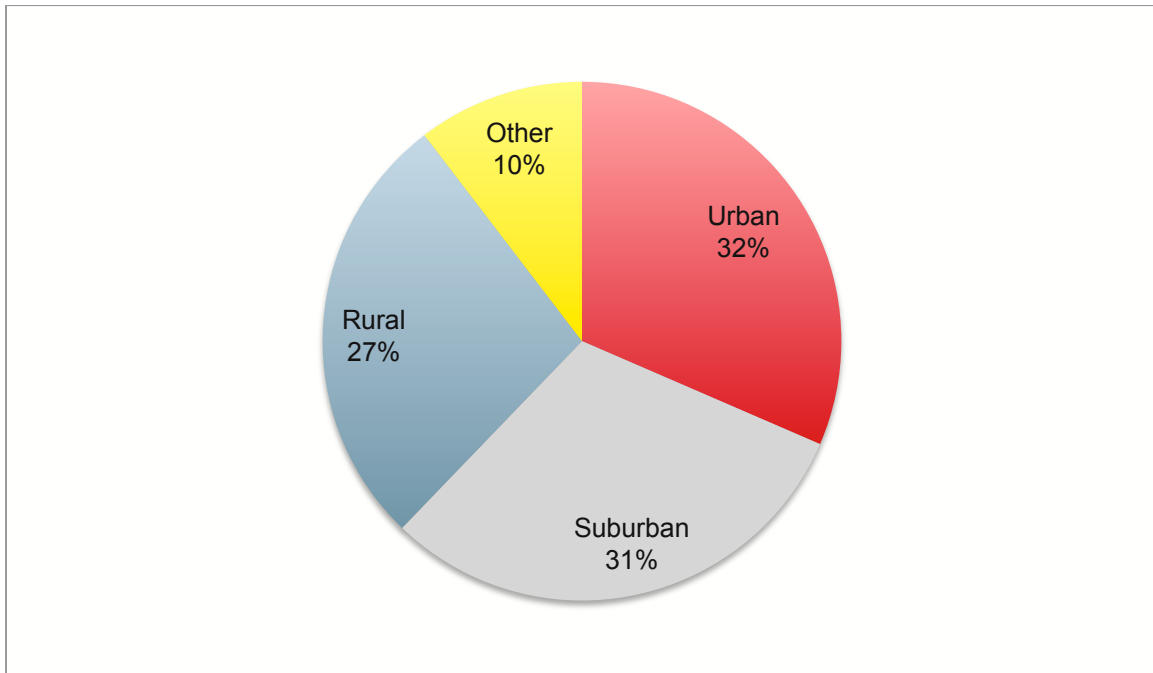
Respondents who indicated other (n = 132) most frequently mentioned:

- Another state partner (i.e., outreach) (20)
- Community organizations/nonprofits (15)
- Health advocates or family caregivers (15)
- Eligibility technicians, specialists, trainers (13)
- Other county employees (e.g., receptionists, workforce development) (13)
- Health care providers (e.g., nurses, hospitals) (10)
- Case managers/workers (9)
- Recipients/clients (7)

### *Geography*

Participants were also asked to describe the area development where the majority of their clients live (e.g., urban, suburban, rural or other). Responses indicate a pretty even split, such that 31.5% indicated that their clients live in an urban area, 30.7% indicated that they live in a suburban area, 27.4% reported that they live in a rural area and 10.4% selected “other” (see Figure 2). Those that indicated other largely selected that they served a mixed population (e.g., “urban and rural,” “statewide,” “all of the above”).

Figure 2: Geography of Clients



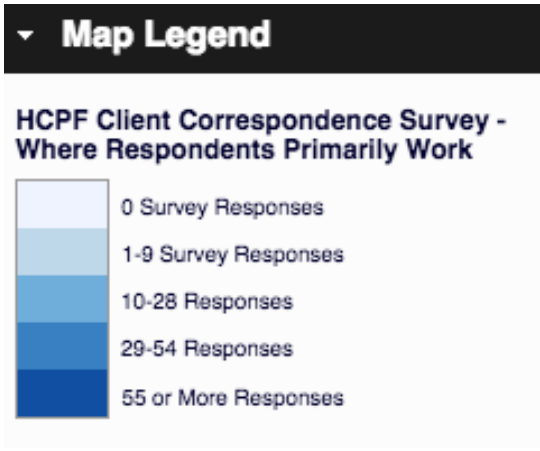
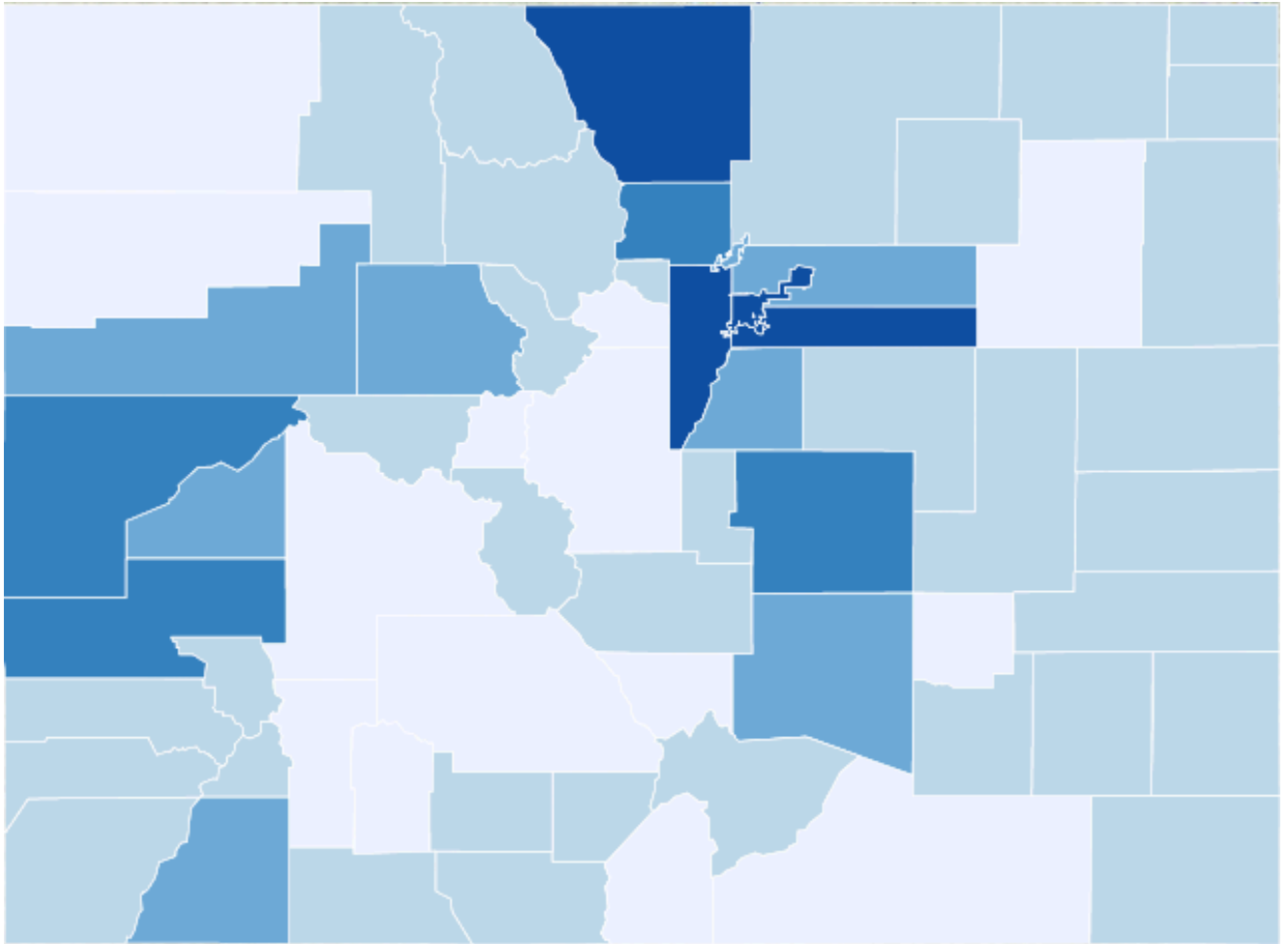
#### By County

- Participants were also asked to indicate in which county do the majority of their clients live (see Figure 3 on the following page for a heat map of responses). Regions were defined as the following, based on the breakdown provided by Colorado Counties, Inc. (CCI)<sup>3</sup>
- Eastern: Cheyenne, Elbert, Kit Carson, Lincoln, Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, Yuma
- Front Range: Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, El Paso, Jefferson, Larimer, Weld
- Mountain: Chaffee, Clear Creek, Custer, Eagle, Fremont, Gilpin, Grand, Jackson, Lake, Park, Pitkin, Teller, Summit
- Southern: Alamosa, Baca, Bent, Conejos, Costilla, Crowley, Huerfano, Kiowa, Las Animas, Mineral, Otero, Prowers, Pueblo, Rio Grande, Saguache
- Western: Archuleta, Delta, Dolores, Garfield, Gunnison, Hinsdale, L Plata, Mesa, Moffat, Montezuma, Montrose, Ouray, Rio Blanco, Routt, San Juan and San Miguel

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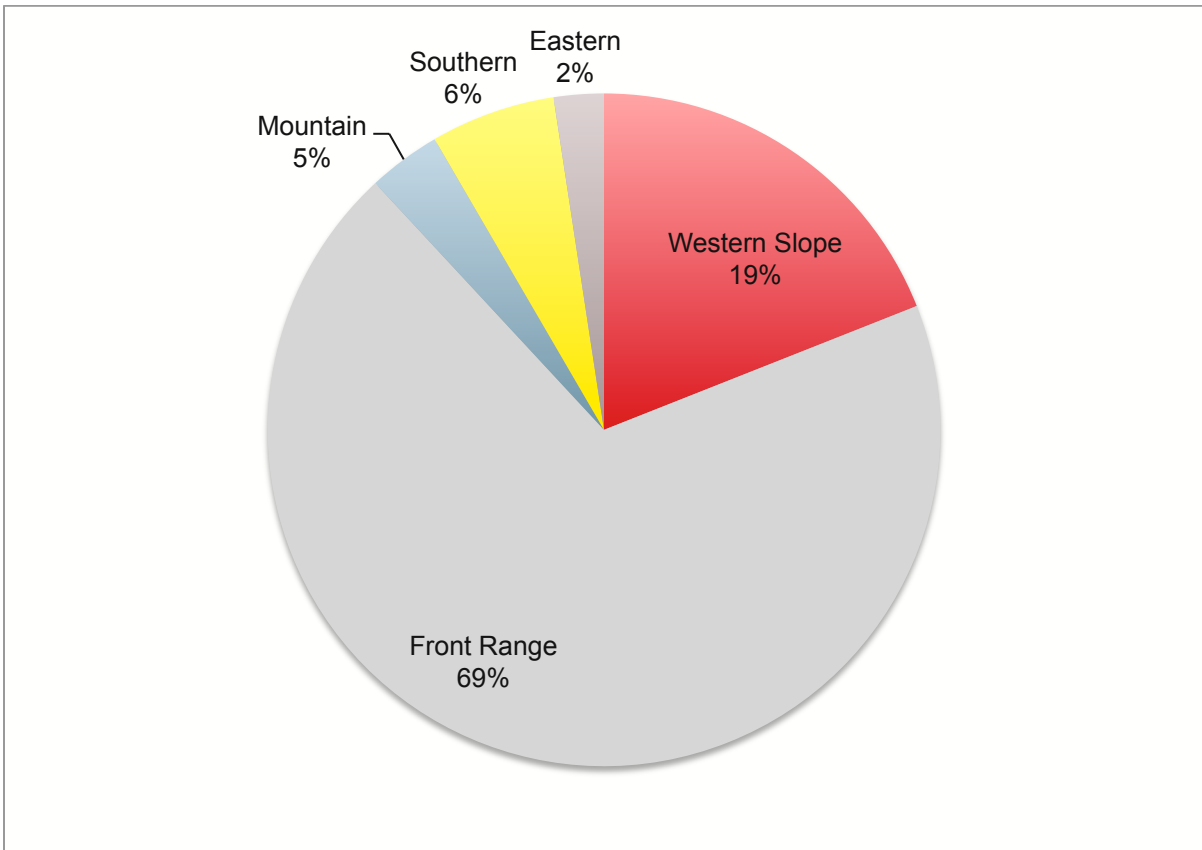
<sup>3</sup> Colorado Counties, Inc. *Five District Map*. Retrieved from: <http://ccionline.org/ccj/district-officers/>

Figure 3: Colorado County of Clients



Additionally, using the district breakdown by CCI to group respondents into Colorado regions suggests strong representation of those working primarily with Front Range clients and with Western Slope clients (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Colorado Region of Clients



*Frequency of Confusion on Communications*

Additionally, participants were asked to indicate 1) approximately how many Medicaid, Child Health Plan *Plus*, Food Assistance or Cash Assistance clients they meet with or communicate with in an average month, and 2) how many of those clients that they meet or communicate with are confused by an eligibility correspondence letter.

Regarding the number of average monthly clients, the most frequent response was 100 (n = 93) and the average response was about 416. However, 75% had less than 150 clients and 98% had less than 1,000 clients, suggesting a couple of extreme outliers (e.g., 80,000 and 150,000). Similarly, the most frequent response for how many clients are confused was actually 0 (n = 87), followed by 10 (n = 77), with an average response of about 109 clients. However, 75% of respondent reported a number less than 51.5 clients and 98% responded with a number less than 400.

As the average responses above appear do not clearly represent what is happening for most individuals (when it comes to their clients having confusion on the letters), another tactic was used: a percentage of clients experiencing confusion. This percentage was

calculated by taking the number of clients confused divided by number of clients overall.<sup>4</sup> Overall, the average rate of client's confusion was 46.5%, with the most frequent result actually being a report of 100% (n =113). Twenty-five percent of respondents indicated a frequency of less than 20%, and 75% of respondents indicated a frequency of less than 75%.

## Reoccurring Themes (Across Letters)

Each correspondence letter was individually tested using all research tools. However, there were a variety of issue factors that spanned across all letters, and thus, there are recommendations that apply to all of the letters. This section highlights the key areas that, regardless of letter type, need to be addressed. See Table 1 for an overview of key issues and recommendations.

### Overall Issue Areas

The three issues that span across letter-types focus on the readability, the navigation and layout, and the tone and usability of the letters.

#### *Readability*

Primarily, the **literacy level of the letters is too high**, with numerous statements suggesting the letters would be better at a sixth grade reading level. Other ways in which literacy level becomes too high is by the amount of **lengthy sentences and unnecessary verbiage**. Readability will improve across all levels with an intense focus on easing the reading level.

**Inconsistent use of terminology** is an additional factor that negatively affects all letters' readability. For example, "Medicaid" vs. "Medical assistance"; "CDLE" vs. "CDOLE"; and "effective date" vs. "application date" vs. "coverage start date."

#### *Navigation and Layout*

When it comes to the navigation and layout of the letters, **there is too much difference in how each letter utilizes consistent organization and formatting**. For example, if a desirable "grid" view in the NOA is agreed upon, that grid should be used in other letter types. Similarly, if bold letters show the next steps/action items, each letter should utilize that. Wherever possible, consistency is desired.

Also related to layout is the notion **that the purpose and call to action are not always at the start of the letter, but often pages behind**. In some documents, this is better than others, but clarity for the reader on what this letter is about and what needs to be done next should be visible at the front.

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<sup>4</sup> This calculation revealed that eight respondents indicated a rate of greater than 100%, and so were excluded.



### *Tone and Usability*

A common issue affecting the tone and usability of the correspondence is that there are often **unclear calls to action**. Similar to the above two categories (readability and navigation/layout), by simplifying the call to action, the letters will be less intimidating to the reader. Also, **when there is too much legal information such as rules, appeals, etc.**, readers can become scared or misinterpret the letters.

## **Overall Recommendations**

### *Readability*

To attain a lower literacy level, the following recommendations are suggested:

- A consistent font size (12) is used throughout all letters
- A sixth grade reading level is recommended
- Shorter sentences and direct language are used
- Terms used are consistent within and across letters
- Avoid jargon and acronyms

### *Navigation and Layout*

To improve the consistent navigation and layout across letters, the following ideas should be implemented:

- Ensure clear headings for each section
- Have a simple and clear purpose at the start of each letter
- Move the “call to action” to the front of each letter
- Consistent layout and formatting between all letters (where possible), including the use of icons

### *Tone and Usability*

To improve the tone and usability of all letters, JVA recommends the following are accomplished:

- Legal information broken out/divided from the main intention (i.e., a brochure)
- Clear statement of purpose and necessary action needed will decrease feelings of confusion

## Other

While this was not alerted often in the research, a few key players mentioned the topic of ensuring equity through language access. This leads to the following recommendations for all letters:

- Ensure equity through language access by redoing the Spanish translation and/or incorporating “Babel” insert in all letters

Figure 5: Overall Issue Areas and Recommendations (Across Correspondence)

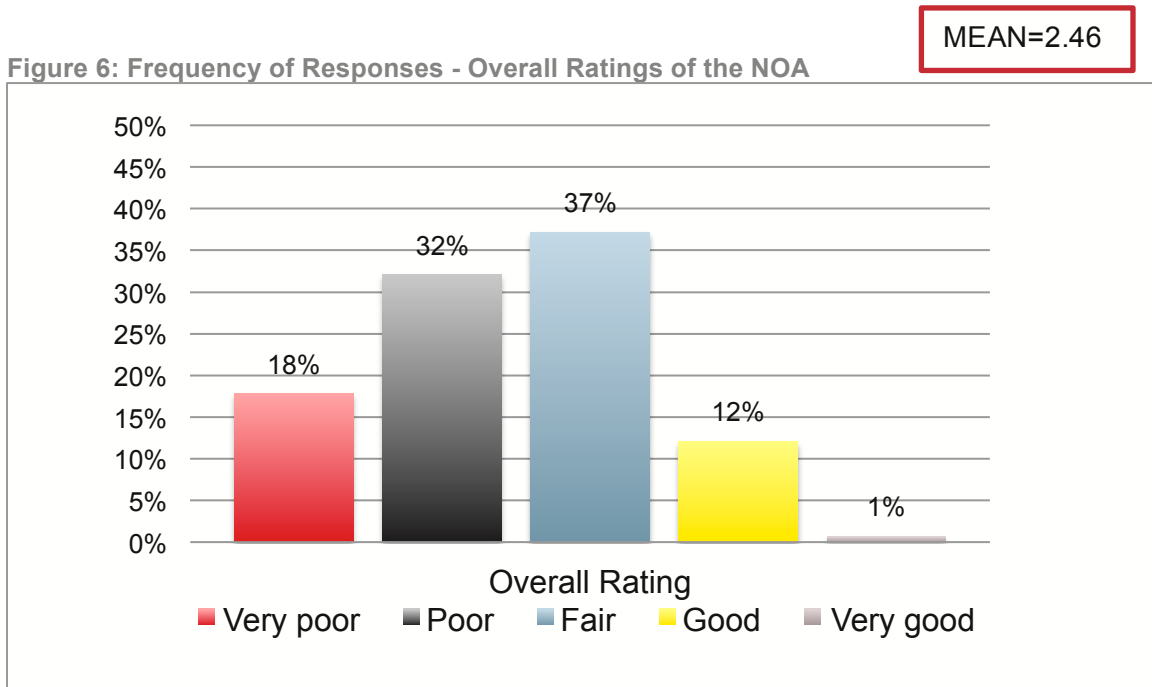
Issue Area	Recommendations
<b>Literacy level too high (lengthy sentences and unnecessary verbiage)</b>	Shorten sentence length, font size (12) Adapt to a near sixth grade reading level Shorten sentences Use consistent terminology and definitions No jargon
<b>Formatting and layout inconsistent (purpose and call to action not always leading)</b>	Clear heading for each sentence Consistent layouts and formatting where possible, including the icons used Purpose/Call to action at the front of each letter
<b>Unclear call to action and too much legal information is intimidating</b>	Break out the legal sections from the main information (i.e., a brochure) Ensure a simple and clear statement of purpose and necessary action is given
<b>Overall</b>	Babel inserts into each letter Update the Spanish language correspondence

## Notice of Action

The Notice of Action (NOA) was the most-responded to letter in the stakeholder survey, likely as it is used by most people across the state and thus harbors most of the opinions on how to improve correspondence. This section will highlight the overall issue areas, differences that arose between groups of respondents and recommendations for improvement.

### Overall Rating

Survey participants were asked to indicate, based on their experiences with the NOA, their overall rating of the NOA (where 1 = very poor and 5 = very good). Results suggest that overall, participants tend to rate the NOA as poor ( $M = 2.46$ ,  $SD = .95$ ).

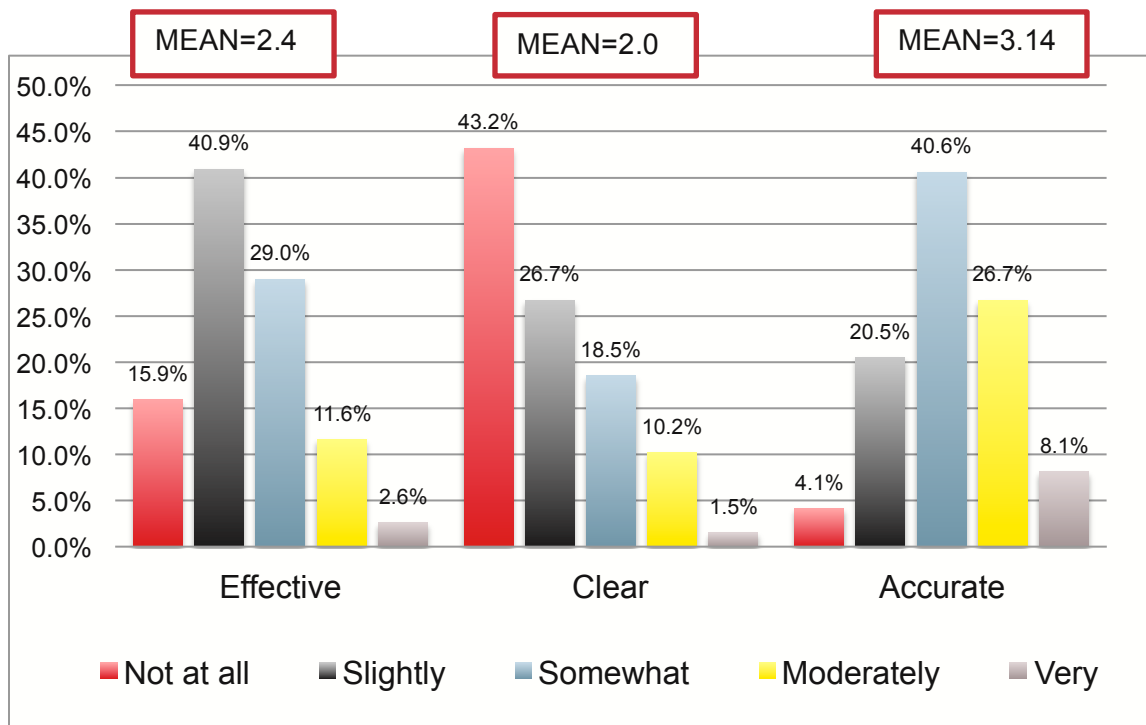


Participants also rated how effective, confusing<sup>5</sup> and accurate they perceived the NOA to be based on their experiences. In sum, participants tended to rate the NOA as only slightly effective ( $M = 2.44$ ,  $SD = .98$ ), quite unclear ( $M = 2.00$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ), and rated the information contained in the NOA as somewhat accurate ( $M = 3.14$ ,  $SD = .97$ ). See Figure 7 for details.

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<sup>5</sup> Participants rated how confusing (where 1 = not at all confusing and 5 = very confusing), however this was reverse-scored so that higher numbers indicate less confusing, in order to match direction of other items (i.e., higher numbers correspond with more positive ratings).

Figure 7: Frequency of Responses - Overall Ratings of the NOA



A test of reliability across these items using Cronbach’s Alpha demonstrates good consistency ( $\alpha = .82$ ), and so a composite score of “overall rating” was created using these four individual items for future analysis within correspondence type and between correspondence type comparisons ( $M = 2.51, SD = .80$ ). The results of some of these comparisons are shared in the following section.

### Differences Between Stakeholder Groups

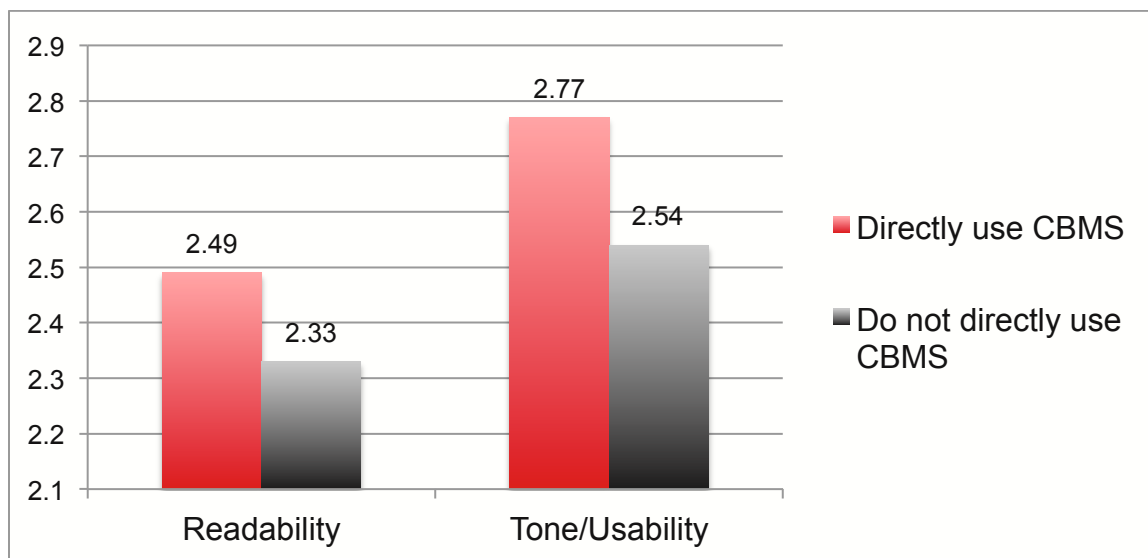
For all correspondence types, it was important to examine how ratings might differ between and within the different demographic groups of the sample (i.e., CBMS, geography) based on ratings of each letter. In other words, analyses were conducted to compare the composite scores of ratings overall, and ratings of navigation/layout, readability, tone and usability. Potential group differences were explored, based on contact with CBMS (i.e., use or do not use), geography of work (i.e., urban, suburban or rural), and region of work (i.e., Western, Front Range, Mountain, Southern and Eastern).

Specifically to the NOA, it was found that interaction with CBMS does not differ between geography of work on the overall perceptions, navigation/layout, readability, nor tone and usability (when using multivariate analysis of variance, MANOVA).

However, there are some differences between those who directly use CBMS compared to those who do not directly use CBMS, such that those who do not directly use CBMS tend to rate the NOA more negatively on perceived readability and on perceived tone and usability ( $F(1,539) = 4.20, p < .05$  and  $F(1,539) = 7.63, p < .01$ , respectively; see Figure 8). Importantly, there are no differences between overall ratings and perceptions

of navigation/layout between those who use and those who do not use CBMS directly. Those who directly use CBMS rate the readability and the tone and usability more positively.

Figure 8: NOA Rating Differences by CBMS Contact



## Key Issue Areas

A number of consistent concerns arose in the evaluation of the NOA, in the survey, interviews and the IPT meeting, which are highlighted below by the main categories of readability, navigation and layout, and tone and usability.

### Readability

Survey respondents were asked to rate several aspects of the readability of the NOA (where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). The following key findings resulted, showing that readability is quite low on a variety of measures:

- The words are easy for anyone to understand ( $M = 2.58$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ )
- The sentences are easy for anyone to understand ( $M = 2.49$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ )
- The concepts are familiar to clients ( $M = 2.25$ ,  $SD = .96$ )
- There is too little information included ( $M = 2.97$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ; reverse-coded)
- There is too much information ( $M = 2.99$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ )
- Overall, the NOA is easy to understand ( $M = 2.13$ ,  $SD = .99$ )

Comparing across these ratings using paired-samples t-tests suggests that all items are statistically significantly different from one another ( $ps < .01$ ), except for rating of too little compared to too much information. In other words, the greatest area for improvement regarding readability of the NOA is with overall “comprehension,” followed by the perception that the concepts are not familiar to clients.

A test of reliability across all items, excluding the rating of “too much information,” reveals acceptable consistency ( $\alpha = .73$ ), so these items were combined to create a composite score of an overall rating of the NOA’s readability for future analyses ( $M = 2.47$ ,  $SD = .70$ ).

### ***Navigation and Layout***

Respondents were asked to rate several aspects of the navigation and layout of the NOA (where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). Similarly, findings showed that the navigation and layout were not well received, with the only rating above the midpoint (3) related to the font size and type:

- The introduction describes the purpose of the letter ( $M = 2.87$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ )
- The instructions describe how to use the information contained in the letter ( $M = 2.32$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ )
- The sections of the letter are clearly demarcated through headings and descriptive titles ( $M = 2.92$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ )
- The font (size and types) is clear ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = .71$ )
- The visual layout (use of whitespace and images) is useful ( $M = 3.04$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ )
- I believe the overall design of the letter helps clients better understand the content of the letter ( $M = 2.32$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ )

Comparing across these ratings using paired-samples t-tests suggests that participants statistically significantly agree more that the font is clear compared with all other navigation and layout features ( $ps < .001$ ) and perceive the greatest area for improvement (i.e., statistically significantly disagree more) to be the instructions and the overall design. Further, a test of reliability across items reveals acceptable consistency ( $\alpha = .79$ ), thus these items were combined to create a composite score of an overall rating of the NOA’s navigation and layout for future analyses ( $M = 2.91$ ,  $SD = .72$ ).

### ***Tone and Usability***

Respondents were asked to rate several aspects of the tone and usability of the NOA (where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). The findings show that the NOA is rated low when it comes to tone and usability as well:

- The NOA uses culturally appropriate language (people from different background would understand the letter in the same way) ( $M = 2.82$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ )
- The NOA uses a friendly tone ( $M = 3.02$ ,  $SD = .92$ )
- The NOA clearly describes next steps (if necessary) ( $M = 2.33$ ,  $SD = .96$ )
- The NOA’s appeals and legal section is helpful for clients ( $M = 2.96$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ )
- The NOA’s appeals and legal section is clear ( $M = 2.87$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ )

- Overall, the NOA is a useful document for clients ( $M = 2.60$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ )

In general, paired-samples t-test comparisons between items reveals significant differences ( $ps < .001$ ), which suggests that the greatest area for improvement regarding tone and usability is the extent to which the NOA describes next steps. Excluding the two legal and appeals items, this information demonstrates that there is acceptable consistency between items ( $\alpha = .76$ ), so a composite score of the overall tone and usability of the NOA was created for future analysis ( $M = 2.69$ ,  $SD = .76$ ).

***“The appeals and legal section is often alarming for customers because they misinterpret the information and assume they owe money.”***

---

## Recommendations

### *Readability*

As seen in the survey findings, the area of greatest need for the NOA is to increase comprehension. To do this, the following recommendations are encouraged:

- Avoid all jargon and acronyms. Of note to avoid (or define) is Qualified Health Plans (QHP) and tax credit language.
- When using organization names and acronyms, ensure they are consistently used across and within letters.
- Simplify all sentences and number of words used in each sentence.
- Ensure next steps utilize plain and simple language, especially when relating to additional steps that are needed, especially in regards to tax credits, Medicaid denial and C4 connections.
- When writing dates and times, define the difference between them (i.e. date of determination, application date, start date).

***“If someone is not eligible for Medicaid, there needs to be a clear statement about Connect for Health option immediately.”***

---

A few ideas proposed in the IPT meeting on how to simplify language are provided below, however, the key factor is to ensure simplicity in language is greatly improved in the NOA.

- *Here’s what to do next*
- *You are getting this because...*
- *We the [county] are sending this*
- *You are eligible due to reported income of ...*

### *Navigation and Layout*

When it comes to the navigation and layout of the NOA, the instructions and the overall design were seen as the area of greatest need in the stakeholder survey. This was

amplified by additional comments in the qualitative research conducted. The following recommendations can improve the navigation and layout of the NOA:

- Supporting Rules/Legal/Appeals shortened or moved, depending on what is required to be there and how it is required to be displayed
- Consistent icons (the checkmarks), headers, bolded information, rows and columns and start dates are used throughout the letter.
- Restructure the table format. There are a few suggestions on how this can be done, which are broken out in Figure 9 and Figure 10.

Specific recommendations from the interviews, IPT meeting and survey to improve the NOA's navigation and layout are:

- *Personalize contact info listed on first page and include C4*
- *Explain what people can expect their next benefit amount to be*
- *Clarify which rule is for which program*

***"The more we can simplify the language in how we describe what's happening to a customer's case, the better."***



Figure 9: Potential Format NOA, Option A

<b>Food Assistance</b>			
<b>Name of applicant</b>	<b>Results of application</b>	<b>Month</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Barry	Approved	March 2016	\$53
John	Denied	-	-
Mary	Denied	-	-
<i>DETAILS on EBT card, start dates, to follow on this page</i>			
<b>Medical Assistance</b>			
<b>Name of applicant</b>	<b>Results of application</b>	<b>Month</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Barry	Approved	March 2016	\$153
John	Approved	April 2016	\$150
Mary	Denied	-	-
<i>DETAILS on EBT card, start dates, to follow on this page</i>			

Figure 10: Potential Format NOA, Option B

Name of applicant	Program	Result	Month	Amount
John	FA	Approved	March 2016	\$253
	MA	Denied	-	-
Mary	FA	Approved	March 2016	\$153
Barry	FA	Denied	-	-
	MA	Denied	-	-
<p><i>DETAILS on EBT card, start dates, to follow on this page</i></p> <p><i>DETAILS on Medicaid, Connect for Health, dates, to follow on this page</i></p>				

### ***Tone and Usability***

The main complaints on tone and usability of the NOA focused on unclear “next steps” and the client confusion that arises due to the already mentioned readability and navigation/layout difficulty. The following improvements are recommended for stronger usability and better tone:

- Action steps need more clarity on what specifically must be done by the client.
- Improved language and layout can help minimize the feeling of confusion (as mentioned earlier).
- A stronger title of correspondence letter and purpose statement can increase understanding and knowledge of what to do next.

### ***Other***

An additional factor that arose in the research was the need for a clearer integration of C4 into the NOA. This came about specifically in regards to Medicaid, when a client is denied for Medicaid, he or she is often confused about next steps. For this reason, it is recommended that a clear statement about C4 be added directly after a Medicaid denial.

***“Typically when a client is denied for Medicaid they completely miss the paragraph explaining about contacting C4HCO”***

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## Income and Eligibility Verification System

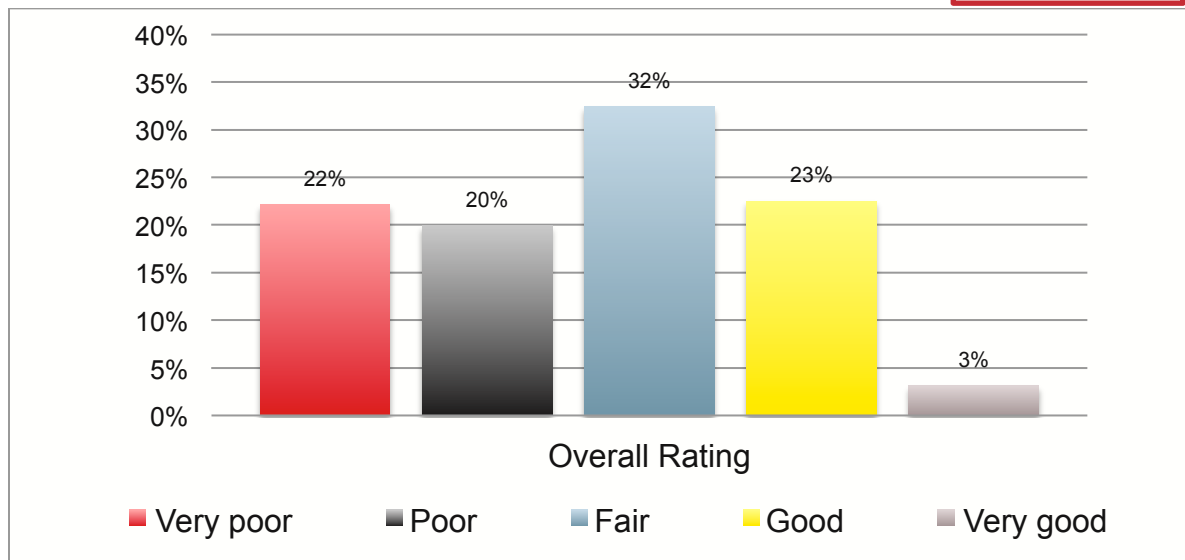
The Income and Eligibility Verification System (IEVS) was the second correspondence to be tested in the stakeholder survey.

### Overall Rating

Survey participants were asked to indicate, based on their experiences with the IEVS, their overall rating of the IEVS (where 1 = very poor and 5 = very good). Results suggest that overall, participants tend to rate the IEVS as moderately poor ( $M = 2.65$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ).

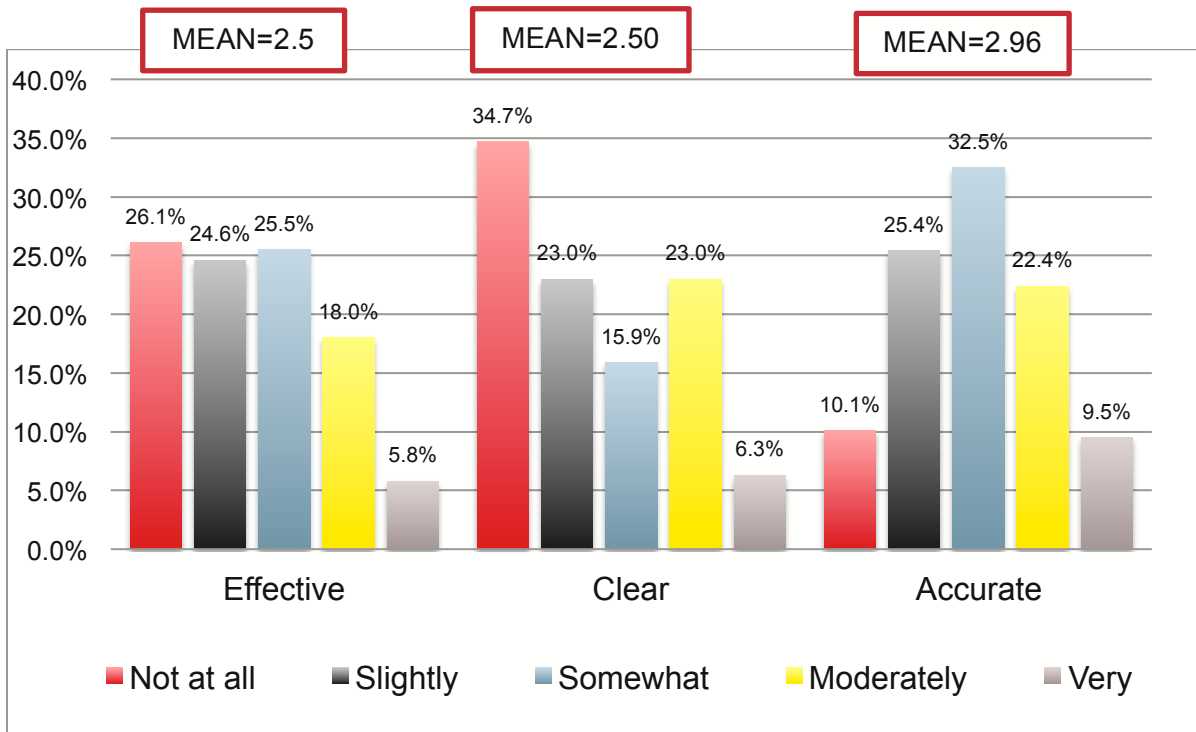
Figure 11: Frequency of Responses - Overall Ratings of the IEVS

MEAN=2.65



Participants tended to rate the IEVS as only slightly effective ( $M = 2.53$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ), fairly unclear ( $M = 2.50$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ), and rated the information contained in the IEVS as only somewhat accurate ( $M = 2.96$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ), as seen in Figure 12.

Figure 12: Frequency of Responses - Overall Ratings of the IEVS



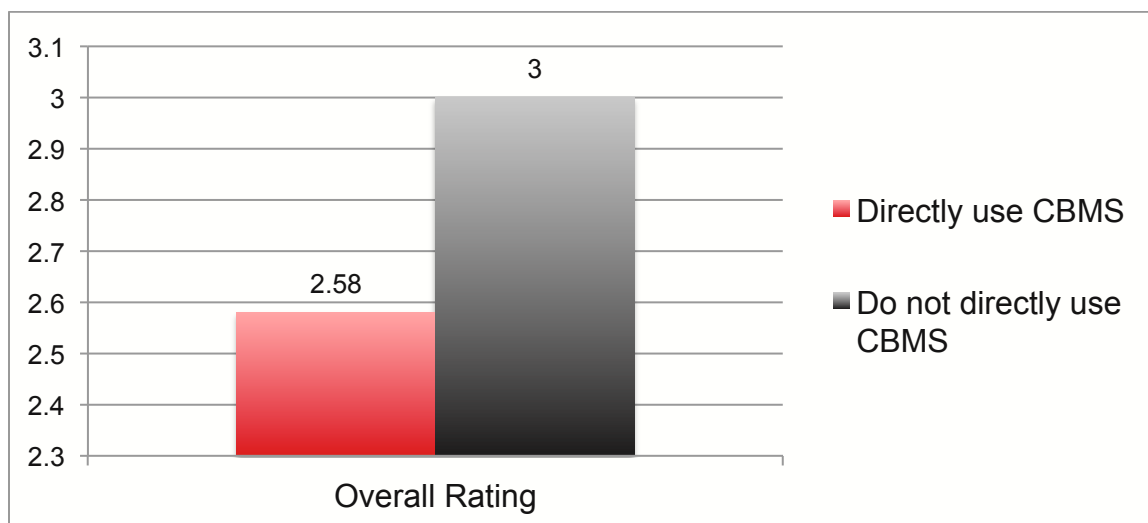
A test of reliability across these items using Cronbach's Alpha demonstrates good consistency ( $\alpha = .84$ ), and so a composite score of "overall rating" was created using these four individual items for future within correspondence type and between correspondence type comparisons ( $M = 2.65$ ,  $SD = .99$ ).

### ***Differences Between Stakeholder Groups***

Similar to what was seen with the NOA, MANOVA analyses revealed that contact with CBMS does not differ between geographies on perceptions of the IEVS. Further, there are no significant differences when comparing between urban, suburban and rural respondents on any of the ratings. However, there is a statistically significant difference on overall rating, such that those who do not directly use CBMS tend to rate the IEVS more positively compared to those who do use CBMS directly ( $F(1, 484) = 11.95$ ,  $p < .01$ ; see Figure 13). Those who directly use CBMS rate IEVS overall more negatively.

Using a one-way ANOVA to compare between Colorado regions reveals no significant differences on overall rating, or ratings of navigation/layout, readability and tone and usability of the IEVS.

Figure 13: IEVS Rating Differences by CBMS Contact



### Key Issue Areas

The following issues for the IEVS arose in the stakeholder survey, interviews and IPT meeting.

#### Readability

Respondents were asked to rate several aspects of the readability of the IEVS (where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). The following are the main results:

- The words are easy for anyone to understand ( $M = 3.01$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ).
- The sentences are easy for anyone to understand ( $M = 2.98$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ).
- The concepts are familiar to clients ( $M = 2.55$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ).
- There is too little information included ( $M = 3.09$ ,  $SD = .99$ ; reverse-coded).
- There is too much information ( $M = 2.65$ ,  $SD = .92$ ).
- Overall, the IEVS is easy to understand ( $M = 2.70$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ).

Comparing across these ratings using paired-samples t-tests, suggests overall, the extent to which concepts are familiar to clients, the ease of understanding and the amount of information being too little is rated significantly lower compared to all other items. A test of reliability across all items, excluding the rating of “too much information,” reveals good consistency ( $\alpha = .81$ ), so these items were combined to create a composite score of an overall rating of the IEVS’ readability for future analyses ( $M = 2.86$ ,  $SD = .81$ ).

***“Feels like a lot [of] words; could be much more straightforward.  
Tone could be more accessible.”***

The primary theme that emerges from the qualitative sources regarding the readability is that clients receiving this letter do not understand that the income being reported from

the Colorado Department of Labor is in quarterly amounts. This causes a good deal of confusion or unnecessary appeals, as it appears to be an inaccurate amount.

***“Clients do not understand/comprehend that this is a quarterly amount or pay attention to the year of reporting.”***

---

### ***Navigation and Layout***

Respondents were asked to rate several aspects of the navigation and layout of the IEVS (the look and the feel) (where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree):

- The introduction describes the purpose of the letter ( $M = 3.61$ ,  $SD = .97$ ).
- The instructions describe how to use the information contained in the letter ( $M = 3.19$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ).
- The sections of the letter are clearly demarcated through headings and descriptive titles ( $M = 3.20$ ,  $SD = .99$ ).
- The font (size and types) is clear ( $M = 3.93$ ,  $SD = .66$ ).
- The visual layout (use of whitespace and images) is useful ( $M = 3.64$ ,  $SD = .84$ ).
- I believe the overall design of the letter helps clients better understand the content of the letter ( $M = 3.05$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ).

Comparing across these ratings using paired-samples t-tests suggests that, generally, participants tend to agree that the font is the area of least weakness, followed by the introduction and the visual layout (which were rated similarly). The instructions and the headings were rated similarly, but the extent to which respondents felt as if the overall design of the letter was helpful to client comprehension was rated statistically significantly lower than all other items. A test of reliability across items reveals strong consistency ( $\alpha = .86$ ), so these items were combined to create a composite score of an overall rating of the IEVS' navigation and layout for future analyses ( $M = 3.43$ ,  $SD = .73$ ).

The qualitative sources support that the navigation and layout were not the cause of the issues related to the IEVS letters. Numerous responses did indicate that the lack of headers to break up the text made the IEVS difficult to parse through.

***“When clients receive this letter, it is a wall of text. There is nothing breaking it up or making it immediately legible. Acronyms shouldn't be used even if they are spelled out earlier in the letter. The use of underlined text makes it look severe but doesn't make it understandable.”***

---

## ***Tone and Usability***

Respondents were asked to rate several aspects of the tone and usability of the IEVS (where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree):

- The IEVS uses culturally appropriate language (people from different background would understand the letter in the same way) ( $M = 3.16$ ,  $SD = .96$ ).
- The IEVS uses a friendly tone ( $M = 3.10$ ,  $SD = .99$ ).
- The IEVS clearly describes next steps (if necessary) ( $M = 3.05$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ).
- Overall, the IEVS is a useful document for clients ( $M = 2.86$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ).

In general, paired-samples t-test comparisons between items reveals significant differences ( $ps < .001$ ) between overall usefulness and all other items, which suggests that the greatest area for improvement is increasing the utility of the correspondence. The greatest area of strength of the IEVS seems to be its use of culturally appropriate language. A test of reliability demonstrates that there is acceptable consistency between items ( $\alpha = .79$ ), so a composite score of the overall tone and usability of the IEVS was created for future analysis ( $M = 3.03$ ,  $SD = .82$ ).

From the qualitative sources many comments arose about the IEVS containing conflicting information and inaccurate information. This appeared to be linked to a few key issues:

- Dates provided on the IEVS are often irrelevant or old by the time they arrive to the client.

***“Usually the IEVS is not up to date with the client’s current employment, therefore confuses the client.”***

---

- Employer names (listed as the legal business name) are often different than the common name the client is used to, resulting in confusion.

***“If possible, I would include DBA for employers. When the employer’s name is reported differently to IEVS than what the client is familiar with, I think it causes confusion. For example some King Soopers stores interface as “DILLON COMPANIES,” and clients do not always know that they are the same thing.”***

---

As seen in the NOA, unclear sentences lead to the client feeling confused, and therefore contribute to the tone feeling unfriendly in the IEVS.

- For example, in the IEVS, if there is a 10% change in income, a letter will be sent out, but this increase does not automatically imply denial. However, the letter states, “This amount is over the income limit,” causing individuals unnecessary concern.

- Another example of language that can cause concern: “This amount is over the income limit for medical assistance and will disqualify some or all members of your household for the program.”

## **Recommendations**

### ***Readability***

Overall, the IEVS is difficult to understand. Similar to what was suggested in the NOA, the following recommendations can improve the correspondence:

- Avoid all jargon and acronyms. A few recommendations pointed out that CDLE is more common than CDOLE.
- Emphasize the dates that the period covered and clarify that this represents a three-month or quarterly income amount.

### ***Navigation and Layout***

The following suggestions for improving the navigation and layout emerged from both the open-ended survey questions and the IPT meeting:

- Addition of headers could be used to break up the text and draw the reader to the important information.
- Improving the layout by ensuring paragraphs are succinct and ordered by importance.
  - For example, by swapping the first with the second paragraph, and then the third with the fourth paragraph.

### ***Tone and Usability***

Numerous suggestions for improving the tone and usability of the IEVS emerged from the qualitative data sources. The primary issue related to the tone is that it feels threatening. The line, “This amount is over the limit and will disqualify...” was specifically mentioned as a sentence that needs to be reworked, as it is both threatening and not always accurate.

Respondents also want the letter to make it clear at the top that the contents contained are time sensitive. Often clients see the quarterly income amount or that the employer listed is not the name they are familiar with and assume there was a mistake and they do not need to take action.

Finally, numerous open-ended responses from the survey suggested ensuring that clients do not receive IEVS related to old jobs. While this is a systems issue, when clients receive IEVS letters for jobs they no longer have it causes confusion and sometimes inaction.



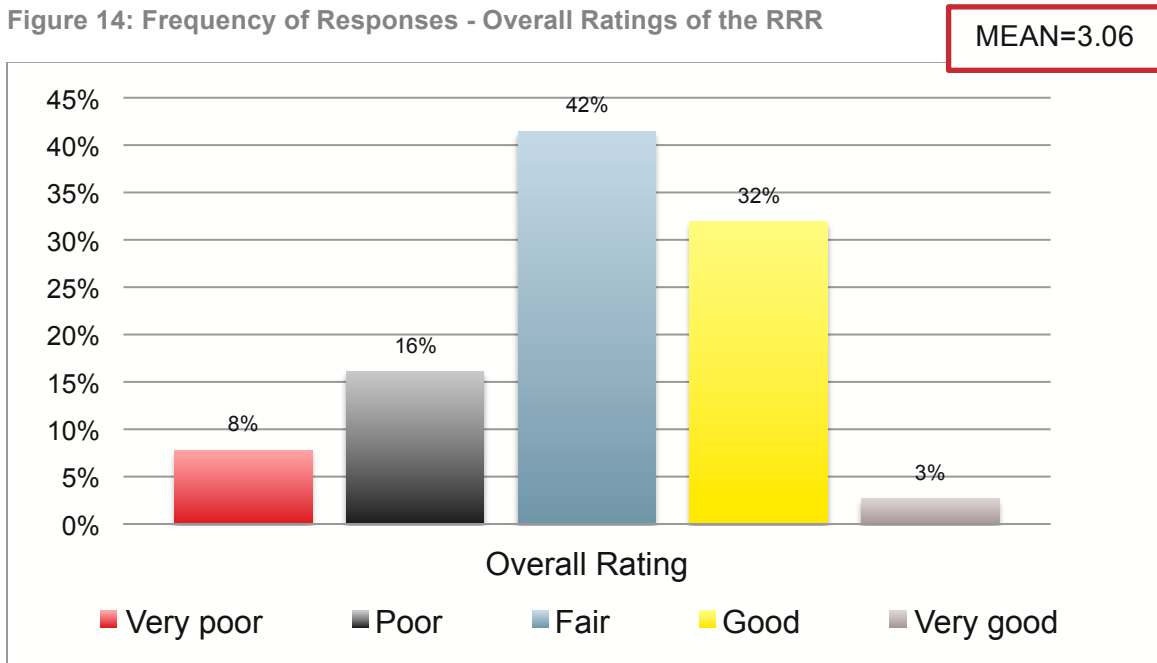
## Redetermination/Recertification Notice (RRR)

The Redetermination/Recertification Notice (RRR) was the third correspondence to be tested in the stakeholder survey.

### Overall Rating

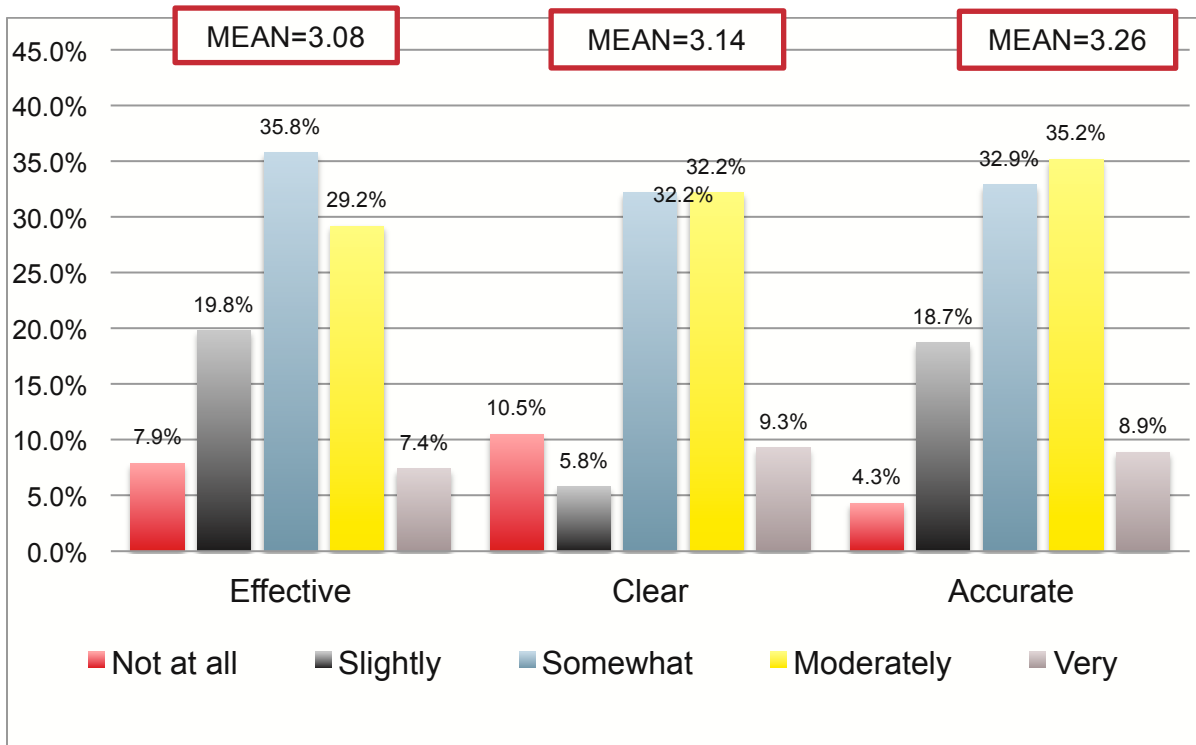
Survey participants were asked to indicate, based on their experiences with the RRR, their overall rating of the RRR (where 1 = very poor and 5 = very good). Results suggest that overall, participants tend to rate the RRR as fair ( $M = 3.06$ ,  $SD = .95$ ).

Figure 14: Frequency of Responses - Overall Ratings of the RRR



In sum, participants tended to rate the RRR as fairly effective ( $M = 3.08$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ), only slightly confusing ( $M = 3.14$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ), and rated the information contained in the RRR as pretty accurate ( $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ). See Figure 15 for details.

Figure 15: Frequency of Responses - Overall Ratings of the RRR

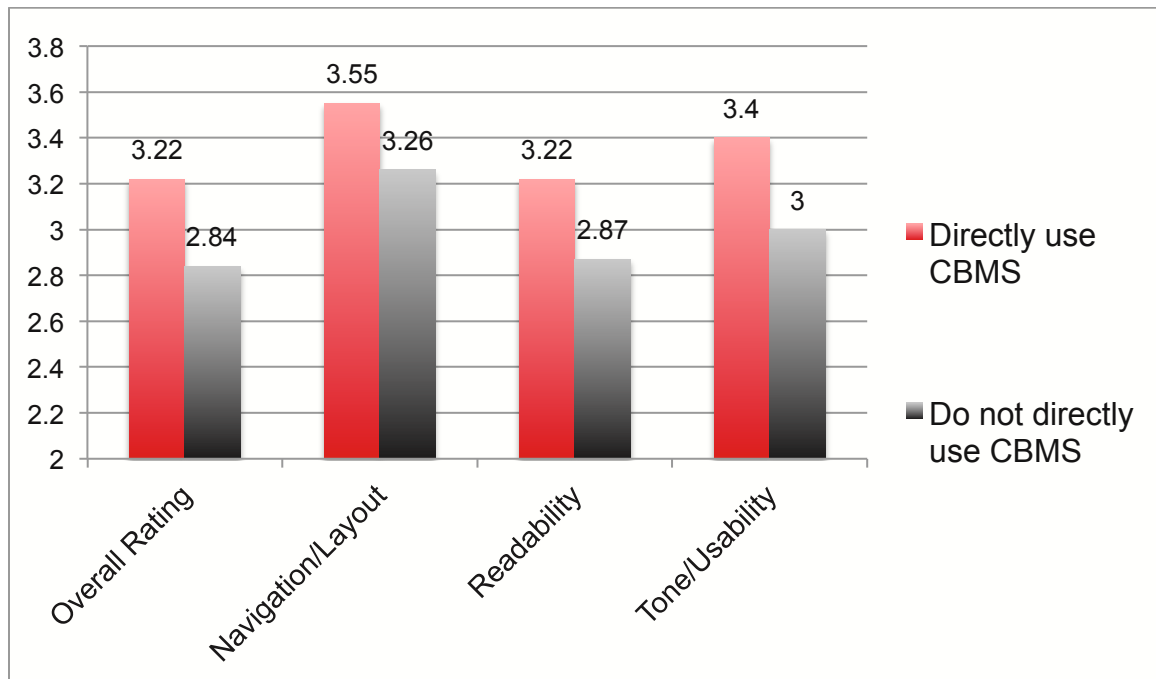


A test of reliability across these items using Cronbach’s Alpha demonstrates good consistency ( $\alpha = .82$ ), and so a composite score of “overall rating” was created using these four individual items for future analysis within correspondence type and between correspondence type comparisons ( $M = 3.14$ ,  $SD = .82$ ).

**Differences Between Stakeholder Groups**

There are no significant interaction effects, suggesting that contact with CBMS does not differ between geographies on perceptions of the RRR, nor are there significant differences based on geography, alone. However, ratings between those who directly use CBMS and those who do not directly use CBMS are significantly different, such that those who directly use CBMS rate the RRR significantly more positively overall, as well as its navigation and layout, its readability, and its tone and usability when compared to those who do not directly use CBMS ( $F(1, 478) = 13.60$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $F(1,478) = 10.55$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $F(1, 487) = 16.89$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $F(1, 478) = 19.88$ ),  $p < .001$ , respectively; see Figure 16).

Figure 16: RRR Rating Differences by CBMS Contact



Using a one-way ANOVA to compare groups based on Colorado region reveals a marginally significant difference on overall rating of the RRR ( $F(4, 534) = 2.50, p = .06$ ). A Tukey's post-hoc comparison shows that this is largely driven by those serving Southern clients ( $M = 2.76, SD = .68$ ) rating the RRR significantly more negatively when compared to those serving Western Slope clients ( $M = 3.25, SD = .75; p < .03$ ) and marginally significantly more negatively than those serving Front Range clients ( $M = 3.13, SD = .85; p = .11$ ).

## Key Issue Areas

### Readability

Respondents were asked to rate several aspects of the readability of the RRR (the content and language) (where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree):

- The words are easy for anyone to understand ( $M = 3.24, SD = .97$ ).
- The sentences are easy for anyone to understand ( $M = 3.18, SD = .97$ ).
- The concepts are familiar to clients ( $M = 3.19, SD = .97$ ).
- There is too little information included ( $M = 2.90, SD = .90$ ; reverse-coded).
- There is too much information ( $M = 3.08, SD = 1.00$ ).
- Overall, the RRR is easy to understand ( $M = 3.08, SD = 1.00$ ).

Comparing across these ratings using paired-samples t-tests, suggests overall, the words, the sentences and the concepts used are likely strengths of the RRR. A test of reliability across all items, excluding the rating of “too much information,” reveals good consistency ( $\alpha = .80$ ), so these items were combined to create a composite score of an overall rating of the RRR’s readability for future analyses ( $M = 3.15$ ,  $SD = .72$ ).

From the qualitative data sources no serious issues related to readability are apparent, but a few smaller recurrent issues emerged:

- Concern over the amount of text and acronyms on the first page
- Inclusion of CHP+ and PEAKHealth distracts from instructions and should be included elsewhere

### ***Navigation and Layout***

Respondents were asked to rate several aspects of the navigation and layout of the RRR (the look and the feel) (where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree):

- The introduction describes the purpose of the letter ( $M = 3.75$ ,  $SD = .80$ ).
- The instructions describe how to use the information contained in the letter ( $M = 3.44$ ,  $SD = .95$ ).
- The sections of the letter are clearly demarcated through headings and descriptive titles ( $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = .96$ ).
- The font (size and types) is clear ( $M = 3.82$ ,  $SD = .73$ ).
- The visual layout (use of whitespace and images) is useful ( $M = 3.42$ ,  $SD = .96$ ).
- I believe the overall design of the letter helps clients better understand the content of the letter ( $M = 3.12$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ).

Comparing across these ratings using paired-samples t-tests suggests that generally participants tend to agree that the font is the area of greatest strength, followed by the introduction. The extent to which respondents felt as if the overall design of the letter was helpful to client comprehension was rated statistically significantly lower than all other items. A test of reliability across items reveals good consistency ( $\alpha = .88$ ), so these items were combined to create a composite score of an overall rating of the RRR’s navigation and layout for future analyses ( $M = 3.49$ ,  $SD = .72$ ).

From the qualitative data sources the primary issue that emerged was the lack of consistency. This is described as a lack of consistency in the format of the RRR letters across programs and a lack of consistency in the format within the RRR letters themselves. Specifically, Section II of the Medical RRR was mentioned in both the open-ended questions and in the IPT meeting for its lack of consistency.

***“Inconsistent...some boxes you respond in the box or outside or next to the box. Some information is in the boxes and some are in question format.”***

---

## Tone and Usability

Respondents were asked to rate several aspects of the tone and usability of the RRR (where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree):

- The RRR uses culturally appropriate language (people from different background would understand the letter in the same way) ( $M = 3.35$ ,  $SD = .90$ ).
- The RRR uses a friendly tone ( $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = .80$ ).
- The RRR clearly describes next steps (if necessary) ( $M = 3.17$ ,  $SD = .98$ ).
- Overall, the RRR is a useful document for clients ( $M = 3.30$ ,  $SD = .97$ ).

In general, paired-samples t-test comparisons between items reveal that the RRR's description of next steps may be the area for greatest improvement, whereas the tone of the RRR may be its area of greatest strength. A test of reliability demonstrates that there is good consistency between items ( $\alpha = .83$ ), so a composite score of the overall tone and usability of the RRR was created for future analysis ( $M = 3.32$ ,  $SD = .74$ ).

The qualitative sources appear to confirm that the tone of the RRR is its greatest strength as there were no recurring problem areas.

***“Modification needs to be done to advise next steps for Long Term Care eligibility. Resources are always required and not addressed on RRR form.”***

***“[For example] there was a food assistance case that said ‘increase to decrease to increase’ [and] it didn’t make sense. We were just trying to do a food assistance recertification.”***

---

## Recommendations

### Readability

Few recommendations to the readability emerged from the qualitative data sources. There were a few suggestions about moving the CHP+ and PEAKHealth information to the back or into a separate brochure in order to decrease the amount of text and information contained on the front page.

### Navigation and Layout

A number of suggestions for improvements to the navigation and layout of the RRR emerged from the qualitative data and IPT meeting. While numerous suggestions mentioned that a standard format for the RRR across programs would be helpful, no clear consensus regarding which version was should serve as the model format. Instead a couple key attributes from each were suggested to create the standardized RRR format. Suggestions for creating a standardized RRR included:

- Putting a signature line on the first page of every RRR to decrease the number of RRRs returned without a signature

- Indicating to the client what information is already in the system

The inconsistent usage of tables and checkboxes was also singled out as an area for navigation and layout improvement. Specifically, Section II of the Medical Assistance RRR changes from clear questions with Yes/No checkboxes to simple checkboxes and statements. Instead it was suggested to use a consistent format of a question followed by a Yes/No checkbox, and space to elaborate.

***“I don’t know if people view the checkboxes as questions or not. The questions before the boxes in Section II are straightforward.”***

---

### **Tone and Usability**

While the survey responses to “The instructions describe how to use the Information contained in the letter” were high compared to the other letters (M = 3.44, SD = .95), numerous open-ended responses indicated improvements to the instructions could be made. The Medical Assistance RRR in particular was singled out for not having the various sections directly precluded by clear instructions. Also, consistent instructions for what to do if there are no changes to the client’s information would eliminate some problems, as highlighted by this open-ended response to the survey:

***“There are still RRR packets floating around that say if you have had no changes do not do anything and then my LTC Medicaid clients fall off Medicaid.”***

---

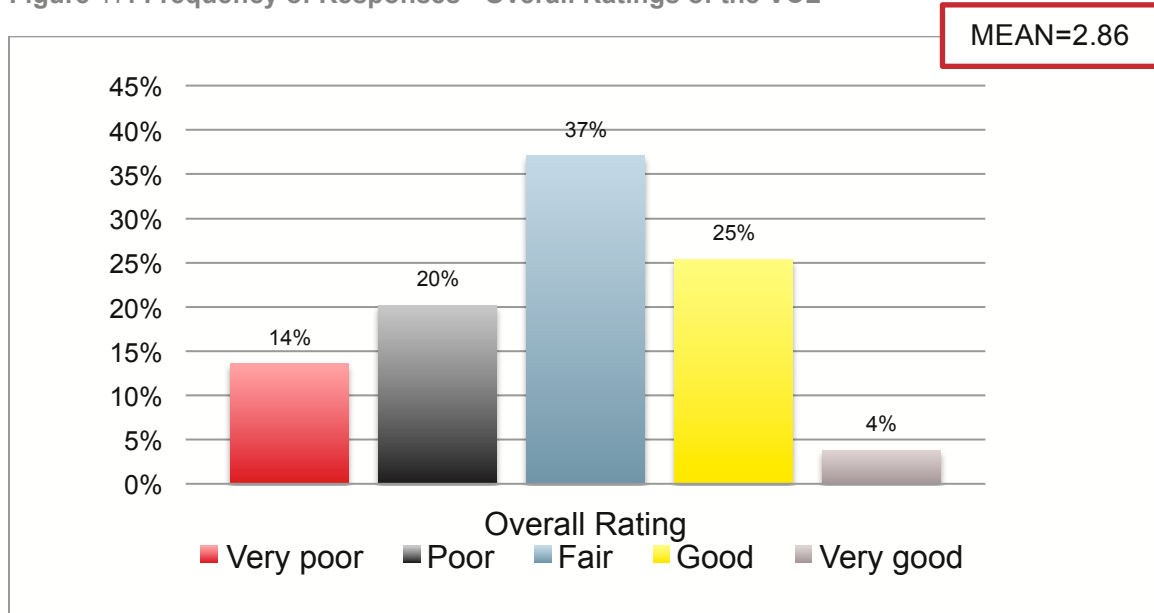
There emerged no clear consensus about the encouragement of clients using the online PEAK system. Numerous open-ended responses were received to both support and highlight the usage of PEAK and to not highlight the usage of PEAK over concerns of its utility.

# Verification Checklist (VCL)

## Overall Rating

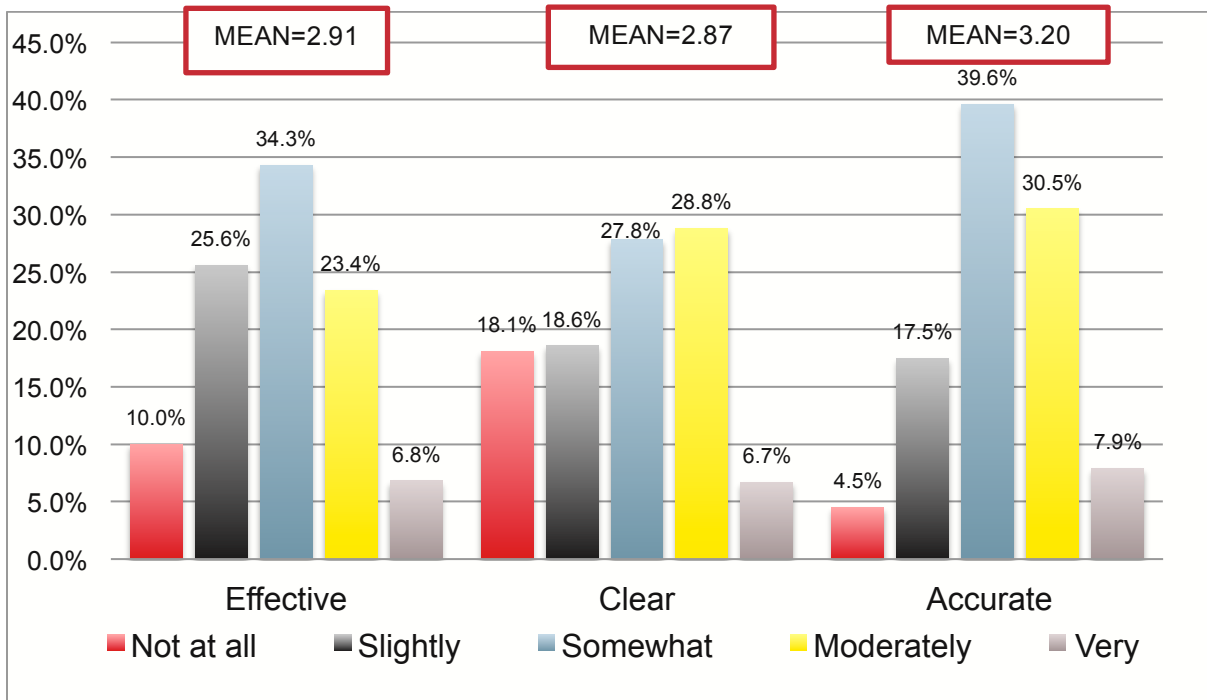
Survey participants were asked to indicate, based on their experiences with the VCL, their overall rating of the VCL (where 1 = very poor and 5 = very good). Results suggest that overall, participants tend to rate the VCL as poor ( $M = 2.86$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ).

Figure 17: Frequency of Responses - Overall Ratings of the VCL



In summary, participants tended to rate the VCL as slightly effective ( $M = 2.91$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ), mildly confusing ( $M = 2.87$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ), and rated the information contained in the VCL as somewhat accurate ( $M = 3.20$ ,  $SD = .97$ ). See Figure 18 for frequency of responses.

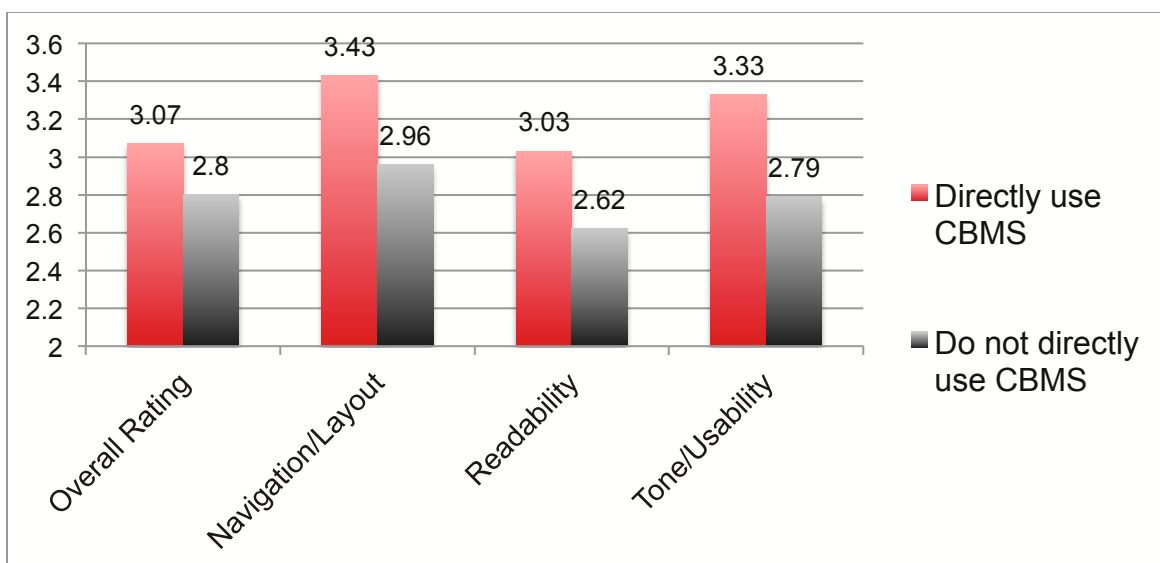
Figure 18: Frequency of Responses - Overall Ratings of the VCL



### Differences Between Stakeholder Groups

There are no significant interactions or main effects of geography on perceptions of the VCL. However, ratings between those who directly use CBMS and those who do not directly use CBMS are significantly different. Those who directly use CBMS rate the VCL significantly more positively overall, as well as its navigation and layout, its readability and its tone and usability, when compared to those who do not directly use CBMS ( $F(1, 464) = 20.03, p < .001$ ;  $F(1, 464) = 25.49, p < .001$ ;  $F(1, 464) = 19.97, p < .001$ ;  $F(1, 464) = 33.15, p < .001$ ; see Figure 19).

Figure 19: VCL Rating Differences by CBMS Contact





Using one-way ANOVA to compare between which region respondent clients live reveals non-significant differences, suggesting that regardless of Colorado region, respondents tend to rate the RRR similarly.

## Key Issue Areas

### *Readability*

Respondents were asked to rate several aspects of the readability of the VCL (the content and language) (where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree):

- The words are easy for anyone to understand ( $M = 2.97$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ).
- The sentences are easy for anyone to understand ( $M = 2.88$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ).
- The concepts are familiar to clients ( $M = 3.02$ ,  $SD = .99$ ).
- There is too little information included ( $M = 2.82$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ; reverse-coded).
- There is too much information ( $M = 3.02$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ).
- Overall, the VCL is easy to understand ( $M = 2.82$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ).

Comparing across these ratings using paired-samples t-tests, suggests overall limited differences between ratings, indicating that all readability ratings for the VCL are somewhat similar (i.e., no real areas of strength or for improvement). A test of reliability across all items, excluding the rating of “too much information,” reveals acceptable consistency ( $\alpha = .76$ ), so these items were combined to create a composite score of an overall rating of the VCL’s readability for future analyses ( $M = 2.95$ ,  $SD = .73$ ).

From the qualitative data sources the theme that emerged regarding the readability of the VCL was that the first page was too text heavy and that this may discourage clients from reading through the entire letter.

***“[The VCL] has too many words. The irony is that we call it a checklist!”***

---

### *Navigation and Layout*

Respondents were asked to rate several aspects of the navigation and layout of the VCL (the look and the feel) (where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree):

- The introduction describes the purpose of the letter ( $M = 3.60$ ,  $SD = .90$ ).
- The instructions describe how to use the information contained in the letter ( $M = 3.34$ ,  $SD = .98$ ).
- The sections of the letter are clearly demarcated through headings and descriptive titles ( $M = 3.13$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ).
- The font (size and types) is clear ( $M = 3.29$ ,  $SD = .82$ ).
- The visual layout (use of whitespace and images) is useful ( $M = 3.22$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ).

- I believe the overall design of the letter helps clients better understand the content of the letter ( $M = 2.94$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ).

Comparing across these ratings using paired-samples t-tests suggests that all ratings are statistically significantly different from one another, which means that the overall design of the letter is rated as most poorly, whereas the introduction may be a strength. A test of reliability across items reveals good consistency ( $\alpha = .88$ ), so these items were combined to create a composite score of an overall rating of the VCL's navigation and layout for future analyses ( $M = 3.33$ ,  $SD = .77$ ).

From the qualitative data sources the primary issue regarding the layout and navigation of the VCL centered on the order in which information was presented. The vital information regarding the program, the proof needed, and the due date does not appear until the third page. This, combined with the text heavy first page, is problematic, as some clients do not get to the call to action.

***“The VCL has the “Wall of Text” problem where the information is presented in solid blocks, and this is difficult for clients to read and understand.”***

---

### ***Tone and Usability***

Respondents were asked to rate several aspects of the tone and usability of the VCL (where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree):

- The VCL uses culturally appropriate language (people from different background would understand the letter in the same way) ( $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = .92$ ).
- The VCL uses a friendly tone ( $M = 3.33$ ,  $SD = .88$ ).
- The VCL clearly describes next steps (if necessary) ( $M = 3.10$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ).
- Overall, the VCL is a useful document for clients ( $M = 3.15$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ).

In general, paired-samples t-test comparisons between items reveal that the VCL's description of next steps and its overall utility may be the area for greatest improvement, whereas the tone of the VCL may be its area of greatest strength. A test of reliability demonstrates that there is good consistency between items ( $\alpha = .85$ ), so a composite score of the overall tone and usability of the VCL was created for future analysis ( $M = 3.22$ ,  $SD = .80$ ).

From the qualitative data sources, much of the discussion regarding the issues with tone and usability of the VCL focused on a systems issue outside the scope of this research. However, due to the volume of responses around this specific issue it is brought up here as something to look into. Countless survey respondents indicated that their primary issue with the VCL is that it was only as useful as the information manually input by “techs.” Other responses indicate that there is simply not enough room to manually input text due to the amount of auto-populated text.

## Recommendations

### *Readability*

In order to alleviate the concern that many clients see the block of text on the first page and do not get to the vital information for the call to action, numerous open-ended responses suggested breaking up the text with the use of headers to demarcate the purpose of the various sections of text.

***“Break up the text with headers, it’s a lot of reading in one chunk and that intimidates most readers.”***

---

### *Navigation and Layout*

Multiple suggestions from both the open ended responses and the IPT meeting to improve the layout involved moving the table from the third page to the first page. This would get the vital information for the action front and center. During the IPT meeting, the specific suggestion to solve both the layout issue was to delete the bottom three paragraphs from the first page and instead put the “Need Proof Of” table (directly below the corresponding instruction bullet points that appear on the first page).

***“I would put the verifications on the first page and notify client that if this is not received by the due date, the benefits may stop.”***

---

### *Tone and Usability*

The theme that emerged from the qualitative data for improving the tone and usability of the VCL focused on ensuring the proof required of the client was specific. Again, this is related to a systems issue about manually entered and auto-populated text.

## Comparisons Across Letters

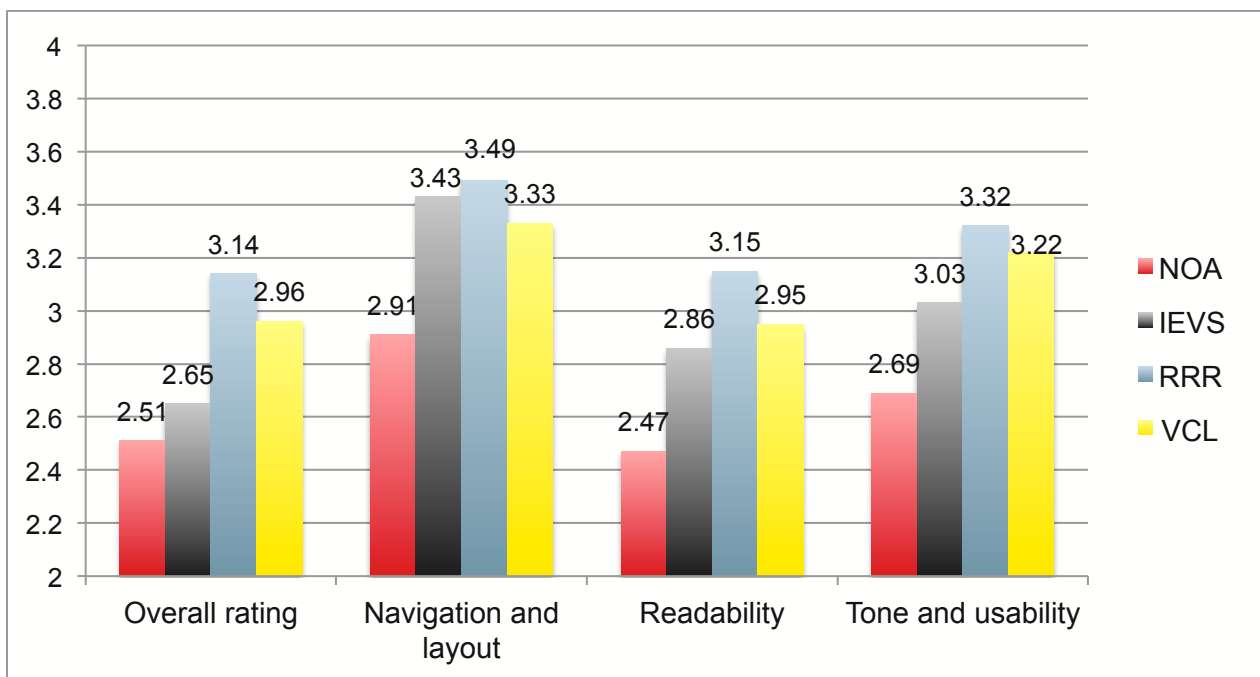
Using the four composite scores that were created for each letter (i.e., overall, navigation and layout, readability, and tone and usability), it is possible to compare between client correspondence types to examine where differences in ratings might lie.

The NOA is rated significantly worse on all outcomes; the RRR is rated best (although again, all could use improving because it hovers right around mid-point of scale).

**Paired-samples t-tests comparing the average overall rating of each of the four letters indicates significant differences between all four ( $ps < .001$ ).** In other words, each letter is rated significantly differently, such that the NOA is rated most negatively overall, followed by the IEVS, then the VCL, and the RRR is rated least problematic overall. Results of this same analysis based on ratings of navigation and layout, readability, and tone and usability reveals (see Figure 20):

- Significant differences between all correspondence types on ratings of navigation and layout, such that the NOA is rated most negatively, followed by the VCL, then the IEVS, and the RRR is rated most positively overall
- Significant differences between all correspondence types on ratings of readability, such that the NOA is rated most negatively, followed by the IEVS, then the VCL, and the RRR is rated most positively overall
- Significant differences between all correspondence types on ratings of tone and usability, such that the NOA is rated most negatively, followed by the IEVS, then the VCL, and the RRR is rated most positively overall

Figure 20: Comparisons by Correspondence Types



## Conclusion

Overall, the review of the client correspondence tested through all research methods—survey, key informant interviews and stakeholder meeting—points to a need for changes with regards to readability, layout and navigation, and tone and usability. These aspects, while not isolated from larger aspects of procedures and systems, are an integral part to improving the letters that clients see and react to. Improved letters will lead to fewer situations of confusion and fear, and thus less burden placed on staff across the state to ease these sentiments.

## Key Recommendations

While specific recommendations for language and layout surfaced throughout the evaluation process, they fell into a few broad categories of focus:

- **Consistency.** This applies both to language (using the same terms, language, acronyms, definitions) as well as layout (headers, formatting, text size and type, use of grids and paragraphs for similar content) throughout the letters, no matter the program (food or medical assistance).
- **Clarity.** The purpose of letters is to be direct and to the point, and located on the first page of any piece of correspondence. In developing language for conveying the purpose, the following questions were commonly recommended to consider:
  - *Why is the client receiving the letter?*
  - *What does the client need to do?*
  - *By when does the client need to do this?*
  - *What does the client need in order to complete this action?*
- **Content.** While no small task, the importance of creating documents that are comprehensive, legally viable and easily accessible by a wide range of constituents is paramount. It is also believed to be possible through the careful consideration of appropriate reading levels, placement of rules and regulations and accurate translation.
- **Construction.** Utilizing a variety of formatting and visual tools (such as check boxes, grids, icons) helps to draw attention to important information and to create space to more easily process meaning and identify next steps.

As evidenced by the feedback gathered throughout all research methods, looping back to these four areas of focus when constructing future letters is likely to bode well for user interaction, including both clients and program staff.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Sample Survey Questions

Note: These survey questions show the introduction and the NOA questions. The questions repeated for the IEVS, RRR, and VCL.

**Client Correspondence Survey 2016**

Introduction

The Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Finance (HCPF) and its partners, the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), Connect for Health Colorado, and the Governor's Office of Information Technology (OIT), want to hear from you about your perceptions and experiences with client eligibility correspondence. To do this, Joining Vision and Action (JVA) is helping to gather feedback from the stakeholder community through this online survey. We are hoping to learn about the challenges and strengths of the following key types of client correspondences:

1. The Notice of Action
2. The Income and Eligibility Verification System (IEVS) Letter
3. The Redetermination/Recertification Notice
4. The Verification Checklist

This survey is specifically about how to improve the language, look and feel of these letters. Your feedback will help inform potential modifications to **how this information is communicated** in the future.

We sincerely appreciate your help in completing this survey, which should take about 20 minutes of your time. Please be sure to provide feedback on all four of the correspondence types included in this survey.

All your information will be kept confidential, so feel free to be candid. This means that your name or any other identifying information will never be linked to your individual responses or comments.

Thank you so much for your time and input—it really is valuable as we work toward improving the usability and effectiveness of client correspondence.

**The survey will close at 5 p.m. April 28.** If you have any questions or trouble accessing the survey, please feel free to contact me directly.

Jill Iman  
Joining Vision and Action  
jill@joiningvisionandaction.com  
303.477.4896

1

## Client Correspondence Survey 2016

### Introduction Questions

**1. Do you directly use the Colorado Benefits Management System (CBMS) in your work?**

- Yes  
 No

**2. What best describes your relationship to client correspondence (the NOA, the IEVS, the RRR and the VCL)? Please choose one.**

- Broker  
 Certified application counselor  
 Consumer advocate  
 County Department of Social/Human Services  
 Customer service agent  
 Health coverage guide  
 Medical Assistance Site  
 State agency employee (HCPF, CDHS, OIT)  
 State workforce training center employee  
 Other (please specify)

**3. Approximately how many Medicaid, Child Health Plan *Plus*, Food Assistance or Cash Assistance clients do you meet with or communicate with (e.g., in-person, by phone or via email) in an average month? Please enter a whole number (e.g., 50 or 255).**

**4. Of those clients, approximately how many of them do you meet with or communicate with in an average month because they are confused by an eligibility correspondence letter? Please enter a whole number (e.g., 50 or 255).**

2

**5. How would you describe where the majority of your clients live?**

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural
- Other (please specify)

**6. In which county of Colorado do you primarily work (e.g., where do the majority of your clients live)?**

Other (please specify)



## Client Correspondence Survey 2016

### Correspondence #1: The Notice of Action

The Notice of Action (NOA) communicates initial and continuing eligibility for benefits. Please take a look at a **sample first page** of this letter for your reference as you answer the following questions. NOAs may look slightly different based on the content (e.g., approval, denial, or termination) and the program(s) the individual(s) applied for, but the following questions pertain to the overall look and feel of NOAs.

4

## STATE OF COLORADO



Case Number: 1B [REDACTED]  
 Skelter Helter  
 1200 FEDERAL BLVD  
 DENVER CO 80204-3221

Monica Gomez  
 Denver/FAD/Division  
 BLDG  
 1200 FEDERAL BLVD  
 DENVER CO 80204-3221

Client ID: 000 [REDACTED] (720) 944-3666  
 Medical Assistance Contact: Monica Gomez (720) 944-3666  
 Adult Financial Contact: Monica Gomez (720) 944-3666  
 Food Assistance Contact: Monica Gomez (720) 944-3666

Date and time of eligibility determination: 04/07/2016 03:02 PM

	<b>Approval: Your application has been approved for the following individual(s).</b>		
Benefit Category	Individual Name and Medical Assistance ID	Application Date	Coverage Start Date
Medicaid - No Premium required	Skelter Helter - Q [REDACTED]	04/07/2016	04/07/2016
<b>Additional Information:</b>			
<b>Supporting Rule:</b> 10 CCR 2505-10, Volume 8 at Section 8.100.3.F			

	<b>Approval: Your application has been approved for the following program(s).</b>				
Program	Application Date	Benefit Start Date/Month	Benefit End Date/Month	Benefit Amount	Date and Time determined
Adult Financial	04/07/2016	04/07/2016	04/30/2016	\$72.80	2016-04-07 15:02
Adult Financial	04/07/2016	05/01/2016	03/2018	\$91.00	2016-04-07 15:02
<b>Additional Information:</b>					
You have been approved for Adult Financial cash benefits.					
<b>Supporting Rule:</b> 9-CCR 2503-5, 3.500					
Food Assistance	04/07/2016	04/2016	04/2016	\$52.00	2016-04-07 15:02
<b>Individuals:</b>					
Skelter Helter - Q [REDACTED]					

The following questions ask about your **overall impressions** of the NOA.

**7. Given your experiences with the NOA and with clients who receive the NOA, what is your overall rating of the NOA using the scale below?**

- Very poor
- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very good

**8. Based on your experiences, how effective do you feel the NOA is for clients?**

- Not at all effective
- Slightly effective
- Somewhat effective
- Moderately effective
- Very effective

**9. Based on your experiences, how confusing do you feel the NOA is for clients?**

- Not at all confusing
- Slightly confusing
- Somewhat confusing
- Moderately confusing
- Very confusing

**10. Based on your experiences, how accurate do you feel the information contained in the NOA is?**

- Not at all accurate
- Slightly accurate
- Somewhat accurate
- Moderately accurate
- Very accurate

Below are several potential **challenges or strengths** of the NOA. Please respond to each of the following questions based on your experiences.

6

**11. Please rate the following aspects of the *navigation and layout* of the NOA (the look and the feel).  
If you do not know, are unsure of your response or can't answer, please leave the item blank.**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The introduction describes the purpose of the letter.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The instructions describe how to use the information contained in the letter.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The sections of the letter are clearly demarcated through headings and descriptive titles.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The font (size and type) is clear.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The visual layout (use of whitespace and images) is useful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe the overall design of the letter helps clients better understand the content of the letter.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Additional comments about the navigation and layout:

**13. Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements regarding the *tone and usability* of the NOA. If you do not know, are unsure of your response or can't answer, please leave the item blank.**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The NOA uses culturally appropriate language (people from different backgrounds would understand the letter the same way).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The NOA uses a friendly tone.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The NOA clearly describes next steps (if necessary).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The NOA's appeals and legal section is helpful for clients.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The NOA's appeals and legal section is clear.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall, the NOA is a useful document for clients.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Additional comments about the tone and usability:

Please respond to the following questions regarding **improvements and modifications**.

**14. How would you describe the NOA's top strength (what should remain the same)?**

**15. If you could modify the language, look and feel of the NOA, how would you change it?**

**16. If you could add additional language to the NOA to tell clients what they need to do after they receive this letter, what would you include?**

**17. Do you have any other comments or feedback regarding the NOA correspondence letter's language, look or feel?**

## Client Correspondence Survey 2016

### Thank You

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this important survey. Your feedback is incredibly valuable and will be used to inform the future conversations around how to improve client correspondence.

Please click "Done" to save your responses and close the survey. Thank you again!

Jill Iman  
Joining Vision and Action  
jill@joiningvisionandaction.com  
303.477.4896

## Appendix B: Interview Script

### *Introduction*

- Hello and thank you for participating in this conversation. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I work with Joining Vision and Action, a Colorado-based planning and research firm hired by the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy & Financing, the Colorado Department of Human Services, Connect for Health Colorado, and the Governor’s Office of Information Technology to facilitate discussions around perceptions of current client correspondence and allow it to develop a better understanding of ways in which it might be able to improve the look and feel of these correspondences. I am speaking with several key leaders around the state who are able to speak to these topics of interest.
- **The information you share today will be audio recorded and shared with the agencies I mentioned earlier**, as it is important for them to know any particular insights that come up from your experiences. After conducting all of the interviews, we will combine all the responses into a larger report that will inform future discussion around correspondence changes.
- Your feedback, and the resulting report on stakeholder feedback, will be used by national plain language experts to create initial drafts of the correspondence we discuss today. Those draft letters will then be tested with clients across the state in English and Spanish, as well as with clients who utilize assistive technology. The drafts will then be revised based on the client feedback. There will also be a concurrent legal review of the correspondence.
- There are no right or wrong answers. I simply want to know what you think and why. Our discussion today should last no longer than 30 minutes.
  - *Confirm that the interviewee received the PDF of sample letters via email and has it open*
- **I will be placing you on speakerphone, as I am going to be taking notes and recording as you speak. Is that OK?**
- Thank you for your participation. Do you have any questions for me before we get started?

### *Interview Questions*

#### **Background**

1. To begin, please tell me briefly about your familiarity with client correspondences, specifically, the Notice of Action (NOA), the Income and Eligibility Verification System or IEVS letter (pronounced: “eaves”, the Redetermination Notice (RRR) and the Verification Checklist (VCL)?
  - a. Probe: Tell me a little more about your position and how it relates to client correspondence

#### **Overall Perceptions**

I’d like now for us to talk a little more *broadly about your overall perceptions of these client correspondences*. It’s important to note that we are focusing on **the language**,



**look and feel** of these letters today. So thinking about the way in which the information is presented and communicated.

2. How would you describe the overall effectiveness of these letters?
  - a. Are there frequent, shared issues/challenges that seem to emerge overall? (Interviewer note: please probe for *shared* issues focused on language, look and feel. If needed, remind the interviewee that we will discuss individual letters later and that we are not going to discuss operational or system issues during this conversation.)
  - b. Clients can choose to receive eligibility-related correspondence through U.S. Postal Mail and/or online through the Mail Center in their Colorado.gov/PEAK account. If they choose e-noticing, they can choose to be notified via email or text when there is a new letter in PEAK. What do you believe is the best method for delivering these letters? Why?
3. Do you believe the information contained in the correspondence letters is generally accurate?
  - a. If “yes” or “no,” what examples can you think of to highlight this?
  - b. Probe: Do particular letters often contradict each other or appear to contradict each other? If so, which ones?

### ***Areas for Improvement and Strengths***

I'd like to shift to talking more specifically about each of the four main types of client correspondence. For each letter type, I will first ask you about your familiarity, and then ask you to share your thoughts on challenges and strengths of the letter type. (Interviewer note: If participant indicates being *unfamiliar* with any of the specific letters below, please skip questions related to that letter.)

4. The Notice of Action (NOA) communicates initial and continuing eligibility of benefits, such as whether you are approved, denied or terminated. How familiar would you say you are with the NOA?
  - a. Based on your familiarity with the NOA...
    - i. What do you believe are the top areas for improvement regarding the language, look and feel of the letter? (*Probe*: This might be related to the layout, design, readability, accessibility and usability of the letter.)
    - ii. What do you believe are the top strengths of the letter?
  - b. If you could modify the look and feel of the NOA, how would you change it?
5. The Income and Eligibility Verification System (IEVS; interviewer note: IEVS is pronounced “eaves”) letter is a letter sent to clients if there is a discrepancy between what they reported as their income and what their employer reported to the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDOLE). If the income the client reported makes them eligible for Medicaid or CHP+, but the employer-reported income would make them ineligible, they will need to respond to the

- letter with an explanation of why the two numbers are different, or provide proof of their income. How familiar would you say you are with the IEVS?
- a. Based on your familiarity with the IEVS...
    - i. What do you believe are the top areas for improvement regarding the language, look and feel of the letter? (*Probe:* This might be related to the layout, design, readability, accessibility and usability of the letter.)
    - ii. What do you believe are the top strengths of the letter?
  - b. If you could modify the look and feel of the IEVS, how would you change it?
6. The Redetermination Notice (RRR) is a letter sent to clients to determine if they are still eligible for benefits. How familiar would you say you are with the RRR?
- a. Based on your familiarity with the RRR...
    - i. What do you believe are the top areas for improvement regarding the language, look and feel of the letter? (*Probe:* This might be related to the layout, design, readability, accessibility and usability of the letter.)
    - ii. What do you believe are the top strengths of the letter?
  - b. If you could modify the look and feel of the RRR, how would you change it?
7. The Verification Checklist (VCL) is a letter sent to applicants and clients who need to provide additional information/documentation for the system to determine their eligibility. If they do not provide this information/documentation, they will not qualify for benefits.
- How familiar would you say you are with the VCL?
- a. Based on your familiarity with the VCL...
    - i. What do you believe are the top areas for improvement regarding the language, look and feel of the letter? (*Probe:* This might be related to the layout, design, readability, accessibility and usability of the letter.)
    - ii. What do you believe are the top strengths of the letter?
  - b. If you could modify the look and feel of the VCL, how would you change it?

### **Closing**

8. As a \_\_\_\_\_ (insert role of interviewee), which of the areas for improvement you mentioned previously are most important to you?
  - a. Why?
  - b. If you could improve one thing with client correspondences, what would it be?
9. Are there any other *critical factors/approaches/focus to ensuring* that the client correspondences are clear and effective?

10. Do you have any final thoughts or concerns about these client correspondences?
  - a. Do you have any other comments or feedback that you think would be helpful for me or for HCPF and its partners to know?

**Thank you very much for your time!** Again, we'll be using this information to inform further conversations around improvements to these client correspondences. Your feedback and perspectives have been very valuable, and if you have any other thoughts that come to mind after we get off the phone, please feel free to contact me at any time. Or if I have additional questions, would it be all right if I got back in touch?

## Appendix C: Summary of Key Informant Interviews

Interviews with all 10 identified stakeholders were conducted April 21-27, 2016.

Interviewees were provided with sample correspondence of all four letters: the Notice of Action (NOA), the Income and Eligibility Verification System or IEVS letter, the Redetermination Notice (RRR) and the Verification Checklist (VCL). While some offered broader feedback about systems functioning, Joining Vision and Action (JVA) staff kindly reminded that the purpose of this round of feedback was to address the language, look and feel of the letters. From these interviews, several key themes were identified and are expanded upon below.

- **Simplification.** All participants noted that that overall, the letters are too long. While it was often recognized that some of the information, including information regarding supporting rules and appeals processes, is necessary to include, interviewees strongly suggested changing how they are incorporated.
- **Comprehension.** Ensuring that all correspondences are at an appropriate reading level is of the utmost importance. Additionally, when requesting information, especially when using jargon-like or not widely known terms, it is recommended that it be accompanied by simple description and/or definition.
- **Consistency.** For elements shared across all letters, such as terms and contact information, format of this information should be consistent. Creating a consistent header across all letters was also recommended.
- **Translation.** Interviewees noted that further work is needed to ensure complete and correct translation between English and Spanish versions.
- **Coordination.** For circumstances that require sending multiple letters to a client, adding clear language that outlines the purpose and necessity of each letter is recommended. Given the opportunity for these letters to appear contradictory, interviewees noted that it would be ideal if multiple letters can be avoided.

Specific feedback and themes from individual interviewees are included in the following pages.

## Individual Interviews

For each interview, a recording was created and accompanying notes were taken during the call. Each participant's role, affiliation, familiarity with the letters and a summary of the key themes are included below.

### Andrea Albo

Ms. Albo is the deputy executive director of Assistance for Denver Department of Human Services. She has been with the department for about 10 years and has had intimate involvement with the CBMS system and accompanying letters, both through direct service with clients and supervision of staff. She indicated she was **very familiar** with all four letters.

Key themes from this interview include:

- **Give the bottom line.** Ms. Albo is an avid believer that for the majority of people, if you “bottom line it” then drill into the details, there is likely to be a better success rate. Suggestions for structuring letters around this principle include: Here's what you need to know, here's what you need to do, here's what happens if you don't, and here's how you start. Ms. Albo also noted that taking this organized approach for action provides more incentive to take the presented action.
- **Having consistent flow and format.** Letters were often cited as lengthy and inconsistent with language and look. Tools like icons used in the NOA letter could be used thematically throughout the document to help create a thread of familiarity and understanding.
- **Dramatically improved over the years.** Given Ms. Albo's experience with the form, she has seen positive changes in the correspondence over the years and was complimentary of the continued commitment by state and county leaders to creating helpful and effective information for clients.

### Elisabeth Arenales

Ms. Arenales is the director of the Colorado Center on Law and Policy's Health Care Program. She has worked with benefit programs through individual litigation as well as overall policy review. Ms. Arenales said she is **very familiar** with each of the sample letters.

Key themes from this interview include:

- **Accessibility.** Ms. Arenales expressed concern about the reading level for all letters, as well as overall design and presentation of the information. She suggested: using simple headings to navigate through the notices, using shorter sentences, increasing font size, eliminating the use of conjunctions, and using bold font for emphasis on key pieces of information.
- **Comprehensiveness.** In addition to shortening and emphasizing important pieces of information, Ms. Arenales also noted the need for

more instructional or informational information about what components of the letter mean. For example, “effective date” was noted as confusing language and having multiple interpretations. Inconsistent abbreviations, such as “Inc Type” versus “Income Type” on the RRR letter were also noted as being unclear.

- **Clarity.** Ms. Arenales shared that clients can receive bundles of notices and can get so overwhelmed that at times they “don’t even open them.” She noted that it is most important to make the most important action or need as clear as possible and to have it be prevalent on the page.

In regards to the letters and the process for refining them, Ms. Arenales said, “There is no reason why a legally compliant document can’t be user friendly.” Ms. Arenales and her team of will also be providing a memorandum that outlines additional in-depth feedback. At the time of writing this summary, it has not been received.

### Stephanie Arenales

Ms. Arenales is the Boulder County Healthy Communities manager. She personally has helped many clients with these letters and also supports her staff as they work with their clients. Ms. Arenales said she is **very familiar** with all of the letters.

Key themes from this interview include:

- **Language.** Overall, Ms. Arenales noted that the letters could contain simpler language, make sure to use an appropriate reading level and avoid jargon. Specifically mentioned throughout was using “qualify” instead of “eligible.” For example, the phrase “we’ve determined your eligibility” could be “we want to see if you qualify for.” Also, references to program names should be consistent; either Medicaid or “medical assistance.”
- **Unified translation.** Ms. Arenales reported that her bilingual staff report a lot of issues with the translations, as it seems like different terms are used in different letters for the same thing. For example, the words for “man” and “woman” were different across two letters; one indicated gender for people and the other gender for animals. Ms. Arenales suggested that it be decided what words are going to be used and then use them consistently throughout all letters.
- **Clarity.** Ms. Arenales noted that a critical approach to ensuring that client correspondences are clear and effective is to make it very apparent (visually and through text) if the client needs to act, by when, for what reason and what is required.

### Mirna Castro

Ms. Castro is the director of Health Enrollment, Literacy & Promotions at Servicios de La Raza and partners with Connect or Health Colorado programs. She indicated that she is **somewhat to very familiar** with the correspondence letters.

Key themes from this interview include:

- **Translation.** The translation from English to Spanish is not always clear and is inconsistent across letters. Ms. Castro noted that the Spanish version is still not as clean and cohesive as the English versions and that they would benefit from having “more eyes” take a look at them to make sure the translation is clear and accurate.
- **Clarity.** Ms. Castro noted that while there has been definite improvement, specifically the NOA and use of check boxes and icons, there is still room to increase clarity of text in all letters. Suggestions include: decreasing the amount of words used, adding “call out” boxes to promote important information (such as PEAK access information) and accentuating what the next steps are.
- **Explanation and accuracy of information.** Though recognized as partially a systems-related issue (with information reported and generated through CBMS), Ms. Castro also noted that more explanation of what terms mean (i.e., differences between gross and net income) and how the timelines apply to the client (i.e., date range for proof of income) would be helpful.

Joanne Hine and Cassie Kampf

Ms. Hine is the Economic Assistance Division supervisor and works mostly with the IEVS and RRR letters for medical assistance. Her team has frequent calls for these letters and is tasked with trying to “answer and decipher.” Ms. Kampf is an Economic Assistance intake supervisor and works mostly with the initial approvals for Medicaid. Both interviewees work for the Mesa County Department of Human Services and were identified as participants for this interview by Michelle Trujillo. They noted being **familiar** with the correspondence.

Key themes from this interview include:

- **Less is more.** Both Ms. Hine and Ms. Kampf agreed that many of the forms were too busy. There were too many dates, too many columns, too many jargon words, etc. The workers may understand all of this information, and also may not at times, but it is very unlikely that the client would be able to understand all of what is included on the page. Being more concise and to the point was a common suggestion. “They just want to know what they’re approved/denied for and why.”
- **Focus on friendly.** For letters that require additional information, the interviewees suggested adding friendlier language to help ward off panic from clients. Specifically, instances where there is additional information needed and the receipt of that information affect the client’s benefits. While this is the most critical piece to address, it was also noted that the letters could have a more person-to-person feel.

- **Clear and current use of dates.** In several letters, the interviewees noted that dates listed on the letters often cause confusion or concern. Specifically mentioned for the NOA and IEVS, the dates included often appear to be contradictory with each other or not applicable to current circumstances (i.e., dates from one or more years prior). While it is understood that some of these dates are necessary to include, more clear explanation of what they represent and why they are included would be helpful. Additionally, adding “end dates” would be helpful in sharing with clients the time frame for these benefits so they can be aware of when they may be required to do something else in order to retain services.

Jennifer M. O'Hearon and Carmen McKay

Ms. O'Hearon is the executive director of Health and Human Services for Rio Blanco County. Carmen McKay, an eligibility technician, joined the call for the interview. Ms. O'Hearon was **familiar** and Ms. McKay noted being **very familiar** with all of the sample forms, as they are something she and her staff “deal with every day.”

Key themes from this interview include:

- **Simplify.** Across all letters, both interviewees noted that condensing the information provided and simplifying the language would help clients understand the correspondence better. They suggested editing the forms so that they get to the point and share what is needed more clearly and quickly.
- **Personalize.** Ms. O'Hearon noted that clients would benefit from having their correspondence reflect their specific circumstance. For example, for the VCL, the person needs to provide bank statements though the letter may use the language of “financial statements.” By not using language that the clients are familiar with or by being clear about what is needed for whom, they often show up at their local county office confused and upset.
- **Clarity.** Both interviewees mentioned that clients often receive multiple letters that appear to contradict each other or at the very least provide confusion. Considering this system issue, Ms. O'Hearon and Ms. McKay suggested being more explicit about program approvals/denials and how they fit into the overall timeline. For example, clients may be denied food assistance for some months and not others. By the time they receive and review the letters, it can be confusing to understand what applies to when.

Representative Dianne Primavera

Colorado State Representative Dianne Primavera dedicates a good deal of her legislative efforts toward issues related to health care. Rep. Primavera serves as the chairperson of the Public Health and Human Services Committee as well as being on the Health, Insurance and Environment Committee, the Legislative Audit Committee and the Health Exchange Oversight Committee. Furthermore, she worked for HCPF as a



customer service manager. Given this experience, Rep. Primavera is **familiar** with the client correspondences.

Key themes from this interview include:

- **Readability.** Rep. Primavera noted that the letters should be written at no higher than a sixth-grade reading level to ensure all clients can understand the correspondence.
- **Clarity.** Rep. Primavera spoke to the importance of being clear about how to get in touch with staff to support client questions regarding these letters. She noted that it is important to include who, at what times and at what numbers staff can be reached for support.
- **Accuracy.** Rep. Primavera noted that she is aware of constituents who have received letters that appear to both declare eligibility and lack of eligibility. Ensuring that letters are clear regarding their intent and do not contradict other letters is important for client understanding and experience.

Kristin Pulatie, Jerry Chartowich and Jen Sherwood

Ms. Pulatie is the director of Health and Human Services for Montrose County. Given her **limited familiarity** with the letters, she invited two of her staff to also participate in the interview: Jerry Chartowich, Eligibility Program manager, and Jen Sherwood, Eligibility Program supervisor. Both noted they were **familiar** with the letters, with Ms. Sherwood being the “subject unit expert.”

Key themes from this interview include:

- **Information inclusion and placement.** Noted throughout this conversation was the type of information included and where the important pieces are placed within the letters. Interviewees noted that information often will get lost when included on multiple pages and many clients will lose interest after a while. Also, many times the letters include information that is not relevant to them (i.e., programs that they didn’t apply for.)
- **Remove jargon.** Interviewees noted that clients could be confused by all of the different agencies (state, county and divisions thereof) involved in the provision of benefits program. “We [county employees] sort of know what they are wanting to say, but the person who has just applied and is receiving initial communication from the state, oh, the maybe it’s the county, oh, it’s got Jerry’s name on it ... at that point, things start to break down. Many people we deal with have a fairly low frustration tolerance.”
- **Be person- and outcome-focused.** A common thread for all correspondence is to increase the “personal” feel of the letters to demonstrate care for clients as humans, versus some that are more detached and “mechanic.” To that end, people want to know what’s going to happen after they fill out the paperwork. Recognizing this human need

and including more information up front about “what’s next” would be helpful.

### Sheryl Sablan

Ms. Sablan is a TANF supervisor and also carries a small caseload of her own in El Paso County. She indicated that she is **very familiar** with the NOA and VCL letters and **somewhat familiar** with the IEVS and RRR letters.

- **Clarity.** Ms. Sablan noted that clients often express confusion about what the information says. Cutting down on the number of words and pages would be helpful in creating an accessible document for clients. She noted that with the wording coming through the system, it’s not really self-explanatory, so it is very helpful to be able to include staff comments to explain what they need specifically from each client.
- **Incorrect or misleading dates.** Noted across the forms, Ms. Sablan has experienced dates that are either unclear as to what they apply to or are contradictory from letter to letter. She suggested being more clear about what each date means and using as few dates as possible.
- **Too much information.** Ms. Sablan identified that the area of improvement that was most important to her is to reduce the amount of information contained within the letters because it contributes to the confusion of the families.

### Renee Schiffhauer

Ms. Schiffhauer is a health and life insurance advisor associated with Connect for Health Colorado. She works mostly with clients who are not eligible for Medicaid, though she does see client correspondence letters for clients who are transitioning between public assistance and Marketplace healthcare. Ms. Schiffhauer identified as being **not very familiar** with the IEVS and RRR letters, **familiar** with the VCL and **very familiar** with the NOA.

Key themes from this interview include:

- **Volume of letters.** Ms. Schiffhauer noted that with the high quantity of letters that a client could receive, it is important to be clear about what each one means and why the client is receiving it. “One thing will say one thing and the letters will say something else. We [staff] put things in the computer and they don’t correct in the system and trigger lots of letters.” Also noted is that depending on when they arrive, the dates seem to be irrelevant or “old” by the time they get the letter. In which case, again, indicating more about why clients are receiving this letter and how it fits into the larger picture would be helpful.
- **Simplify.** The amount of language included in each letter was identified as an area for improvement across all letters. Ms. Schiffhauer recommended keeping letters short and to the point.

- **Contact information.** Increasing the visibility of how people can get in touch with someone to ask questions or reply to the requests for information would be helpful across all letters. Also, ensuring that contact information is current and applicable for clients is key. Ms. Schiffhauer noted that many times the clients she has worked with report that the eligibility worker listed on the letters is either inaccurate or unavailable.

### **Additional feedback**

In terms of layout, the majority of interviewees appreciated the use of the icons (i.e., green checkmarks) and other visual cues, such as the check boxes found in the IEVS letter. Other suggestions included consistent use of headers and box formatting across all letters.

While the interviewer guided interviewees to focus on the language, look and feel of the letters, many participants commented on some of the systems elements that then contribute to the information presented in the letters. For example, the information included in the IEVS letter can be either outdated (a CDOLE reporting period from multiple quarters prior) or can be “inaccurate” to what the client knows to be true (i.e., a workplace noted by its “doing business as (dba)” instead of its publicly known name).

Responses regarding the method for correspondence were mixed and dependent on the client and community. Contributing factors included age of the client, access to physical mailboxes, access to the Internet, and homeless or transient populations, among others. In addition to client preference, an identified benefits of U.S. mail delivery included the return of undeliverable mail to the county, which can help with case closure depending on circumstances. Text and email notifications to log in to PEAK were noted as being friendly to some (especially the younger generations) and the likely movement forward, however, many noted that clients often had trouble logging into the PEAK system, resulting in more calls to their local office. Multiple interviewees noted that direct email of the letters might be a suitable option (in lieu of U.S. mail and the PEAK inbox).

## Appendix D: Integrative Project Team (IPT) Meeting Summary

### *HCPF Stakeholder Engagement Solutions Focused Meeting: Summary of Recommendations*

This represents a summary of recommendations that came out of the meeting held on May 4, 2016 at the Piton Foundation in Denver, Colorado. The meeting was comprised of over 30 health care representatives from across the state, both in-person and on the phone. All participants contributed through a “world café” style facilitation led by Joining Vision and Action.

#### **NOA**

- Make the approval/denial information more user friendly
  - Separate the tables out by program or by individual family member
    - Consensus was not reached regarding which would be better
  - Produce consistent column categories, fonts and headings
- Provide clients with the pertinent contents of the NOA letter on the first page
- Create a key terms and definitions section
- Review which legal notices can be omitted to help prevent client intimidation
  - Currently there are six pages of legal notices
- Make clearer determination dates
- Provide clear instructions on next steps

#### **IEVS**

- Improve clarity and transparency
  - Include both the corporate and common name of employer entity to decrease confusion in clients
  - Be clear about how previous information was obtained by CO Labor and Employment
    - Ensure client knows what information is already on file
- Include an introductory statement regarding why client is receiving the IEVS
- Prioritize the instructions and next steps required of the client
  - Current call to action is ambiguous
- Ensure font is friendly and consistent
  - Current font appears too “governmental”
- Information in paragraph four may be best presented in a chart

#### **RRR**

- Ensure format is consistent for both medical and food assistance RRRs
- Establish page breaks in appropriate places so as to divide up information in a clear manner
- Redo the area where clients input information that has changed so as to ask questions instead of providing check boxes
- Include some “pleases” and “thank yous” to the letter while removing some of the more demanding “you must” and “we need” to establish friendlier tone

- Highlight the intent of the letter and the call to action as they are currently not clear enough

## VCL

- Reshuffle the order of content presented
  - Currently, pertinent information about exactly what is expected of the client is on the last page; recommend to move that information to the front page
- Condense into three sections: Why the client is receiving the letter, what the client needs to do, what information is needed for verification
- Eliminate repetition of words and concepts
  - Usage of the word “proof” was provided as an example
- Include clear instructions regarding how the VCL process can be completed on the PEAK website

## Across Letters

- Consistent format for tables and how they are used to present information
- Ensure appropriate literacy level
- Provide better Spanish translations

## Systems Issues

- Submission of client RRR information on PEAK Health is not visible by the county
- Clarity regarding whether or not a client needs to respond to an IEVS even if there is no change in their reported income would help reduce client anxiety
- Improve mobile access of PEAK website
- Inclusion of ancillary family members on forms tends to lead to client confusion

## Appendix E: CCLP Memorandum

**To:** CBMS Communications Integrated Projects Team (IPT)

**From:** Colorado Center on Law and Policy, Bethany Pray (303) 573-5669 x 310

**Date:** April 29, 2016

**Re:** Elements of Accessible, Comprehensive and Legally Sufficient Notices of Action

The Colorado Center on Law & Policy (CCLP) was asked to participate in a series of interviews to assess the legal sufficiency of current Notices of Action (NOAs) generated by CBMS for public benefit programs. CCLP consulted other legal advocacy organizations on the issues they see in working with clients of public benefit programs in preparation for the interview with JVA. To aid the efforts of the IPT in improving NOAs in Colorado, CCLP has drafted this memo summarizing the issues the legal advocacy community believes are essential to developing NOAs that are accessible, comprehensive and in compliance with federal legal standards for procedural due process.

### **Due Process Legal Standard for Public Benefit Notices**

The vitality of our public benefit programs hinges on the state's ability to communicate important information to consumers clearly and comprehensively. Providing digestible and informative notices of action is a crucial component of effective administration of work support and health coverage programs. When NOAs are unclear, poorly formatted, and fail to inform the applicant of why an action is taken or what information was used to make that decision; it limits the ability of a recipient to contest errors in their eligibility and benefit determination and increases the likelihood of churn.

In Goldberg v. Kelly (1970), the U.S. Supreme Court interpreted the Fourteenth Amendment to require that benefit determination notices must give claimants sufficient information to understand the basis for the agency's action, in order for the notice to be constitutionally adequate.<sup>6</sup> This requirement is a cornerstone of maintaining procedural due process in benefit programs, since applicants "cannot know whether a challenge to an agency's action is warranted, much less formulate an effective challenge, if they are not provided with sufficient information to understand the basis for the agency's action."<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, federal courts have also held that state agencies may not place the burden on program participants to acquire all the information needed to understand why the decision was made. States must provide individuals "complete" notice about why

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<sup>6</sup> Goldberg v. Kelly, 397 U.S. 254 (1970).

<sup>7</sup> Kapps v. Wing, 404 F.3d 105, 124 (2005).

benefits are being reduced or terminated in order that participants may make a fully informed decision about whether to challenge the state’s proposed action.<sup>8</sup> Simply citing a federal or state rule is insufficient. In Colorado, for example, Medical Assistance regulations require that NOAs contain both the specific regulations that require an action *and* “the reasons for the intended action.”<sup>9</sup> Similarly, regulations for Food Assistance notices must contain the reason for the determination, and verification request notices must “specify” the information requested.<sup>10</sup> Recognizing that adequate notices are a basic element of procedural due process, federal courts have acknowledged that without sufficient notice, many errors “will stand uncorrected, and many [participants] will be unjustly deprived of the means to obtain the necessities of life.”<sup>11</sup>

Consequently, as a matter of both legal compliance and best practice, NOAs must fully inform participants of the basis of an adverse decision in language that is accessible and comprehensive.

## **Accessibility**

### **I. NOAs should organize information so that it is easy to understand:**

For notices to be effective, they must be easy to read and understand. Accordingly, we suggest that the State of Colorado consider the following revisions:

- **Information should be conveyed in language that is at a 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading level or lower.**<sup>12</sup> In a 2014 memorandum on best practices for NOAs, the USDA recommends using language at a 6<sup>th</sup> grade level or lower, in order for notices to be understandable to program participants.
- **Use simple headings to help participants navigate the notice.** Examples include “Who will get Medicaid” or “Who can’t get Medicaid and why.” These headings will facilitate better understanding of NOAs.
- **Reduce line lengths to 15 words or less and avoid conjunctions.** Using shorter sentences, as well as more white space in the notice, helps ensure better readability. Also, when giving reasons for an adverse decision, notices should be as precise as

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<sup>8</sup> Ortiz v. Eichler, 616 F. Supp. 1046, 1062 (D. Del. 1985); Schroeder v. Hegstrom, 590 F. Supp. 121, 128 (D. Or. 1984) (quoting Philadelphia Welfare Rights Organization v. O’Bannon, 525 F. Supp. 1055, 1061 (E.D. Pa. 1981)).

<sup>9</sup> 10 CCR 2505-10 § 8.057.1

<sup>10</sup> 10 CCR 2506-1 §§ 4.608.A., 4.604.1, 4.308.F

<sup>11</sup> Vargas v. Trainor, 508 F.2d 485, 490 (7th Cir. 1974)

<sup>12</sup> Available at:

[http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SNAP%20%20Best%20Practices%20in%20Developing %20Effective%20SNAP%20Client%20Notices.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SNAP%20%20Best%20Practices%20in%20Developing%20Effective%20SNAP%20Client%20Notices.pdf)

possible and should avoid using “or” to present multiple possible reasons for an adverse decision. For example, it is best to avoid sentences such as, “You did not qualify for benefits because you did not provide proof of expenses or proof of income.”

- **Information should be presented in a font that is easily readable.** According to the USDA “Guide to Improving Notices of Adverse Action”:  
“It is best to use at least a 10-point type for the basic text and a larger font size for headings (usually at least 2 points larger than your text). Sans Serif fonts like Arial or Lucida Sans have an open look that is easier to read.” However, this “10-point” font size suggestion is merely a minimum benchmark, and to ensure readability, particularly for older beneficiaries, we recommend a larger font size, at least 12 point.
- **The most pertinent information should be bolded and presented at the beginning of the notice.** In Colorado, NOAs do not always clearly state the proposed action at the beginning of the notice. This problem is most evident on notices that contain information for several different programs. Emphasizing the proposed action, with larger font and higher prominence on the notice, will help ensure that more participants are aware of the pending changes in their status
- **Notices should not include previous (outdated) decisions nor should they include contradicting provisions.** NOAs should only contain information that is currently relevant and should not include outdated case information.
- **Citations to statutory regulations should be presented in a less prominent location on the notice.** Information that will initially be less helpful to the participant, such as citations to the “supporting rule,” do not reduce the need for information that is central to the recipient’s understanding, such as the plain language reason for the action. Although these regulatory citations are required in Colorado’s Medicaid program, they could be displayed less prominently. Additionally, the inclusion of pages that are “intentionally left blank” also delays the presentation of more relevant information, and is confusing for beneficiaries.
- **Use of terms should be consistent within and between sections.** For example, Medicaid notices in Colorado currently contain two dates: an “application date” and “coverage start date.” A later page explains appeal rights, but uses the term “effective date.” Without further explanation, recipients would not be able to identify which date is the effective date.

## **II. NOAs should include a “Babel insert” to ensure the understanding of Limited English Proficient participants:**

NOAs must be accessible to people with limited English proficiency (“LEP”). In order to ensure that limited English Proficient participants are able to understand the content of



notices they receive, NOAs should include a standardized “Babel insert.” These inserts pose the following question in several different languages:

*“If you need help understanding this document, please call 1-800-xxx-xxxx. We can provide an interpreter for free.”*

Currently, the only NOAs in Colorado that include these inserts are those that originate from Connect for Health Colorado program (see **Appendix C, “CO Notice 10/27/2015,” page 3**). These inserts should be included in NOAs for every program. This step would enable LEP participants to seek the help they might require in order to understand changes outlined in their notices. Including this insert would also ensure compliance with Title VI and the Affordable Care Act (ACA).<sup>13</sup> A proposed rule on nondiscrimination in health programs under Section 1557 of the ACA would require taglines in the top 15 languages spoken by individuals with LEP nationally.<sup>14</sup> By making plans to incorporate that language now, Colorado will be taking appropriate steps toward compliance.

### **Comprehensiveness**

NOAs should include the specific rationale for the adverse decision, as well as the household and income information used as the basis for that decision.

#### **I. NOAs should inform the participant of the specific reason for the adverse decision and to whom it applies:**

Effective notices provide the participant with an individualized and specific basis for decisions involving their benefit determination and eligibility. When notices offer an explanation that is vague or generalized, the participant does not have enough information to know whether the determination is accurate. In order for an individual to confirm the accuracy of their benefit determination or to make an informed decision about whether to appeal, he or she must have specific information about the basis for denial, termination or reduction in benefits.

Examples of problematic language, and alternatives to that language, follow.

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<sup>13</sup> Title VI 42 U.S.C. § 2000d states: “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” This provision protects against discrimination based on language exclusion.

<sup>14</sup> The federal Office of Civil Rights plans to provide a sample notice and translated taglines for use by covered entities. For more information on the proposed rule, see “Nondiscrimination in Health Programs and Activities Proposed Rule, Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act.” Available at: <http://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/for-individuals/section-1557/nondiscrimination-health-programs-and-activities-proposed-rule/index.html>

- a) In Appendix A, the box for “Medicaid + Additional Long-Term Care Services,” the applicant was denied for the following reason:

*“You did not give us everything needed to complete your application.”*

A more legally sound approach would be to provide the participant with the specific item(s) still needed to process the application. For example:

*“Your application was not processed because you did not give us proof of monthly utilities expenses.”*

Or see **Appendix D (“PA Notice, 8/31/2015”)** for another example of a NOA that provides a more specific basis for a benefit determination:

*“Your SNAP benefits are being stopped because you failed to submit a timely application for recertification, or you did not complete the recertification interview scheduled by the CAO.”*

(Although the rationale on this notice could be even more specific by eliminating one of the two alternatives, it is an improvement over the Colorado notice, insofar as it more precisely identifies the components missing from the application.)

- b) In Appendix B, in the box for “Medicaid- No Premium required,” the applicant was denied for the following reason:

*“Your income is more than the limit for the program.”*

A better notice would include the specific amount that the participant exceeds the program’s limit. In contrast, please refer to **Appendix E (“PA Notice, 4/22/2014”)**, which reads:

*“You do not qualify for SNAP because your countable resources are over the resource limit. The amount of your countable resources is \$3,405.00, which is over the limit of \$3,250.00.”*

## **II. NOAs should clearly present all of the relevant household information underlying the benefit calculation:**

Notices are frequently mailed to program participants after there has been a reported change in household circumstances, resulting in a new benefit calculation or eligibility determination. Consequently, it is important that participants are given the underlying household information used in their benefit redetermination, so that they can verify the accuracy of this information and dispute any errors.

Specifically, when relevant, NOAs should inform participants:

- (1) Who is counted in the “household”;
- (2) What is the recorded *income* of each household member; and

(3) What are the recorded *expenses* of each household member.

This important information, which allows the participant to confirm the accuracy of their benefit determination, is already electronically stored, and thus, should be readily available for inclusion in NOAs.

For examples, please see some of the samples cited below: Note that Appendix A is a Medicaid notice and expenses are not necessary, just income.

- a) In **Appendix A (“CO Notice, 2/10/2016”)**, the Colorado notice does *not* include the recorded income or expenses for each household member. A better alternative is **Appendix F (“WI Notice, 7/30/2012”)**, on page 4, there is a table that includes each individual in the household, their reported income, and their expenses (“Bills”).
- b) **Appendix E (“PA Notice, 4/22/2014”)**, which is intended to inform the participant that he or she is over the resource limit, includes a table with each household member and their reported assets. Note: this NOA does *not* include each household member’s income, as that information is irrelevant to the issue of whether they exceeded the resource limit.

By incorporating these revisions into Colorado’s Notice of Actions, the state will help to facilitate more effective communication with program participants. These improvements will allow participants to better understand their status and rectify any errors in their benefit calculations—thereby reducing churn and enabling savings to taxpayers and state agencies.

# Community Assessment of Latino Older Adults in Metro Denver

**For Colorado Latino Age Wave**

An initiative of

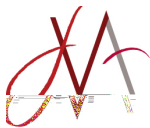


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## Executive Summary

The mission of Colorado Latino Age Wave is to invest in and advocate for innovative services and programs that support the well-being of Denver's Latino older adult population. To support its mission and see it become a reality in metro Denver, Colorado Latino Age Wave engaged JVA Consulting, LLC (JVA) and CREA Results (CREA) to conduct a community assessment to build a base of knowledge about key factors that influence access and delivery of services for Latino older adults in the seven-county Denver metro area, which includes Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas and Jefferson counties. The primary goals of the assessment were to:

- Present a comprehensive demographic overview of the 55+ Latino populations in the Denver metropolitan area
- Provide insight into their values, beliefs, feelings and perceptions about aging, as well as the assets and strengths they bring to solve community problems and age in community
- Achieve a baseline understanding of the needs, issues and challenges facing Latino older adults
- Identify and document strategies that advocate for and support access to services for Latino older adults

## Methodology

The following methods were used to complete the assessment:

- Engaged a Community Advisory Committee in the assessment process
- Engaged an expert in cultural competency
- Conducted a literature review and demographic research of Latino older adults age 55 and older
- Conducted 19 telephone or in-person interviews and two focus groups with key community leaders
- Conducted 10 focus groups with Latino older adults ranging in age from 55 to 90
- Conducted two focus groups with caregivers of Latino older adults
- Developed and administered a Web-based survey to gather information from service providers

## Key Findings

The community assessment identified several key findings, which help Colorado Latino Age Wave better understand the Latino older adult population in metro Denver and inform its future work. The following is a brief overview of key findings, broken out by the assets Latino older adults possess as well as their needs.



### Assets of Latino Older Adults

- Latino older adults possess many strengths and assets, which are valuable resources for the Denver metropolitan area. These assets include: strong commitments to family and community, resiliency, experience building coalitions, wisdom and knowledge, and a desire to remain active and engaged. They have a strong work ethic and deep desire to help family, neighbors and the community.
- Latino older adults have positive perceptions on aging and appreciate the wisdom that comes with age. For them, it is important to remain engaged and active, have good health, maintain independence, and have family support.
- Latino older adults value the role of family, desire to help their family and the community, and want to age in place because of strong family connections.
- The Latino older adult population is rapidly growing and is growing at a faster rate than other racial and ethnic groups in the same age range. As they seek to expand educational and career opportunities and remain connected and active in community, there are significant opportunities to engage this growing and thriving population.

### Needs of Latino Older Adults

- Service providers and agencies organized to care for older adults are inadequately prepared to address the particular needs of aging Latino constituents. Similarly, service providers and agencies dedicated to serving Latinos are inadequately prepared to address the particular needs of those who are aging. As a result, there is a lack of services and supports geared specifically toward Latino older adults in metro Denver. Latino older adults specifically need additional access to health care, nutrition, transportation and adequate housing. They also want increased access to classes and activities to continue their education as well as opportunities to remain active and engaged in the community.
- Compared with non-Latinos of the same age group, the Latino older adult populations in metro Denver face health disparities, specifically in the area of diabetes. They also have lower rates of health insurance coverage, higher rates of poverty and higher rates of unemployment. These disparities point to the high need for many individuals to have increased access to important services.
- Local service providers need additional training and technical assistance to learn how to better serve and reach Latino older adults. They also need help overcoming challenges such as inadequate funding or insufficient capacity.
- There is a lack of effective communication and outreach to Latino older adults about available services. Whether services or supports are available through community-based organizations or government agencies, Latino older adults often do not know about the services or how to access them. There needs to be communication activities specifically aimed at addressing how to effectively reach this population with important information. Additionally, many services are complex and Latino older adults and their families need help navigating the complex systems.
- There are policies that both help Latinos as well as hinder their access to services. Policies that help include those that prohibit against discrimination, provide access to discounted services, facilitate access to government assistance and protect from fraud or exploitation. Policies that hinder access fail to adequately acknowledge the role of

family in caregiving, make access complicated for intergenerational households and discriminate based on documentation.

- Latino older adults face several barriers in accessing services, such as adequate information, financial resources, culturally responsive and age-appropriate services, language-appropriate materials, bilingual staff and transportation. Undocumented immigrants face additional barriers, such as being prevented from accessing some services as well as experiencing fear, dependency and isolation.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed as a result of the findings from the assessment.

- Support neighborhood-based and home-based programs
- Utilize the promotores model to train Latino older adults to help others navigate the system and increase access to services
- Build coalitions and partnerships among organizations serving the Latino community as well as older adults
- Support intergenerational programs that engage the entire family
- Increase funding to Latino serving agencies to increase their capacity to serve older adults and increase funding to aging service providers to increase their capacity to serve Latinos more effectively
- Develop a public policy initiative that supports community-centered services
- Invest in training to develop champions among Latino older adults
- Develop more effective communication strategies

## Introduction and Background

Two important demographic trends in the United States are (1) the rapidly growing number of older Americans and, (2) the growing number of Latinos in all age groups. When these two realities are brought together, it becomes clear that regions with significant Latino populations must take a closer look at how Latino older adults will help change the narrative of aging in their communities and across the nation.

Within the human services framework, aging is often described in terms of the deficits that accumulate as individuals grow older, particular with regard to health, disability, economic security, access to vital services and connection to community. In this service model, the mission of many public and private agencies and their funders is to address these deficits to alleviate the negative impact of aging on the lives of individuals and their families. However, the deficit-focused vision of aging is incomplete and obsolete. Thanks in part to social supports in place over several generations, many older adults lead healthy, productive and meaningful lives into their 60s, 70s, 80s and beyond. Today's older adults are redefining aging on their own terms with high expectations, optimism and a sense of purpose. They are creating an unlimited range of possibilities and opportunities to contribute to their families, their communities and their own well-being.

Additionally, Latino older adults bring a rich history and strong cultural traditions to the asset-focused vision of aging. As illustrated throughout this report, values such as family, community, intergenerational connectivity and a sense of duty to help others are important assets. While Latinos have faced social and economic adversity, they have also developed resiliency, a sense of cultural pride and a strong commitment to help the community.

However, Latino older adults are also at higher social risk than many other older adults, and when compared with non-Latinos in the same age ranges, they face greater poverty, unemployment and health disparities in metro Denver. They also face barriers such as ineffective communication and outreach and lack of language- and culturally-responsive services. Undocumented Latinos face additional barriers, as they are ineligible for many of the safety-net services and supports.

## Colorado Latino Age Wave's Response

In 2011, Hispanics in Philanthropy (HIP), a national organization focused on promoting stronger partnerships between organized philanthropy and Latino communities, launched the Latino Aging Initiative with research showing a "wave" of Latinos entering *la tercera edad* (third stage of life) with a 224% increase in older Latinos by 2030. This research by Hispanics in Philanthropy provides a detailed analysis of Latino aging issues for consideration by the philanthropic, public and private sectors.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cummings, M. R., Hernandez, V. A., Rockymore, M., Shepard, M. M., & Sager, K. (2011). The Latino Age Wave: What changing ethnic demographics mean for the future of aging in the United States. Retrieved (footnote continued)

In October 2011, Colorado Latino Age Wave was launched as an initiative of Rose Community Foundation with major funding from Hispanics in Philanthropy (provided by The Atlantic Philanthropies), the Latino Community Foundation of Colorado and Community First Foundation. In June 2012, the Colorado Health Foundation joined the partnership as a major funder as well. Colorado Latino Age Wave seeks to understand more deeply the assets and strengths of the Latino older adult population in the seven-county Denver metropolitan area, as well as the ways to invest in and advocate for innovative services and programs that support this population. HIP selected metro Denver as the inaugural community to begin building capacity and innovative programs to support Latino older adult populations through the foundation partnership.

The core values and philosophy guiding Colorado Latino Age Wave are focused on the following:

- Respecting *cultural relevancy* and honoring the cultures and values that are central to Latino populations
- Helping all Latino older adults maintaining *independence* and a high quality of life
- Believing in *intergenerational strength* and the engagement and interconnection of the whole family
- Upholding *respect for elders* and believing the wisdom, knowledge and experience they possess are invaluable assets to their families

Colorado Latino Age Wave is committed to helping service providers:

- Develop culturally relevant practices and programs
- Support the development of programs that help foster independence in a culturally relevant way
- Promote the creation of a high quality of life for both aging members of the family as well as the young people living in the household
- Support a model of care that acknowledges the assets and strengths of older adults

In order to support its mission and see it become a reality in metro Denver, Colorado Latino Age Wave engaged JVA Consulting, LLC (JVA) and CREA Results (CREA) to conduct a community assessment to build a base of knowledge about key factors that influence access and delivery of services for Latino older adults in the seven-county Denver metro area, which includes Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas and Jefferson counties. This report presents the findings of the assessment.

### Historical Context of Metro Denver

Metro Denver is an ideal location to focus attention and resources on the expanding population of Latino older adults, given the cultural history and current demography of the American

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from <http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/learning/report-latino-age-wave-what-changing-ethnic-demographics-mean-future-aging-us>

Southwest. The Latino population is rich in diversity and complexity, ranging from families whose ancestors predate white settlers to recent immigrants.

A brief look through Colorado's history reveals several key phases that have had an impact on the Latino population. From Native Americans and the Spanish conquistadores, to Mexico's independence from Spain, followed by America's westward expansion and the war on Mexico, to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and a subsequent wave of civil rights violations, the Latino population has endured much adversity throughout Colorado's history.

Denver is often cited as the birthplace of the Chicano Movement,<sup>2</sup> and it is a legacy that was brought up in key leader interviews by community leaders who cited activism and survival as two of the assets of the Latino older adult population in the Denver metro area. In the 1960s, tired of discrimination and indiscriminate violence, Chicanos started to stand up and fight for their rights. The movement started in New Mexico, when Reies López Tijerina demanded the Treaty of Guadalupe to be honored, and was continued in Denver when Rodolfo (Corky) Gonzáles founded the Crusade for Justice, an organization that fought for the rights of Mexican Americans.<sup>3</sup>

Although Latinos have faced great adversity, they have survived and thrived with a characteristic resiliency that has led to a rich cultural endowment, a strong network of Latino-serving institutions, political clout and growing influence within the social and economic mainstream. Leaders such as Corky Gonzáles, Federico Peña (the first Latino Mayor of Denver) and many others highlight the great successes and opportunities of the Latino population in metro Denver.

The creators of this report have made substantial efforts to represent diverse views and perspectives on Latino aging while presenting data that point to some common themes and trends. This report demonstrates how Latino older adults approach aging in a way that honors their wisdom and assets, and it deserves consideration in the formation of public policy, in the creation of best practices in service delivery and in the growing and changing body of knowledge about aging in America.

## Methodology

Colorado Latino Age Wave outlined the following primary goals of the assessment:

- Present a comprehensive demographic overview of the 55+ Latino populations in the Denver metropolitan area
- Provide insight into their values, beliefs, feelings and perceptions about aging, as well as the assets and strengths they bring to solve community problems and age in community
- Achieve a baseline understanding of the needs, issues and challenges facing Latino older adults

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<sup>2</sup> National Public Radio.(2011). Chicano Movement's Denver Roots Run Deep. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/2011/06/30/137529484/the-chicano-movements-denver-roots-run-deep>.

<sup>3</sup> Muñoz, C. (1989). Youth, identity, power: The Chicano Movement. New York: Verso Books.

- Identify and document strategies that advocate for and support access to services for Latino older adults

To ensure data collection methods addressed these three goals, the following research questions were developed:

- Who makes up the Latino 55+ population in Denver? What are their demographic characteristics? What are their values, beliefs, feelings and perceptions about aging? What assets and strengths do Latino older adults have that they can bring to solving community problems and to aging in community?
- What do Latino older adults need and desire to successfully age in community?
- What services and supports are currently provided? What are the gaps?
- What are successful strategies/best practices to advocate for and to provide services and supports?
- What are the local, state and federal rules, regulations, guidelines and policies that facilitate or interfere with access to services and supports?

The assessment utilized diversified methods to gather data from community members and stakeholders, which also included a review of literature and secondary data. The assessment gathered and triangulated data from several sources and methods in order to increase the accuracy and validity of the findings. This community assessment was guided by the expertise of community members with extensive knowledge and understanding of the Latino community in metro Denver, the older adult community in metro Denver, and issues and trends in cultural competency, research and evaluation, and community engagement. Additionally, tools were designed and methods were selected based on an approach that seeks to illuminate, understand and utilize the strengths and assets that community members, specifically Latino older adults, bring to addressing community needs and challenges.

### **Community Advisory Committee**

A Community Advisory Committee (Committee) was created by Colorado Latino Age Wave to provide counsel, expertise and guidance on matters related to the successful planning and implementation of the overall initiative. The Committee consisted of 16 volunteer members who represented and offered a broad range of expertise, age and experience to the initiative. Committee members met with JVA and CREA four times to provide feedback about the assessment. Members include representatives from constituency-based groups, private businesses, education, health and mental health institutions, government, nonprofits and foundations. The Committee provided informed counsel on the planning and implementation of the community assessment. It provided feedback and approval on the overall assessment design and research questions; reviewed, discussed and provided feedback on all data collection tools used during the assessment; participated in a focus group style discussion to pilot the key leader interview protocol; and provided insight and recommendations into the specific individuals or types of content area experts to participate in the key leader interviews. Finally, the Committee reviewed the assessment report and provided feedback and recommendations.

### Expert in Cultural Competency

Colorado Latino Age Wave also engaged the services of an expert in cultural competency. The role of the expert was to bring awareness and capacity of cultural competency principles, as well as incorporate knowledge, analysis and best practices to the initiative. The cultural competency expert reviewed and provided feedback on all data collection tools, observed and provided feedback on select focus groups, and reviewed and provided feedback on the final report.

### Document Review and Demographic Research

A document and literature review was conducted to better understand the current trends in aging, as well as gain deeper knowledge into the policies and practices impacting Latino older adults. Demographic data were used to better understand the characteristics of the Latino older adult population in the seven-county Denver metro area, which includes Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas and Jefferson counties. Demographic variables included: Latino aging trends in Colorado, population counts by age, gender, health insurance coverage, disability, health conditions, poverty, unemployment and other characteristics for Latino adults ages 55 and older.<sup>4</sup>

### Key Leader Interviews

JVA conducted a series of key leader interviews to gather in-depth information about the needs of Latino older adults, community services and supports, as well as gaps, barriers to access and policies that impact access to services. A list of key leaders in the community was generated by the Community Advisory Committee, JVA and Colorado Latino Age Wave staff. In April and May 2012, JVA contacted over 60 key leaders to participate in individual interviews and two focus groups. In total, 34 community leaders participated, 19 were interviewed individually by telephone and 15 participated in the focus groups. The participating key leaders included community activists, health care providers, executive directors and key staff from community-based organizations that serve Latinos and older adults, elected officials, attorneys from government and social service organizations that work with older adults and individuals with disabilities, and representatives from government and social service agencies that serve older adults. In addition, several of the participants identified as Latino older adults. The key leader interview protocol can be found in Appendix C.

### Focus Groups

JVA conducted 12 focus groups, including 10 with Latino older adults and two with caregivers, to better understand Latino older adults' assets and strengths, needs and factors that influence their access to services. Focus groups and key leader interviews were intentionally selected as primary methods, as opposed to resident surveys, based on recommendations from the

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<sup>4</sup> Additional data, including Medicaid eligibility, numbers of Latino older adults in nursing home or assisted living facilities, number of Latino older adults on Waivers and State Plan Services and numbers with chronic diseases have also been requested and will be provided when available either prior to final report submission or as an addendum.

Community Advisory Committee and information in literature. The literature points to the use of focus groups among both Latinos as well as older adults due to its ability to facilitate an environment where participants are accompanied by peers and others who may share similar experiences, allowing them to feel more comfortable to share their feelings and experiences. It also provides a venue to establish trust and mediate language and literacy issues.<sup>5</sup> Finally, focus groups allow an opportunity to provide context for questions and time for responses, which can help older adults trigger memory of past events and process the questions that follow.<sup>6</sup>

Groups were conducted throughout the seven-county Denver metro area, with six in Spanish and six in English. The geographic distribution of focus groups was determined based on the size of the Latino older adult population in each county. Additionally, focus group participants were invited through community connections and networks, with the goal of gathering a broad spectrum of individuals. (See Appendix C for the Focus Group Protocols.) Additionally, participants were from different national origins, including Mexican, Puerto Rican, Honduran, Salvadoran, Argentine, Columbian and U.S.-born Latinos.

Focus group participants were asked to complete a brief, voluntary demographic survey at the beginning or end of each focus group. The following information provides an overview of those who completed the survey. Focus group participants were primarily female (73% female and 27% male) and participants' ages ranged from 55–90, with a median age of 65. Slightly more than half (55%) participated in Spanish-language groups. Fifty-three percent of participants were married, 9% single, 26% widowed and 11% divorced. Additionally, 61% of participants had an income less than \$15,000 in 2011, 17% between \$15,000–\$24,999, 6.5% between \$25,000–\$34,999, 2% between \$35,000–\$44,999, 6.5% between \$45,000–\$54,999 and 6.5% with incomes above \$55,000. Finally, 40% of the participants lived with a spouse, 36% lived with other family members and 22% lived alone.

### Provider Survey

A provider survey was administered electronically to representatives of organizations in the seven-county Denver metro area that provide services to older adults, Latinos, or Latino older adults to gather information about organizations, services and outreach in the community. The survey was administered via email invitation in May 2012, with a total of 85 respondents starting the survey and 44 (51.8%) completing it. Data for all respondents is woven throughout the assessment. These respondents were primarily from 501(c)(3) organizations (63%), though some were also from government agencies (16%), for-profit organizations (12%) or other non-classified organizations (9%). Additionally, 57% of respondents indicated their organizations' primary focus area is serving older adults, while 19% of respondents' organizations primarily

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<sup>5</sup>Umaña-Taylor, A. J., & Bámaca, M. Y. (2004). Conducting focus groups with Latino populations: lessons from the field. *Family Relations*, 53(3), 261-272. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/pss/3700344>

<sup>6</sup>Barrett, J. & Kirk, S. (2000). Running focus groups with elderly and disabled elderly participants. *Applied Ergonomics*, 31, 621-629.



serve Latinos and 5% primarily serve Latino older adults. See Appendix B for complete results of the survey and Appendix C for the survey instrument.

### Data Analysis

Data were quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed using rigorous techniques. Quantitative survey data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Analyses included frequencies, descriptive analyses and cross-tab analyses. Qualitative data from key leader interviews and focus groups were analyzed using coding and thematic pattern matching. Evaluators synthesized results from the quantitative and qualitative data to tell a more complete story about the strengths and assets as well as needs and challenges facing Latino older adults.

### Study Limitations

The thoughtful design of this assessment was intended to minimize limitations by using multiple methods of data collection and data sources, as well as incorporating the expertise of numerous parties. However, a few limitations are worth noting. First, when considering results of the provider survey, it is important to note the results are not a representation of all providers of services to older adults and Latinos. Instead, the results represent the unique situations and perspectives of only those organizations that chose to participate in the survey. Additionally, key leader interviews and focus groups are a method with which to gather in-depth information from specific individuals or small groups of people. Results represent the unique situations and perspectives of only those individuals who participated and are not representative of the complete population.

### Findings

The following section presents the findings of the assessment, which provide insight into the Latino older adult<sup>7</sup> populations in metro Denver, including demographic information; their perceptions on aging; their assets and strengths; the needs, issues and challenges they face; the available services and service gaps; barriers to accessing services; policies that benefit or hinder access to services; and best practices to advocate for and provide services to Latino older adults.

### Demographic Overview of the Latino Older Adult Populations

In 2011, Hispanics in Philanthropy released a report that highlighted the trends and data related to aging among Latinos in the United States. Results illustrate that on a national level, the Latino population age 65 years and older will increase by 224%, compared with a 65% increase for the

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<sup>7</sup> For this assessment, the term “Latino older adult” is used to represent all Hispanic/Latino/Chicano individuals age 55 and older. During data collection activities with Latino older adults, there was no consensus about the most appropriate or desirable term to use to describe the population. However, *adulto/a mayor* was frequently preferred by focus group participants, as was *elder*, *senior* and *persona de la tercera edad*. Older adults typically expressed that age was just a number, and therefore terms such as *anciano*, *viejito* or *abuelito* were not preferred.

white population of the same age.<sup>8</sup> The report also found that Latino older adults, compared with non-Latinos of the same age group, have lower rates of health insurance coverage, lower incomes, higher poverty rates and experience disparities in health.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, as depicted below, data in Colorado reveal similar trends facing Latinos as what is seen at the national level.

### ***Aging trends in Colorado***

- In Colorado, the Latino population is one of the fastest growing populations. A look at U.S. Census data reveals the **Latino population<sup>10</sup> grew by 41.2% from 2000 to 2010**, compared with an overall change of 16.9% for total Colorado population.
- Looking specifically at Latino older adults in Colorado, **from 2000 to 2010, there was a 76.9% increase in Latino older adults (age 55 and older)<sup>11</sup>** compared with a statewide increase of 51.9% for all races of the same age group.<sup>12</sup>
- Based on forecasts produced by the State Demography Office, **the Latino population (all ages) in Colorado will continue to grow by 174% by 2030**, compared with the white non-Hispanic population growing by 31% in the same time period.<sup>13</sup>

**Denver metro Latino older adult population.** Based on 2010 U.S. Census data, there were 596,178 older adults living in the seven-county Denver metro area. Of those, 63,690 were Hispanic or Latino, for a total of 11%. Additionally, approximately 46% of the Latino older adult population is male and 54% female.<sup>14</sup> Table 1 breaks down the Latino population for each county by age range and includes those ages 45–54 to provide insight into those approaching age 55.

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<sup>8</sup>*Supra*, see 1, p 8.

<sup>9</sup>*Supra*, see 1, p 6.

<sup>10</sup> The U.S. Census breaks the population down by “Hispanic or Latino.” For the purpose of this assessment and continuity in language, Latino will refer to the demographic breakdown for the remainder of the report.

<sup>11</sup> The Latino older adult population (age 55 and older) grew from 67,875 individuals in 2000 to 120,078 in 2010.

<sup>12</sup> In Colorado, there were 755,380 individuals age 55 and older in 2000 and 1,147,269 in 2010.

<sup>13</sup> State Demography Office, Colorado Division of Local Government. (2011). Forecasts by Race and Ethnicity. Retrieved from [http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite?c=Document\\_C&childpagename=DOLA-Main%2FDocument\\_C%2FCBONAddLinkView&cid=1251593733959&pagename=CBONWrapper](http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite?c=Document_C&childpagename=DOLA-Main%2FDocument_C%2FCBONAddLinkView&cid=1251593733959&pagename=CBONWrapper)

<sup>14</sup> U. S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey

Table 1. Latino Population by Age Range and County

County	Total Population Age 55+ (all Races)	Total Latino population Age 55+ (%)	Age 45–54	Age 55–64	Age 65–74	Age 75+
Adams	78,802	16,524 (21%)	16,039	9,326	4,517	2,681
Arapahoe	124,451	8,415 (7%)	9,746	5,137	2,079	1,199
Boulder	65,008	3,658 (6%)	3,986	2,123	975	560
Broomfield	11,524	602 (5%)	678	360	152	90
Denver	123,875	22,859 (18%)	19,117	12,043	6,492	4,324
Douglas	50,894	1,821 (4%)	2,701	1,166	438	217
Jefferson	141,624	9,811 (7%)	9,147	5,628	2,644	1,539
<b>Total for seven counties</b>	<b>596,178</b>	<b>63,690 (11%)</b>	<b>61,414</b>	<b>35,783</b>	<b>17,297</b>	<b>10,610</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census.

**Health insurance coverage.** As illustrated by Table 2 below, 22% of Latino older adults age 55–64 do not have health insurance coverage in the seven-county area. Additionally, because persons age 65 and older who are eligible for Social Security are also eligible for Medicare, it's worth noting that 4% of Latinos age 65 and older do not have coverage. These rates are notably different than those for white non-Latino older adults in the same seven counties, which indicate 8% age 55–64 with no health insurance coverage and less than 1% (.4%) of individuals 65 and older. Hispanics in Philanthropy notes that nationally, 8% of Latinos are not eligible for Social Security, and are therefore not eligible for Medicare, exposing them to a greater risk of being uninsured.<sup>15</sup>

Table 2. Latino Population With No Health Insurance Coverage

County	Age 55–64	Age 65–74	Age 75+
Adams	2,382 (27%)	326 (7%)	142 (6%)
Arapahoe	959 (20%)	0 (0%)	88 (10%)
Boulder	525 (26%)	88 (9%)	28 (5%)
Broomfield	41 (8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Denver	2,787 (24%)	230 (4%)	84 (2%)
Douglas	58 (5%)	0 (0%)	14 (12%)
Jefferson	679 (13%)	62 (2%)	17 (1%)
<b>Total for seven counties</b>	<b>7,431 (22%)</b>	<b>706 (4%)</b>	<b>373 (4%)</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008–2010 American Community Survey

<sup>15</sup>Supra, see 1, p. 10.

**Disability.** As illustrated in Table 3 below, 38% of Latino older adults in the seven-county area have a disability. This is only slightly higher than the 33% of white non-Hispanic population of the same area and age group with a disability.

*Table 3. Latino Population Age 65+ With a Disability\**

County	Age 65+
Adams	2,649 (39%)
Arapahoe	1,178 (39%)
Boulder	570 (39%)
Broomfield	0 (0%)
Denver	4,164 (40%)
Douglas	163 (25%)
Jefferson	1,290 (34%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,014 (38%)</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2010 American Community Survey

\*Disability information was only available for Latinos age 65+

**Common health conditions.** Colorado Latinos face a number of health issues and disparities. For example, in Colorado, 6.2% of Latinos have diabetes, compared with 4.9% for all Coloradans. While the difference in total diabetes rates is small, the disparity in diabetes mortality rate is very large, with Latinos “having an age-adjusted death rate for diabetes more than twice that of the total population and nearly three times that of whites.”<sup>16</sup> The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment notes that a possible explanation for this difference is that Latinos may have higher rates of undiagnosed diabetes than other groups. Additionally, the top five leading causes of death for Colorado Latinos were cancer, heart disease, stroke, unintentional injury and diabetes.<sup>17</sup>

**Poverty.** As illustrated in Table 4, 15% of Latinos age 55–64 had incomes below poverty level, as well as 16% of Latinos age 65–74 and 75+. When compared with the white, non-Hispanic population of the same age ranges, Latinos have a higher rate of poverty, as 6% of white non-Hispanics age 55–64, 7% age 65–74 and 9% age 75+ had incomes below poverty level. Additionally, when looking at national data pertaining to Social Security income, of Latinos age 65 and older, 82% had Social Security income compared with 90% among non-Latino whites.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Office of Health Disparities, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. (2009.) Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities in Colorado 2009. Retrieved online from <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/ohd/>

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Supra*, see 1, p. 10.

*Table 4. Latino Population With Income in the Past 12 Months Below Poverty Level*

County	Age 55–64	Age 65–74	Age 75+
Adams	1,034 (12%)	656 (15%)	215 (9%)
Arapahoe	669 (14%)	406 (19%)	259 (29%)
Boulder	394 (19%)	88 (9%)	126 (24%)
Broomfield	*	*	*
Denver	2,167 (19%)	1,191 (19%)	877 (21%)
Douglas	0 (0%)	54 (10%)	0 (0%)
Jefferson	680 (13%)	254 (10%)	83 (6%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,944 (15%)</b>	<b>2,649 (16%)</b>	<b>1,560 (16%)</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2010 American Community Survey

\*Data for Broomfield County were not available.

**Unemployment.** Based on data in Figure 5 below, 9% of Latinos age 55–64, 10% of Latinos age 65–69 and 6% age 70 and older were unemployed. Unemployment among Latino older adults is slightly higher than that of their white non-Hispanic counterparts, with unemployment rates of 6% for age 55–64, 6% for age 65–69 and 5% for age 70 and older.

*Table 5. Latino Population Unemployed*

County	Age 55–64	Age 65–69	Age 70+
Adams	520 (9%)	113 (13%)	44 (13%)
Arapahoe	230 (6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Boulder	211 (16%)	54 (20%)	0 (0%)
Broomfield	*	*	*
Denver	660 (9%)	107 (18%)	48 (6%)
Douglas	17 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Jefferson	412 (12%)	18 (3%)	25 (8%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,050 (9%)</b>	<b>292 (10%)</b>	<b>117 (6%)</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2010 American Community Survey

Figures are based on those who are in the labor force but lack employment.

\*Data for Broomfield County were not available.

**Other characteristics.** Several other factors speak to the characteristics of the Latino population in Colorado. For example, in 2010, an estimated 180,000 Latinos in Colorado were unauthorized immigrants.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, 268,014 Latinos (26%) were foreign-born.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Pew Hispanic Center. (2010). Unauthorized Immigrant Population. Washington, D.C.: Pew Hispanic Center. Retrieved from <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2011/02/01/unauthorized-immigrant-population-national-and-state-trends-2010/>

<sup>20</sup>U. S. Census Bureau, 2008–2010 American Community Survey

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that in terms of the demographic characteristics of the Latino older population in the seven-county Denver metro area, many key leaders who were interviewed underscored the diversity of the Latino older adult population. Key leaders stated that within the broader pan-ethnic Latino population, there are many intragroup differences such as language, socio-economic status, culture, immigration status, political affinity, religion and nationality. To highlight that, according to the 2010 U.S. Census, of those that selected Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin, 73% selected Mexican, 24% selected other Hispanic or Latino, 2% selected Puerto Rican and 1% selected Cuban. Finally, although there are socioeconomic differences within the Latino population, several key leaders highlighted the fact that Latino older adults tend to have fewer economic resources than their white counterparts. Research by the Pew Hispanic Center and Hispanics in Philanthropy supports this perception, with figures illustrating that Latinos disproportionately live in poverty, with factors such as lower wages, less education and lower rates of English proficiency than non-Latinos of the same age.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, nationally, 20% of foreign-born Latinos age 65 and older live in poverty, compared with 17% of native-born in the same age category.<sup>22</sup>

### Latino Older Adults' Perceptions About Aging

Perceptions on aging vary greatly based on cultural and social context. As such, it is a complex issue when attempting to identify themes across one geographical area with diverse groups of people. However, to learn how to better serve Latino older adults as they age in the metro Denver area, it is important to understand their varying perceptions. Research has shown that Latino older adults are “less likely to access services from mainstream service providers” and “tend to age at home with the support of family.”<sup>23</sup> It also points to the role of *familismo* (engaging family in important decisions), *personalismo* (building relationships at the personal level) and relying on community networks.<sup>24</sup> Studies have also shown that Latino older adults' perceptions on aging are often positive, with strong emphasis on the role of family, the wisdom that comes with age and the presence of religion, while also influenced by the fear of loneliness or loss of independence.<sup>25</sup> The perceptions on a national level are also reiterated at the local level. As outlined below by Latino older adult focus group participants as well as key leaders, themes such as the importance of family, the role of independence, the fear of isolation, the

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<sup>21</sup> *Supra*, see 1, p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> Pew Hispanic Center. (2010). *Statistical Portrait of Latinos in the United States, 2008. Table 37: Poverty, by Age, Race and Ethnicity: 2008*. Washington, D.C.: Pew Hispanic Center. Retrieved from <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2010/01/21/statistical-portrait-of-hispanics-in-the-united-states-2008/2008-statistical-portrait-01/>

<sup>23</sup> *Supra*, see 1, p.2.

<sup>24</sup> *Supra*, see 16. And Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2010). *Reference and resource guide for working with Hispanic/Latino older adults*. (HHS Publication No. (SMA) 10-4570). Retrieved from [kap.samhsa.gov/products/brochures/.../Reference\\_Resource\\_Guide.p...](http://kap.samhsa.gov/products/brochures/.../Reference_Resource_Guide.p...)

<sup>25</sup> Beyene, Y., Becker, G. and Mayen, N. (2002). Perception of aging and sense of well-being among Latino elderly. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* 17(2), 155-17.

wisdom that comes with age—as well as the importance of remaining active, engaged and healthy—were highlighted.

Many of the Latino older adult focus group participants mentioned that aging and growing older was often connected with gaining wisdom and being viewed as a cornerstone of the family. During one of the focus groups, one Latina older adult shared, *"In my family, I see myself as the foundation, and the children see me that way; we have all events in the house. I keep the family together."* It is important for the community to recognize Latino older adults as an asset and build on the strengths they possess.

To get a sense of the assets and strengths Latino older adults feel they can offer, during focus groups, they were asked what they were most proud of and what wisdom or lessons they wanted to impart onto younger generations. Responses revolved around family, remaining active and involved in their communities, and being proud of themselves for all they had accomplished, learned and done in their lives. Focus group participants were proud of their accomplishments and wanted to share this wisdom and experiences with their families and friends. Several participants were first- or second-generation immigrants and shared stories about the challenges of adapting to a new culture. They mentioned the difficulties they faced when they moved to Colorado, and they wanted to ensure their children and grandchildren understood the merits of hard work and perseverance.

For example, one Latino older adult mentioned that he worked for 40 years *"en la interperie,"* meaning outside without protection from bad weather. He further mentioned that his children would not be able to work under those harsh conditions. However, that is what he was most proud of, that his children did not have to endure the harsh conditions he worked under for over 40 years. His wife said that was true, that their children were successful and had nice jobs. She mentioned that they dressed in nice clothes. As she was saying this she was smiling, her pride in what she and her husband had accomplished reflected in her smile as she talked about their children's success.

### Values, Beliefs, Feelings and Perceptions on Aging

Focus group participants and key leaders were asked to provide input into how they and other Latino older adults viewed aging as well as what "aging successfully" meant. Based on feedback, the participating Latino older adults view age as simply a number, and they value remaining engaged, active, independent, healthy and close to family.

Overwhelmingly, focus group participants had fairly positive outlooks on aging, and many view it "simply as a number" and with age comes wisdom. Latino older adults and key leaders highlighted the importance of remaining engaged and active, having good health, maintaining independence and having family support.

For many Latino older adults, there is not only an expectation of being taken care of in "old age" but there is a desire to help their family and the community.

*"I am 66. It's a number to me, but do I have to act like I am 66? I do not act like it. I don't care if they don't like it. If they tell me, you are 66, act your age...does that mean I have to sit in a rocking chair? No way." Latino older adult*

**Age is only a number.** Latinos older adults repeatedly brought up the observation that age was simply a number. As the quote above conveys, many participants felt that age is irrelevant as long as people remain engaged, active and healthy.

**Important to remain engaged and active.** Many of the focus group participants were still employed, and those who were not employed were still very active in their communities through volunteer work, participating in classes and events at community/senior centers, and helping their families and neighbors. Feedback from key leaders reiterated this thought, stating that it is extremely beneficial for Latino older adults to remain active.

*"La energía crea más energía. Algunos ancianos cuando se jubilan ya no quieren hacer nada y se entumen. Es muy importante moverse todo el tiempo. Entre más te mueves, más energía tienes. (Energy creates more energy. Some older adults, when they retire, they do not want to do much and then they become numb. It is important to keep moving; the more you move, the more energy you have)." Latino older adult*

**Isolation is a problem.** Key leaders also noted that isolation is a big problem for Latino older adults and that is why it is essential for them to continue doing the things they enjoy. Additionally, Latino older adults stated that they like to be social and that it is important to socialize with family, as well as other community members.

**Health is a key factor.** Health is a key element in aging. While some key leaders stated that Latino older adults are afraid of aging because it is usually accompanied by new and ongoing health issues, others stated that aging in the Latino community is viewed as a natural process and some have a rather fatalistic attitude. However, as noted by a key leader who works directly with Latino older adults, a fatalistic view is not necessarily negative but a reflection of an individual's acceptance of the normal changes that occur with aging. However, s/he stated that if s/he was trying to do work around preventative health care measures, it was more difficult to work with older adults who view illness as an inevitable part of aging. Many Latino older adults also stated that aging has meant dealing with various new health issues, including illnesses, pains and other ailments. Often as a result of health problems, many focus group participants mentioned that as they age they have to change their routines and reduce the number of activities they participate in. Fear of not having adequate health insurance that will help them as they age, or not having health insurance at all, was cited by Latino older adults.

*"Aging reminds us that we need to stay on our toes." Latina older adult.*

**Maintain sense of independence.** For many focus group participants, there was an attitude that as long as you are able to continue doing things by yourself and as long as you can continue engaging in the hobbies and interests you love, your age is irrelevant. On the other hand, there was a feeling that once you began losing your ability to take care of yourself and to remain independent, it was a sure sign of aging.



**Interactions between health, transportation and independence.** Several Latino older adults mentioned that when these challenges are combined, it makes it difficult to age in place. For example, one Latina older adult mentioned that as she grew older and encountered health issues that limited her physical mobility, she was not able to do the things that she needed to do. She could no longer drive or walk to the bus stop and, therefore, she had to wait for someone to give her a ride.

**Importance of family.** Family was an important thread, and Latino older adults mentioned the importance of having family close by and that the ability to interact with grandchildren, or even their own children, helped lessen the effects of aging. Similarly, key leaders noted that **Latino older adults want to age in place because the connections to family are strong.** For many Latino older adults, there is not only an expectation of being taken care of in "old age" but there is a desire to help their family and the community. Additionally, according to key leaders, this is a value that is shared across different generations. Thus, most Latino family members are reluctant to put their older family members in nursing homes<sup>26</sup> and prefer to take care of their own. A couple of key leaders did state, however, that the value of taking care of parents as they age is something that is changing as there is a shift from Latino families that have recently immigrated to families that have been in the U.S. for several generations. Nonetheless, overwhelmingly, Latino older adults underscored the importance of not putting a loved one in a nursing home. One Latina older adult mentioned that she had to put her sister in a nursing home because they had no choice since her sister was very sick. As she was talking, she stressed that that is not what she wanted for her sister. She described the nursing home as a sad place where older adults are left there abandoned. She visits her sister every day, and she mentioned that all of the older adults know her and are happy to see her because no one else visits them. It was really important for this participant to communicate that putting her sister in a nursing home was something she struggled with.

Similarly, caregivers expressed that they want to take care of their family members. One Latina caregiver mentioned, "*Espero que mis hijos puedan disfrutar de mis papás porque es lindo crecer con los abuelos. Yo crecí con mi abuelita, era como mi segunda madre y eso quiero para mis hijos, que sigan conociendo a sus abuelos. Y que los hijos de ellos también me conozcan a mi, y que den respeto y que no se les olvide de donde vinieron.* (I want my children to enjoy my parents because it is nice to grow up with your grandparents. I grew up with my grandma, she was like a second mother and that is what I want for my children, for them to continue knowing their grandparents. I also want their children to know me. I want them to give respect and to never forget where they came from.)"

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<sup>26</sup> "Nursing homes" is the term used by focus group participants and key leaders and is used in the report to capture their voice. However, researchers understand "skilled nursing facilities" is the preferred term among aging networks.

***With age comes wisdom.*** Another common perception was that with age comes a great amount of wisdom. Some key leaders stated that Latino older adults are respected and revered in their community.

*“For me, aging is a blessing; you have experienced a lot of things and learned a lot.”*  
Latino older adult

***For caregivers, lack of insurance, decreased independence and increased reliance on outsiders were challenges mentioned when thinking about their aging loved ones.*** They also expressed that there is a fine balance between allowing and encouraging your aging family to remain independent, and fearing their ability to take care of themselves, especially as their health and other needs increase. For example, a Latina mentioned that she and her husband want her mother-in-law to move in with them. However, her mother-in-law has lived in her house for many years and she does not want to go anywhere else. This participant is concerned about her mother-in-law because she has reached a point where she leaves the water running while watching television or forgets to turn off the stove. This woman conveyed a real concern for her mother-in-law's safety while simultaneously expressing frustration at not being able to do more to help her.

Another Latina caregiver mentioned that since her mother did not have insurance, they had to go to a clinic that serves people who are uninsured. However, she mentioned that the waitlist to get an appointment is long, which is frustrating because she is concerned about her mom not getting timely care. Additionally, she mentioned that her mom has to wait three hours at a clinic in Longmont. To make things worse, the people that work at the clinic do not talk to the patients or answer questions.

### **Assets and Strengths of Latino Older Adults**

Latino older adults bring many assets and strengths to the community, and based on feedback through the assessment, there is a strong desire by many Latino older adults to be engaged in community work.

*Latino older adults' strong commitment to family, resiliency, experience in building coalitions, and wisdom and knowledge, combined with a desire to remain active and engaged in the community, are incredible assets and resources for the Denver metropolitan area.*

***Commitment to family.*** One of the greatest assets of the Latino older adult population is a strong commitment to family, based on feedback from focus group participants and key leaders. Many Latino older adults mentioned that they have been able to play an increased role with their families as they age, doing things such as watching and caring for grandchildren, volunteering at schools and helping around the house while adult children are working.

***Resiliency.*** Key leaders stated that Latino older adults have endured many hardships and can, therefore, share their experiences with the younger people and give them advice on how to overcome the struggles that their community currently faces. As mentioned, Latino older adults

are "survivors," and the Latino community can learn a lot from their determination and will to succeed.

**Coalition building.** Key leaders also mentioned that Latino older adults know how to build coalitions to get things done in the community. For example, some stated that many Latino older adults experienced the civil rights movement and learned how to work with other people in order to solve community problems and fight for their rights, as well as the needs of their families.

**Wisdom and knowledge.** Many Latino older adults mentioned that wisdom comes with age, and Latino older adults have the ability to offer advice and wisdom to younger generations. Key leaders reiterated this asset and noted that many Latino older adults were professionals who can volunteer for activities such as tutoring or serving on boards and committees. They also mentioned that some Latino older adults have special skills or talents that they mastered and can share with the community such as artistic and creative talents. For example, a Latina caregiver mentioned that her grandfather was a carpenter. She stated that while he could not do carpentry anymore, he could give instructions to others. In addition, another Latina caregiver mentioned that her mother, who immigrated to the United States 20 year ago, recently received her GED. After completing her GED, she became a GED instructor and she has helped over 10 Spanish-speaking immigrants earn their GED.

**Active and engaged.** In addition to the items identified above, specifically remaining committed to families, focus group participants remain connected to and engaged with the communities in the following ways:

- **Volunteer work.** Many of the participants mentioned being active in their communities, often through the churches, senior centers or recreation centers where the focus groups took place. When asked how they engaged with these communities, participants said they volunteered to drive people to appointments, to offer counseling or advice, and to teach classes or help with other activities at the church or center. One Latina older adult, for example, stated, *"I belong to a church prayer center...I have been an usherette there for 30 years. We were in the jail ministry. Now, there are eight women in the ministry and I have to oversee them."* In addition, numerous participants mentioned volunteering at local schools, with their grandchildren or in other community settings.
- **Exercise and activity.** Many participants mentioned how active they were and how important it was for them to remain active as they age. For some focus group participants, engaging in structured activities and exercise programs at senior centers and recreation centers was mentioned as one of the primary ways they stay involved in their communities.
- **Employment.** While certainly not the majority, some of the older adult focus group participants mentioned they were still working and that was an important way for them to connect with their communities as well as support themselves. Continuing to work also helped some focus group participants feel like needed and useful members of their communities and families.

## Needs and Realities Facing Latino Older Adults

The following section presents findings relating to the needs, issues and challenges facing Latino older adults in the metro Denver area. It's important to note that this section reflects the diversity of the needs from Latino older adults who participated in the assessment. For example, while one individual may need health insurance in order to access medical care, another individual may simply want enrichment activities as the lack of health insurance or financial resources are not concerns.

## Needs and Desires to Successfully Age in Community

Key leaders and focus group participants were asked what Latino older adults need and want in order to grow older and age successfully and in community.

Latino older adults need tangible services and supports, such as nutrition, access to health care, transportation and adequate housing. They also have intangible needs, such as opportunities to remain active and involved in the community, support their family and remain connected to others.

**Services and supports.** Most key leaders stated that Latino older adults need to have access to health care, housing, transportation and nutritional services. In addition, these services need to be in communities with large Latino older adult populations, culturally and language appropriate, affordable, timely and adequate. Key leaders also mentioned that Latino older adults need to have adequate financial resources to pay for basic necessities as well as to be able to have some fun. Many older adult focus group participants also simply stated that they needed enhanced or additional access to services and supports to help with everyday life.

- **Nutrition.** One issue that was brought up repeatedly was that many Latino older adults do not have access to healthy foods. One elected official mentioned that, in some neighborhoods, the corner stores do not offer healthy foods. If older adults cannot drive or do not have adequate access to public transportation, they cannot buy healthy foods and vegetables. Another key leader who works for a nonprofit organization mentioned that the types of foods available at foods banks are often not healthy options for older adults because they are high in sodium and/or sugar.
- **Access to health care.** Latino older adults, key leaders and caregivers stated that having access to quality health care was a significant factor in enabling Latino older adults to age in place. Several Latino older adults mentioned that with aging comes serious health issues and that it is important for Latino older adults to have access to health care services. One key leader who is also a Latina older adult stated that her dream was to have a small clinic with primary care facilities in all of the neighborhoods. Several other Latino older adults echoed this desire and said that it would be nice to be able to go see a doctor who was close by whenever they did not feel well.
- **Transportation.** Latino older adults and key community leaders noted that having reliable transportation was absolutely necessary for independence and to be able to age in place. While many Latino older adults who participated in the focus groups stated that they still drive, they stated that if they could not drive that would significantly limit their ability to do the things they enjoy. As will be discussed in subsequent sections, limitations with public transportation also present barriers to accessing services and

remaining independent. Finally, in all focus groups, Latino older adults stated that they knew someone who did not drive and depended on other people to get to places or had to rely on public transportation. As one Latina mentioned, *“El mayor problema con la gente Latina es transporte porque la mayor parte de la gente Latina no maneja. Y si maneja, no hay suficiente dinero para comprar el carro. Y si compra el carro, no hay con que pagar el seguro y la gasolina. (The biggest problem with 'la gente Latina' is transportation because the majority of Latinos do not drive. And, if they do drive, there is not enough money to buy the car. In addition, if you buy the car, there is no money to buy car insurance or gas.)”*

- **Adequate housing.** Key leaders, Latino older adults and caregivers mentioned that adequate housing is essential in order to age successfully in place. A Latina older adult who is well connected to the Latino older adult population in Northwest Denver mentioned that housing in Denver is inadequate. She mentioned that in Denver, there used to be a lot of single room housing but that is no longer the case. Another key leader who works directly with Latinos shared the fact that new housing developments do not take into account the needs of Latino older adults. There was a consensus among respondents that having safe housing was challenging for Latino older adults. One Latina older adult mentioned that the back of her trailer was rotten and that she was afraid it would fall; she was afraid for her own safety. She contacted Boulder County, and they told her that after the snow season was over they would come over and fix it. However, she is still waiting for someone to fix her home. Another older adult mentioned that it was very expensive to maintain a safe house. For example, redoing a shower for people who have physical limitations costs too much. A caregiver mentioned that her grandparents' house was not safe because the stairs were too steep and they needed to go up and down to do laundry. In addition to making sizeable modifications to ensure the their house is safe, Latino older adults and key leaders also shared that even for smaller tasks such as painting or changing the light bulbs, some older adults need help.

**Activities and opportunities to remain engaged.** A theme that repeatedly came up was the importance of continued access to activities and opportunities to remain involved in the community. As has been mentioned, for many of the focus group participants, remaining active and involved in their communities is one valuable way to remain vigorous and vital and to feel like they are continuing to contribute to society. However, as will be discussed in subsequent sections, there are certain skills or training the older adult focus group participants want to gain in order to feel capable of remaining active in their communities. Key leaders also noted the importance of engaging Latino older adults in civic and religious organizations as a way to maintain connections to family and friends. A few key leaders cited that some recreation centers have social programs but that they are usually in English and do not incorporate Latino cultural aspects such as music.

**Family.** The importance of family could not be underscored enough by focus group participants. As much as Latino older adults mentioned wanting to help and support their families, there was an equally overwhelming desire to be supported by their families as they continue to age. Many of the Latino older adults mentioned the importance of living with (or near) family and the continued role they wish for family to play as they age. However, a great number said that while it was not desirable to end up living in a nursing home or assisted living facility, they didn't want to feel like an extended burden on their family members. One Latina older adult mentioned,

*"Most of us have taken care of our parents or someone in our family, and doing that, I did it because I wanted to. Sometimes you have to do everything; it is quite a challenge and it is time consuming, is very hard, especially when you have a big family and everyone wants to tell you what to do but no one wants to help. Because I did that, I would never put my kids through that." Another Latina echoed this sentiment and stated, "I always tell my kids, if I cannot take care of myself, they need to put me in assisted living."*

**Connection to friends and community.** Numerous Latino older adults said that isolation and loneliness were significant problems within the aging population and that older adults without close family or friends often lacked the support they needed to age in community successfully.

### Services and Supports

This assessment now looks into the services and supports that are available to help Latino older adults successfully age in community. When looking at available services, it is equally important to understand the barriers to accessing services and the service gaps.

#### Access to services and service gaps

Key leaders and focus group participants were asked to discuss current services or supports that are available to help Latino older adults as they age in place and in community. The feedback from all parties (Latino older adult focus group participants, caregivers and key leaders) indicates a lack of services and supports that specifically address the needs of Latino older adults. There are services for Latinos, and there are services for older adults. However, there is a lack of services targeted to older adults who are Latino.

While community-based organizations and churches, senior centers and recreation centers, and government agencies support Latinos and older adults, there is a lack of services geared specifically toward Latino older adults. Additionally, Latino older adults often do not know about the services or how to access them.

Latino older adults specifically need additional health and home-related services, classes and activities to continue their education and remain engaged, better information about programs, places to gather and transportation services.

**Community-based organizations and churches.** Most key leaders referenced services and supports provided by community-based organizations and churches<sup>27</sup> that provide services to Latinos of all ages. For example, many leaders stated that community-based organizations such as Clínica Tepeyac, Clínica Campesina, Salud Family Health Center, Servicios de la Raza, Denver Inner City Parish and the Southwest Improvement Council provide services to Latinos. However, key leaders were not aware of specific programs for Latino older adults. One key leader with expertise in policy mentioned that in Colorado, there is a perception that the Latino community is young, which is why services are often geared toward families and children. Latino focus

<sup>27</sup> "Churches" included various denominations.

group participants discussed churches and recreation centers generally as receiving services, with some referencing specifics such as Silver Sneakers, CHARLAR (Community Heart Health Actions for Senior Latinos at Risk) and Meals on Wheels.

Several key leaders also mentioned that churches across the seven-county Denver metro area provide services to older adults such as food, clothing and sometimes help with bills. However, some leaders also mentioned that organizations and churches are strapped for resources and cannot help everyone. Along the same lines, several leaders highlighted that the current needs for housing, transportation, medical, financial, recreational and transportation services far exceed the current availability.

Respondents to the provider survey provided similar perceptions about the extent of services geared specifically toward Latino older adults. For example, provider survey respondents were asked to identify their organizations' primary focus area. The majority of respondents (57%) targeted services to older adults, 19% of respondents targeted services to Latinos, and only 5% targeted services specifically to Latino older adults. When further probed about the percentage of clients who are Latino older adults, the majority of respondents (78%) indicated that this population makes up less than 25% of their client base.

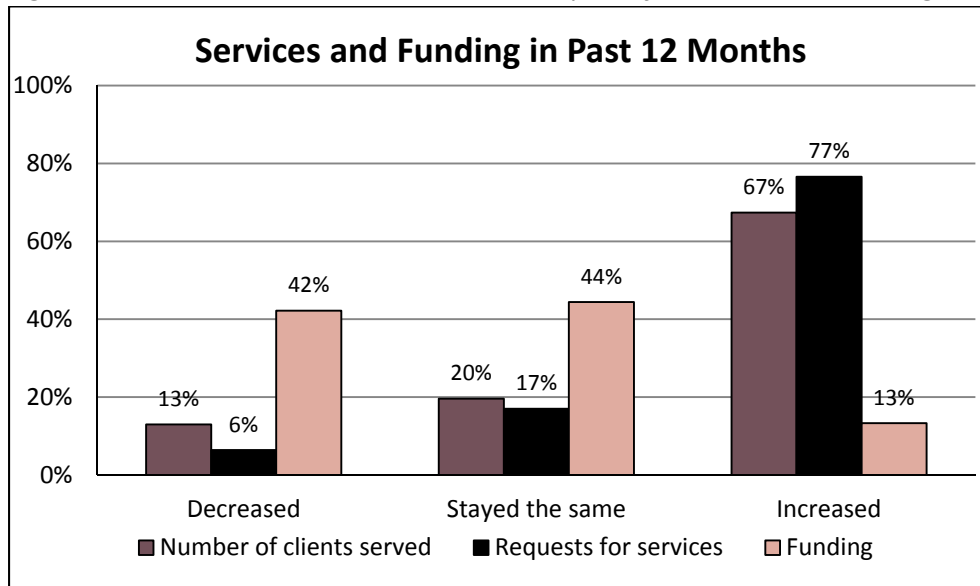
**Funding constraints.** Provider survey respondents were also asked about current trends and if in the last 12 months, the number of clients they have served, the requests for their services and funding have increased or decreased. As illustrated in Figure 1 below, the majority of respondents indicated that the number of clients they have served as well as the requests for services have increased (for 67% and 77% of organizations, respectively), while only 13% of respondents' organizations have seen an increase in funding. In subsequent questions, 50% of Latino serving organizations and 32% of older adult serving organizations indicated that funding is a challenge faced when serving Latino older adults. This finding is not unique to this assessment, as a previous study by the Denver Area Agency on Aging also determined that while the older adult population in metro Denver is growing, the financial resources at the state and federal levels are in jeopardy of being cut.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Denver Regional Council of Governments. (2011). *2011–2015 Area Plan on Aging*. Retrieved from <http://www.drcog.org/index.cfm?page=PublicationsAgingServices>



Figure 1. Perceived Trends in Clients Served, Requests for Services and Funding (n = 45)



**Senior centers and recreation centers.** Key leaders also shared that senior and recreation centers across the seven-county Denver metro area provide many services to older adults such as exercise classes, nutrition classes and socializing opportunities. However, according to key leaders, many Latino older adults do not know about these services. In addition, many of these centers do not provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services that would encourage Latino older adults to participate in these programs. An example that can illustrate the sentiment of key leaders is derived from the researcher's experience in conducting focus groups in Aurora. The researcher visited a center that caters to older adults, and although this center is in a predominantly Latino area, there were no staff members who spoke Spanish at the time of the visit. In addition, when asked if they had Latinos who were members of the center, one staff member said that there might be a couple, but he/she was not aware of many Latinos who utilized the services. The researcher subsequently observed the park surrounding the center had several Latino families playing and socializing but did not observe any Latino members at the center.

**Government programs.** Finally, key leaders also indicated that there are some government programs that provide services and supports such as food stamps, Medicare, Medicaid, LEAP (Low-Income Energy Assistance Program) and transportation for seniors. Other supports that were cited were in relation to programs that seek to protect older adults from fraud, abuse, neglect and exploitation. The District Attorney has an office that deals specifically with consumer fraud in the older adult population. One interviewee stated that one of the greatest supports Latino older adults have in order to be able to age successfully in place is the government. The participant stated that government agencies provide a wide range of services to help older adults age in place. However, key leaders explained that many Latino older adults often do not know about these services. In addition, according to key leaders, the systems are complex and people have difficulty accessing services. Finally, based on feedback from key leaders, few agencies have staff members who are sensitive to the needs of Latino older adults.



***Latino older adults also identified specific services they need.***

- **Health services.** Many Latino older adults felt their communities lack adequate access to health services. In addition, many participants said that even if they lived in communities with services, those services were often too costly or were not culturally appropriate, making them challenging to access. Further, for many of the focus group participants, a lack of insurance made accessing health care even more challenging.
- **Home services.** Because independence remained a priority among many of the older adult focus group participants, many also mentioned a need for increased help and/or support with home-focused tasks. For example, an 80-year-old Latina mentioned that she could not pull the weeds out of her garden, and the more she waited, the longer the weeds got and they would just take over her garden. This was also a priority mentioned in the caregiver focus groups and many family members indicated that they wished their loved one had more in-home support, both for things like work and help around the house, but also as it related to medical or personal needs.
- **Classes and/or activities.** According to focus group participants, while there are some places, in some communities, where classes and activities are hosted (such as community centers, recreation centers, schools, etc.), many Latino older adults have a desire for additional access to these activities. For example, a Latina older adult mentioned that her husband was embarrassed to attend the water aerobics classes at the recreation center because he could not keep up. She said that they should offer additional classes keeping in mind that people have different physical abilities. Additionally, Latino older adult focus group participants mentioned a desire for English language classes, computer classes or health-related classes to provide them with additional skills and knowledge. One Spanish-speaking participant stated, *"I want to learn English so I can help other people."* This statement highlights how important it is to remain active and continue to grow, not just for themselves but to help their community.
- **Information about current programs.** While some Latino older adults knew of various classes or activities in their communities, many felt that communication to older adults about the services and programs available to them was inadequate. For example, one older adult mentioned that she had not attended the recreation center because she thought it cost \$300 a year to join. She did not know there was a discount for seniors. She mentioned that when she was in the pool one day, another older adult told her that if she got a note from the doctor, then she could get a discount. This participant was really upset that the staff from the recreation center did not give her the information. She stated, *"If you want seniors to be here, if you want the facility to be used, then make it available to people with limited financial resources."*
- **Gathering space.** Much like the desire Latino older adults expressed for increased access to classes and other activities, they also mentioned the importance of having physical space in which to gather. Churches, recreation centers, senior centers and other community centers were mentioned as viable examples of effective spaces to gather. Latino older adults in Longmont and Arapahoe, in particular, mentioned that they really wanted a place where they could get together, have potlucks, socialize and have fun. One Latino older adult mentioned, *"[The] Spanish-speaking community has always been the type of people that needs somebody else."* This statement underscores the

importance of having gathering places, a theme that was repeatedly mentioned through the focus groups and interviews.

- **Transportation services.** While the majority of focus group participants were still driving themselves, transportation was mentioned often as a need to support older adults who wish to age in community. This finding, which also came up in a study by Denver Regional Council of Governments Area Agency on Aging, illustrates Latino older adults face many barriers commonly expressed by older adults.<sup>29</sup> Further, 65% of provider survey respondents indicated that transportation is a barrier that inhibits clients from accessing services.
  - **Everyday activities.** Focus group participants mentioned several needs for transportation: first, for everyday needs such as going to the grocery store, getting to scheduled appointments, or attending classes or meetings. Additionally, depending on the county, Latino older adults mentioned different needs. For example, in Longmont, public transportation is lacking and people who do not have a car or a mode of transportation are not mobile. In Denver, the system is better but is still far from adequate. One participant mentioned that she had to get on three buses when she needed to get to her doctor's appointment. In Boulder, while public transportation is adequate, for older adults who have physical disabilities, the rules and practices regarding scheduling special transportation make it challenging. For example, a Latina older adult had to rely on a staff person from the senior center when she needed a ride because she does not speak English and does not understand the rules regarding the scheduling process.
  - **Non-routine activities.** For emergency situations, including the emergency room and/or other last minute, unplanned needs, current transportation is inadequate. In the counties that offer transportation for older adult who have some physical challenges, riders need to schedule a ride days before they need the service. One Latina older adult mentioned that if she had an emergency, such as needing to pick up medicine, she could not get free transportation and would need to contact a relative or pay for transportation, which, on a limited income, was not an option.
  - **Traveling long distances.** Latino older adults were not aware of any services for older adults who wish to travel longer distances, such as to other cities or parts of town to visit friends and/or family. While there are senior discounts, the price of the bus pass is often too high for people on limited incomes.

**Feedback from caregivers.** When caregivers were asked about the needs of their aging loved ones and what they, as caregivers, needed in order to support aging family members, they mentioned very similar themes. Caregivers wanted their loved ones to have **access to programs and classes** to help them build their technology/computer skills; **access to health services**, including language and culturally appropriate staff and services; **transportation services** to help lift the burden from the caregivers; and **increased communication** or access to information for

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<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*

the caregivers who need to have a better understanding of services in order to advocate for their aging loved ones.

### **Barriers to Accessing Services**

While several barriers have been noted above by key leaders and Latino older adult focus group participants, it is important to specifically highlight the common barriers that were frequently cited by individuals and service providers.

Latino older adults face numerous barriers in accessing services, including adequate communication or information about services, financial resources, culturally responsive and age-appropriate services, language-appropriate materials and staff, transportation and even prejudice.

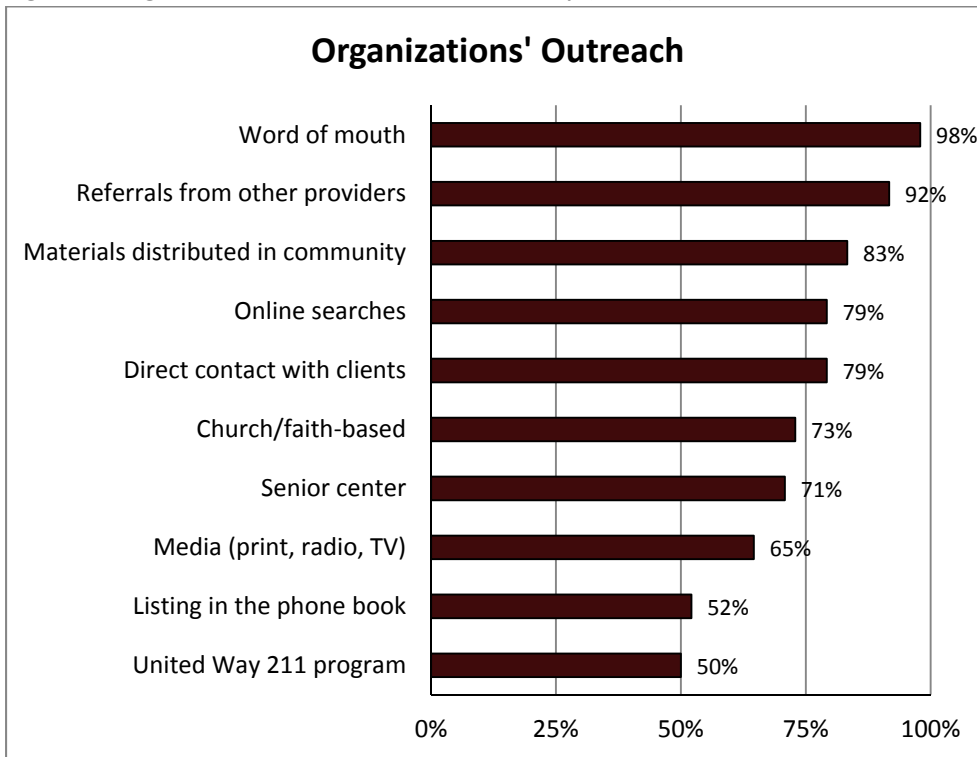
**Communication or information about services.** One of the key themes cited by both key leaders and focus group participants was an overwhelming feeling that communication and information about services was limited, which contributed to an overall feeling that the Denver metro area lacks adequate services and supports. Whether services and supports are available through community-based organizations or government agencies, the feedback is that Latino older adults often do not know about the services or how to access them. Focus group participants mentioned that while word of mouth can be effective and is often the preferred way of receiving communication, it is not sufficient in some community networks. Some Latino older adults are a part of networks where people have a lot of information, however, others are in smaller networks or networks that have lower levels of information. Latino older adults need help navigating the system. This sentiment reiterates previous findings of the Denver Regional Council of Governments Area Agency on Aging, which discovered through the Community Assessment Survey for Older Adults (CASOA) that one of the greatest needs of older adults in the region is knowing what services are available and how to access them. It also discovered that more aggressive outreach is needed to reach minority populations.<sup>30</sup>

To better understand communication and outreach strategies, service providers were asked how people find out about their organizations. Feedback from respondents, as detailed in Figure 2 below, reveals word of mouth, referrals from other providers and materials distributed in community are the top-rated methods. However, based on feedback from focus group participants, these methods are not sufficient in some networks.

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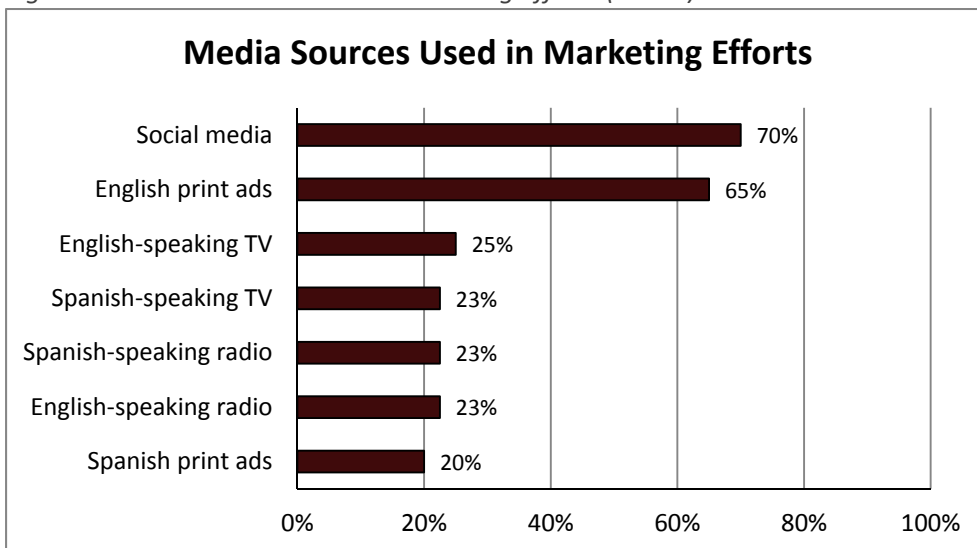
<sup>30</sup>*Supra, see 28.*

Figure 2. Organizations' Outreach to Community (n = 48)



Additionally, when asked about media sources used by respondents' organizations to publicize their programs, less than one-fourth of organizations rely on Spanish-language ads, whether print, radio or television (Figure 3 below). It may be worth exploring the role these Spanish-language mediums can play in reaching the Latino older adults, as well as systems to better distribute information and reach Latino older adults.

Figure 3. Media Sources Used in Marketing Efforts (n = 40)

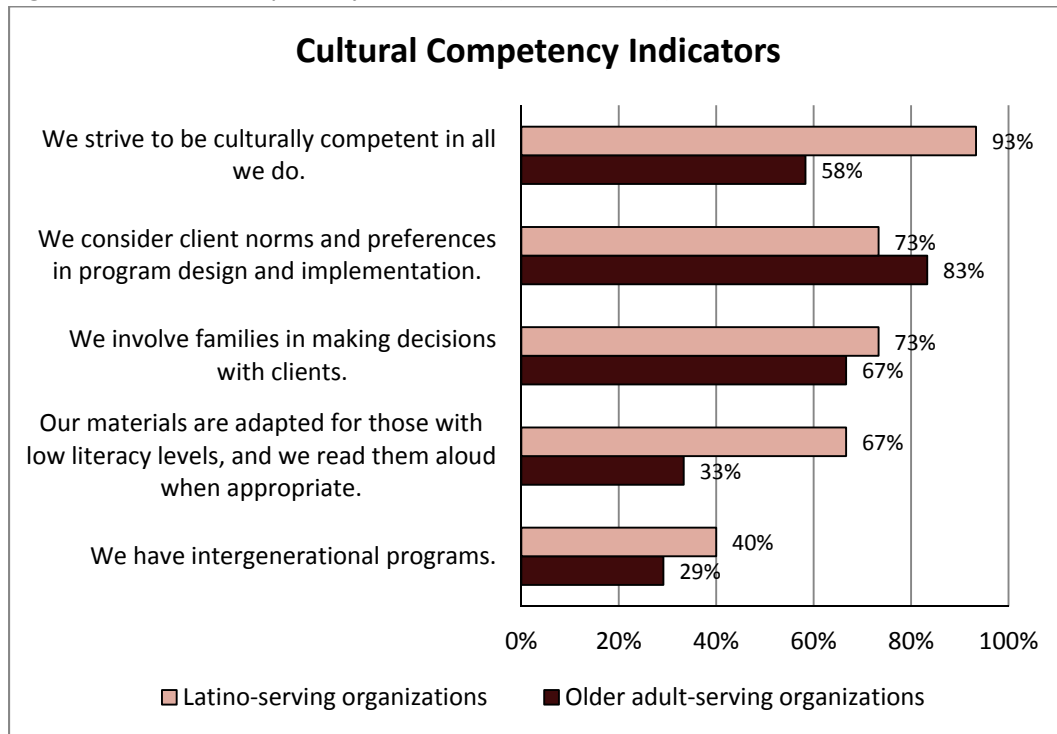


**Financial resources.** Focus group participants discussed that available health services were often too costly or they lacked adequate insurance. They also mentioned that prescriptions and other medications are expensive and that it can be challenging, with limited resources, to pay for necessary care in addition to everyday expenses. Several focus group participants are still working, and they cannot retire because they will be unable to pay for basic necessities. For example, one Latino adult mentioned that while he has a job, he is looking for a part-time job to supplement his income in order to cover all of his bills. Provider survey respondents reiterated this sentiment, with 59% indicating that money to pay for services was a barrier that inhibits clients from accessing services.

**Culturally responsive and age-appropriate services.** The majority of the key leaders stated that many services available are not culturally responsive. A few stated that it is not just in terms of language or culture, but that many organizations are not equipped to address the needs of aging adults. Focus group participants also indicated that services were often not culturally appropriate, making them challenging to access. For example, some older adult key leaders mentioned that some organizations offered pamphlets in Spanish, however, they did not account for the fact that many Latino older adults are functionally illiterate. Therefore, if they just got a pamphlet and no one explained things to them verbally in a way that they could understand, people would get discouraged from accessing services. Additionally, several older adults mentioned that the personnel in many organizations did not look like them. One Latina older adult stated, *"I don't want a young woman telling me about things relating to aging."*

Provider survey respondents were also asked to weigh in on indicators of cultural competency for their organizations. As illustrated by Figure 4 below, 93% of Latino-serving organizations compared with 58% of older adult-serving organizations strive to be culturally competent. However, only 33% of older adult-serving organizations adapt their materials for low reading levels or read them aloud, further reinforcing the statement of the key leader above.

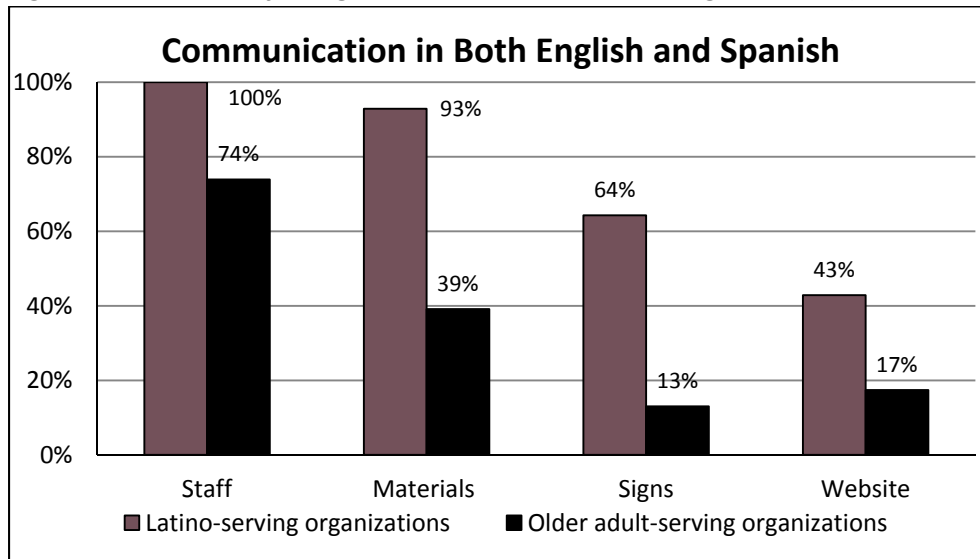
Figure 4. Cultural Competency Indicators (n = 15; n = 24)



**Language.** Focus group participants commonly mentioned language as a barrier to accessing services. Many indicated that either not having materials available in Spanish, or not having access to Spanish-speaking staff members at service provider locations, was challenging. For example, one Latina older adult mentioned that she went to a food bank. She picked a container that she thought was ice cream, but when she got home she found out it was dog food. She said that no one at the food bank spoke Spanish and she was not able to ask questions. Similarly, key leaders indicated that many senior and recreation centers do not provide linguistically appropriate services, which discourages participation by Latino older adults. Finally, over half of the provider survey respondents also indicated that language was a barrier for clients accessing their services, although only 6% found it to be a major barrier while 52% found it to be a minor barrier.

To better illustrate this barrier, provider survey respondents were also asked to indicate the types of communication that are available in Spanish as well as English. Based on Figure 5 below, there is a clear difference in the provision of Spanish material between the types of organizations, which points to the lack of Spanish-language content available through older adult-serving organizations that don't specifically target Latinos.

Figure 5. Prevalence of Bilingual Communication Within Organizations (n = 14; n = 23)



**Prejudice and racism.** Some key leaders also stated that there is still prejudice and racism. These factors create an unwelcoming environment that makes it difficult for Latino older adults to be able to access services because they are often treated with disrespect and denied services because of the color of their skin. One key community leader mentioned, "All elderly face issues, but if you throw in language barriers and the unique experiences of Latinos, then it becomes even more complicated. There are people that have been facing issues (barriers) all their lives, and by now, they are tired with the system." Additionally, a key leader who works to protect older adults' rights mentioned that in Arapahoe County, if a person speaks Spanish, the social services staff stops talking to him/her. S/he further stated that from her perception there is an assumption because of the current hostility, that anyone who is not proficient in English must be undocumented.

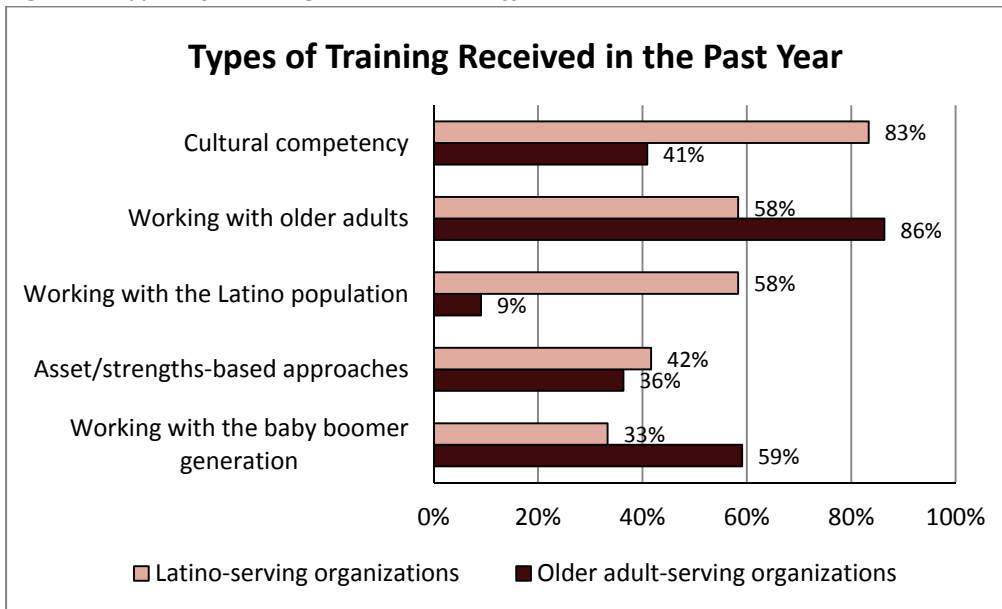
#### **Cultural Competency Indicators From Service Providers**

In the provider survey, respondents were also asked to provide information about their organization and staff. While the information only represents perceptions of those who responded to the survey, it provides a snapshot into organizations in the Denver metro area that serve older adults and Latinos.

Service providers face several challenges in serving Latino older adults including inadequate funding, ability to outreach and access the Latino community, and insufficient capacity. In addition to overcoming these challenges, organizations would benefit from training and technical assistance to learn how to better serve Latino older adults.

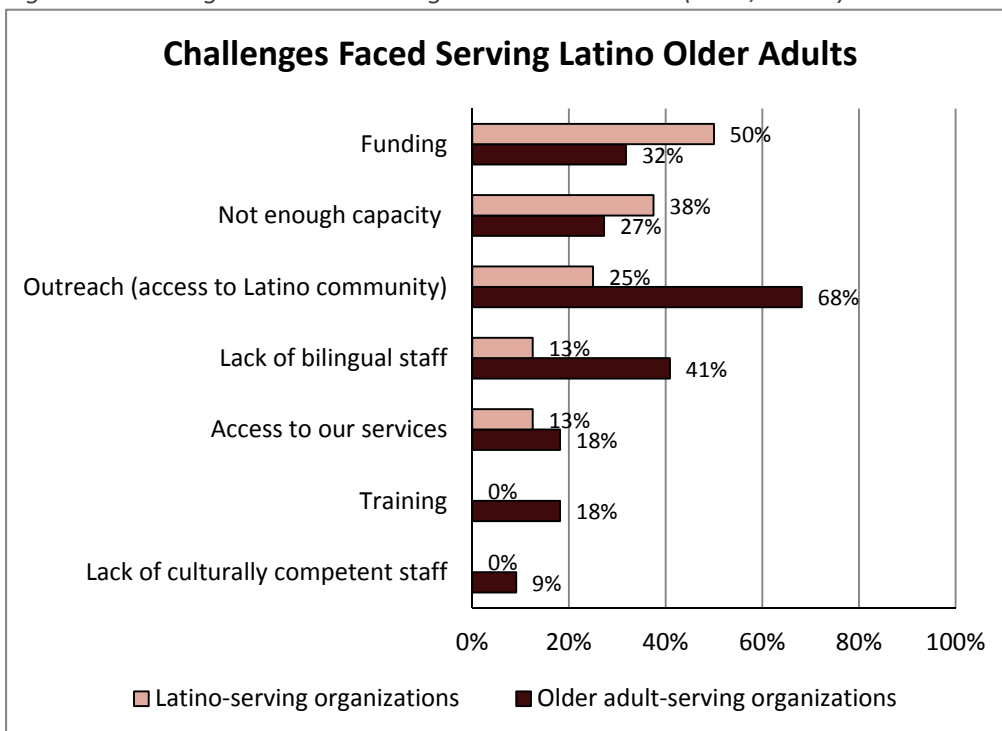
**Training for staff.** Provider survey respondents were also asked to indicate the types of training their staff members have received in the last year. Figure 6 highlights the different types of training received by organizations that serve Latinos compared with those focused on serving older adults.

Figure 6. Types of Training Provided to Staff in the Past Year (n = 12; n = 22)



**Challenges faced in serving Latino older adults.** As illustrated in Figure 7 below, organizations face many challenges in serving Latino older adults. Interestingly, **the most highly rated challenge by older adult-serving organizations is outreach/access to the Latino community**, which reinforces the communication and outreach barrier brought up by focus group participants and key leaders.

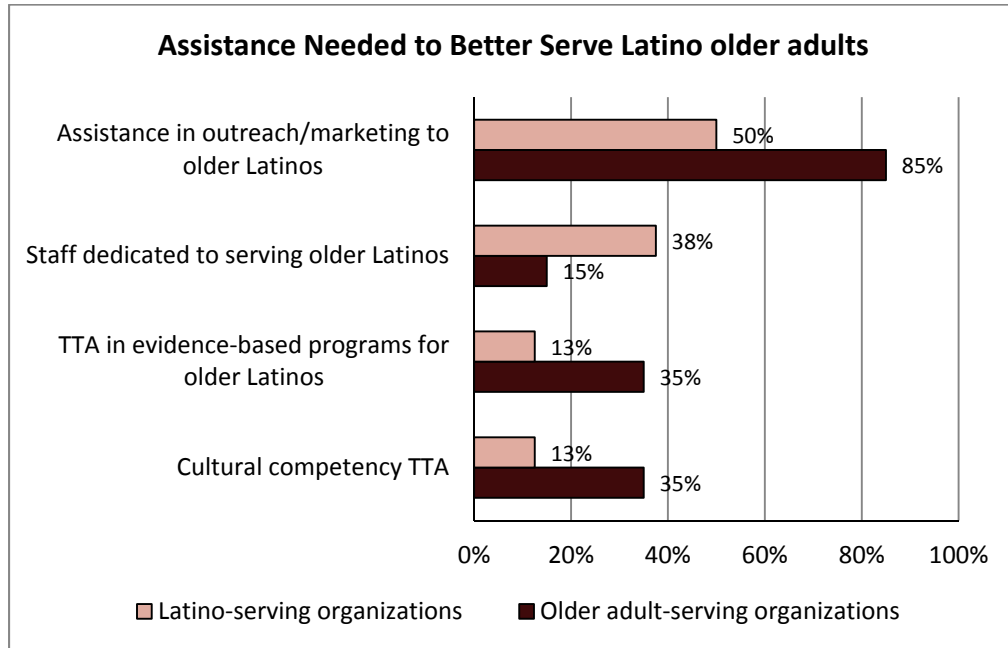
Figure 7. Challenges Faced in Serving Latino Older Adults (n = 8; n = 22)





**Assistance needed.** Service providers in the Denver metro area would benefit from many types of assistance, specifically in the area of outreach/marketing to Latino older adults as well as training and technical assistance in evidence-based programs for Latino older adults and in cultural competency (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Assistance Needed to Better Serve Latino Older Adults (n = 8; n = 20)



### Policies That Limit and Facilitate Access to Services

The following section discusses policies that limit and benefit access to services.

Policies that help Latino older adults prohibit discrimination, provide access to discounted services, facilitate access to government assistance, protect from fraud or exploitation and advocate for services.

Policies that hinder Latino older adults' access to services do not address the needs of aging populations, fail to adequately acknowledge the role of family in caregiving, make access to services complicated for intergenerational households and discriminate based on documentation.

### Policies That Help

Key leaders identified the following policies that facilitate access to services and supports:

- Policies that **prohibit discrimination based on age**
- Policies that allow older adults to **access discounted services**
- Policies that allow older adults to **access local, federal and state funds** for housing, food and medical services, including Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security
- Policies that **protect older adults** from fraud, exploitation and neglect

**Older Americans Act.** Some key leaders also mentioned that there are many policies under the Older Americans Act (OAA). According to the Administration on Aging, "Although older individuals may receive services under many other federal programs, today the OAA is considered to be the major vehicle for the organization and delivery of social and nutrition services to this group and their caregivers."<sup>31</sup> The OAA has a wide range of programs that older adults can access through 56 state agencies.

In 1965, the Older Americans Act established Area Agencies on Aging to advocate and provide services to Americans over the age of 65. Colorado has 16 Areas on Aging. The Denver metropolitan area is served by the Denver Area Agency on Aging (DAAA)<sup>32</sup> and the Boulder County Area Agency on Aging. The Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) was designated as the Denver Area Agency on Aging. The DAAA and BCAAA focus on helping Americans who are 60 and older to age in place and independently. In addition, the OAA requires that AAAs focus on older adults who have the greatest need.

The AAAs that serve the Denver metropolitan area support Americans who are 60 years or older in a variety of ways. For instance, both agencies conduct research, including needs assessments of older adults to help inform stakeholders as well as to advocate for the needs of American older adults. In addition, area agencies are required to develop a plan for their vision and services and update it every four years. A review of the DAAA 2011–2015 and BCAAA 2010–2014 plans indicate that both agencies keep abreast of the changing demographics in their communities and have additional initiatives to help local agencies better understand the impacts of the aging population and how to best serve them. This is important because their services and advocacy work reflect the changing needs of American older adults in these areas. For example, DAAA has the "Boomer Bond" project, a special project of the Metro Vision Implementation Task Force, which will develop regional awareness and provide information on best practices to help them plan for and better serve older adults.

The AAAs also provide direct services to adults who are 60 years or older and to their adult caregivers. For example, they provide comprehensive information about available services. In addition, both the DAAA and BCAAA contract with other agencies to provide services to older Americans. These services include transportation, home care, legal services and family caregiver support.

In terms of providing services to ethnic/racial minorities, the DAAA acknowledges that while minorities in the eight-county area it currently serves account for only 15% of the population, this is changing rapidly. Each successive cohort has a larger ethnic population and, therefore, future plans have to account for the growing diversity of older adults in this area. In addition, its 2011–2015 plan indicates that minority older adults tend to have fewer financial resources than

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<sup>31</sup>Department of Health and Human Services: Administration on Aging. (2012) Older Americans Act. Retrieved from [http://www.aoa.gov/AoA\\_programs/OAA/index.aspx](http://www.aoa.gov/AoA_programs/OAA/index.aspx).

<sup>32</sup> The DAAA includes Adams, Arapahoe, Broomfield, Clear Creek, Denver, Douglas and Jefferson counties.

their white counterparts and, therefore, their needs will be higher.<sup>33</sup> As mentioned earlier, the DAAA has used this information to ensure that the provision of services is adequate. For example, the needs assessment indicated that there was a need for outreach to minority older adults. Thus, the DAAA requires contractors to have an outreach plan to identify minority older adults and caregivers, and those who do not speak English as their primary language. It also plans to use media outlets that target specific ethnic/racial communities for outreach.

The BCAA has also considered the needs of minority older adults in Boulder County. According to its needs assessments, the largest percentages of Latinos 55 and older are in Lafayette and Longmont. The BCAA highlights the importance of providing outreach to individuals who lack connections, including Latinos. In addition, the assessment highlights the services the Longmont Senior Center conducts for Latino older adults, including outreach and education services.<sup>34</sup>

### **Policies That Hinder Access**

Key leaders interviewed for the assessment also noted policies that hinder Latino older adults' ability to stay home.

***Policies are not addressing the needs of aging populations.*** This is a sentiment that is echoed in a 2011 report by the AARP Policy Institute and the National Conference of State Legislatures.<sup>35</sup> For example, they state that streets were not designed for walkability. In many places across the United States, people cannot walk safely across the streets because the streets are too wide or sidewalks are not safe. As the number of older adults is growing and they are choosing to age in place, they need to be able to move safely from one place to another. However, the current policies governing land use do not take into account the needs of an aging population.

***Reimbursement for caregiving.*** Another example of policies that interfere with the ability of Latino older adults to age in community is related to reimbursement for caregiving, specifically how family members are reimbursed for taking care of aging family members. As has been mentioned, the role of the family in aging has been cited as a very important factor. As such, many adult children are filling the role of taking care of their aging loved one. In Colorado, if an older adult desires to be taken care of by a family member rather than by a professional, he or she has this option. However, the current laws are complex and set limitations for how much a person can get reimbursed for taking care of a family member. First, there are limitations based on federal, state and local funding. Additionally, family caregivers are considered "unskilled laborers," which means that this wage might not be sufficient to offset working fewer hours or giving up their job altogether. Given that the reimbursements for caregivers are not sufficient, this pushes some family members to rely on formal service providers. If a person cannot afford to take care of his/her aging family member, he/she might be forced to institutionalize the

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<sup>33</sup>*Supra*, see 28.

<sup>34</sup>Boulder Area Agency on Aging. (2010). Age well Boulder County: A plan to create vibrant communities. Retrieved from <http://www.allagewell.com/>

<sup>35</sup>Farber, N. & Shinkle, D. (2011). Aging in place: A state survey of livability policies and practices. National Conference on State Legislatures and AARP Public Policy Institute.

family member because Medicaid will pay for all those services, in direct contradiction to the preferred way of providing and receiving care in Latino families.

**Intergenerational households.** Another challenge related to Latino older adults being able to age in place has to do with the fact that current policies make it challenging for Latino older adults who live in an intergenerational household to access services.<sup>36</sup> For example, if an older adult couple lives with one of their children and their family, under current structures, they might be considered just one household. Therefore, the incomes and assets of all members will be taken into account when determining whether the older adults qualify for certain benefits. This might result in denial of services. For example, if the older adults want to apply for cash counseling through Medicaid, this program requires that applicants have as little as \$2,000 in assets to qualify.<sup>37</sup> Thus, if the children of the older adult couple are counted as part of the household, and assets exceed the maximum amount allowed, they will be denied services. While there is a way to break down the incomes by separating the households so that Latino older adults can still qualify for services and supports, one key leader who provides legal assistance to older adults stated that it is a cumbersome process and that many times families need an attorney to help them navigate this system.

**House Bill 1023.** One particular policy that was brought up by key leaders is House Bill 1023.<sup>38</sup> HB 06S-1023, Illegal Aliens, Public Benefits and Contracts, was signed into law in 2006. This bill requires all people who are applying for public benefits to provide proof of lawful presence in the United States. One of the motivations behind this policy was to deny services to people who are not lawful residents of Colorado. According to key leaders, HB 1023 makes it challenging for Latino older adults who are undocumented to access state-funded services. However, because this policy requires that all people applying for public benefits provide documentation that proves they are legal residents or citizens, this policy has also made it difficult for older adults who were born in the United States but do not have the required documentation to prove it to access services. One of the key leaders said that this hurts U.S.-born Latino older adults disproportionately because of the anti-immigration climate. The logic behind this statement is that being Latino adds a level of suspicion that a person is undocumented regardless of whether he/she was born in the U.S. or what language he/she speaks. Thus, if U.S.-born Latino older adults are unable to provide the required documents to prove that they are legal residents in the United States, they might be denied public benefits.

**Bureaucratic practices.** Finally, a few key leaders stated that, in addition to the aforementioned policies, bureaucratic practices pose challenges for Latino older adults. For example, if an older adult experiences discrimination, there is no one enforcing those policies unless a person can

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<sup>36</sup> Intergenerational households (or intergenerational co-residence) refer to a living arrangement in which two or more generations of the same family live in the same house.

<sup>37</sup> Certain assets, such as the primary residency, may not be considered when determining eligibility. National Resource Center for Participant Directed Services.

get assistance from a lawyer. The issue of bureaucratic practices also came up in regards to accessing Medicare, Medicaid and other social welfare programs. Respondents stated that the regulations are very strict and do not take into account physical and education limitations of Latino older adults. One respondent stated that if one calls social services, he or she might have to wait hours before talking to a person and that this is may be difficult for some older adults.

### Specific Issues Facing Undocumented Immigrants

In addition to issues and challenges facing Latino older adults in general, there are also specific issues that undocumented immigrants in the Denver metro area face. Latino older adults who are undocumented and key leaders were asked about the specific issues Latino older adults who lack required government documentation face.

In addition to the barriers faced by most Latino older adults, immigrants without proper documentation are prevented from accessing government and some community-based services and supports. They also are more likely to experience fear, dependency and isolation.

*"Es un miedo...Es un miedo... Si uno no tiene papeles es muy dificil... Se imagina, viejitos y sin papeles. (It is a fear...it is a fear. If you do not have papers it is very difficult. Can you imagine being old and not having papers?)"*

**Access to services.** Both focus group participants and key leaders stated that the fact that individuals do not have documentation **prevents them from accessing most local, state and federal services and supports.** For example, Latino older adults who are undocumented are not eligible to receive Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security supplemental income or any of the federally funded social welfare programs that are designed to help keep the elderly out of poverty. In addition, according to focus group participants and key leaders, many Latino older adults without documentation **might not access community-based services** such as health care screening because they do not know if documentation is required. Even in instances where documentation is not required, some focus group participants and key leaders noted that an individual without proper documentation might choose to not seek services. For example, why bother to find out if you have cancer if you cannot receive the necessary treatment? Additionally, another Latina older adult stated that she needed medication but could not apply for help because of her immigration status. While she was able to receive assistance from a community-based organization, the organization only offered one-time emergency support, and it was the only organization she knew about that offered help in her community.

**Fear.** Several key leaders explained that when people do not have documentation, they experience hostility and are afraid of being found and being separated from their families. This fear might prevent them from reaching out. In addition, many of them also have to worry about seeing their children and grandchildren being deported and seeing their families being torn apart. Key leaders also stated that there are many misunderstandings surrounding documentation status. For example, if a Latino older adult who has documentation lives with other family members who do not have documentation, he/she might choose not to access services because many government forms ask for information on all household members.

Although the information is not required, many applicants do not know this and decide not to apply for services for fear of hurting other family members.

**Dependency and isolation.** Some key leaders stated that many Latino older adults who lack documentation do not drive and, therefore, are more dependent on their family members for transportation. In addition, because of fear and dependence on others, Latino older adults who are undocumented might be more isolated than other Latino older adults. As discussed previously, many Latino older adults rely on remaining engaged and active as they age, a trait not limited only to those older adults with proper documentation.

**Employment challenges.** Additionally, some of the focus group participants stated that it was extremely difficult to get a job. They stated that since they are elderly and lack the required documentation, they have been unable to find a job and, therefore, rely on their children for support. This made them sad, as the main reason they came to the U.S. was to find a job.

**Importance of family.** For Latino older adults without documentation, the family is the most important source of support. Two Latino older adults who do not have papers stated that they live with one of their sons and receive support from cousins and other family members. However, one Latina older adult who lacks documentation said she felt bad for her son. She said that he had to take care of his children, his wife and the parents. She said she felt powerless because they could not help their son with all of his bills and she simply does not make enough money to support them. However, despite the adversities they face, they keep a close-knit family.

A follow-up question to both focus group participants and key leaders prompted them to identify services or programs for Latino older adults who are undocumented. The Latino older adults who are undocumented said they are able to access services at the senior center in their community. Additionally, key leaders also mentioned that some community-based organizations such as Servicios de la Raza, Centro San Juan Diego, Clinica Campesina, Salud Family Health Center, Denver Health, Catholic Charities, Denver Inner City Parish and other churches provide services to immigrants who are undocumented. It is pertinent to note that these organizations serve undocumented immigrants, but they do not necessarily have any specific programs for Latino older adults who are undocumented. Denver Inner City Parish has a program for older adults, and most of the participants in its program are Latino. However, this organization does not know how many are undocumented because it does not ask for documentation.

Provider survey respondents were also asked to provide insight into whether their organizations have citizenship/residency requirements. Based on input from service providers who responded to the survey, only 20% of respondents' organizations have citizenship or residency requirements, whether for some or all programs. When asked what type of documentation is required, feedback typically included a photo identification and/or information with proof of address, such as a piece of mail or affidavit. Additionally, when asked whether immigrant status was a barrier for clients to access their services, 6% identified it as a major barrier and 36% as a minor barrier.

**Possible solutions.** Finally, key leaders were asked to provide ideas about possible solutions to address the barriers faced by Latino older adults who are undocumented. Many of the key leaders stated that comprehensive immigration reform is needed. To address the issues faced by Latino adults who are undocumented, it is necessary to address federal and state policies that hurt this population. In addition, other key leaders stated that we need more programs that serve people regardless of their documentation status. Another key leader stated that it is important to advocate for this population because they cannot advocate for themselves.

### Successful Strategies/Best Practices to Advocate for and Provide Services

This final section presents findings and other information about best practices in serving Latino older adults. It also provides information about service models that seek to rely on the assets and strengths that Latino older adults possess.

An effective way to advocate for Latino older adults is to empower them, engage them in politics, educate younger generations, work through networks of established organizations and build coalitions.

An effective way to provide services to Latino older adults is to provide services in their community utilizing community-based approaches and strategies: provide culturally responsive and language appropriate services, train providers on the needs of Latino older adults, honor the role of the family and account for physical capabilities and limitations.

Effective ways to engage Latino older adults are to honor and acknowledge their assets and strengths and provide them with information in a way that speaks to them, their family and their community.

### Advocate for Latino Older Adults

**Engage and empower Latino older adults.** When key leaders were asked what were the best practices to advocate for Latino older adults, the most common response to this question was that it was necessary to have policymakers (with power) and Latino older adults engage in face-to-face conversations about their needs so that the policymakers can hear directly from this population. On a similar note, one leader also stated that it was important to empower Latino older adults so that they can get involved and advocate for themselves. Research suggests that empowering the community members and beneficiaries of social services ensures there is a good match between the services being offered and the clients' needs.<sup>39</sup> In addition, research suggests that when social workers/service providers use empowerment strategies, the programs tend to be more effective.<sup>40</sup> One way to empower clients is to include them in the decision-making process.<sup>41</sup> Clients can be empowered by having direct input such as joining advisory

<sup>39</sup> Iglehart, A. P. & Becerra, R. M. (1995). Social services and the ethnic community. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

<sup>40</sup> Hardina, D. (2005). Ten characteristics of empowerment oriented social services. *Administration of Social Work*, 29(3), 23-42

<sup>41</sup> Aranda, M.P., Villa, V.M., Trejo, L., Ramírez R., & Ranney M. (2003). El Portal Latino Alzheimer's Project: Model program for Latino caregivers of Alzheimer's disease-affected People. *Social Work*, 48, 251-279.



boards.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, several key leaders suggested investing in community leaders who can champion aging issues.

***Involve Latino older adults in civic engagement activities.*** Based on feedback from key leaders, it is important to involve Latino older adults in political and civic engagement activities and create a strong Latino voting block that can advocate for the needs of the Latino older adult population. It is important to engage Latino older adults in the full spectrum of activities, such as registering to vote, mobilizing communities on issues, serving on commissions and boards, and running for office. Research on political participation, representation and policy outcomes provides ample evidence that when minority candidates are elected to office, they are likely to champion policies that benefit their constituency. For example, Latino representatives tend to sponsor and support bills that directly benefit Latino communities.<sup>43</sup> Thus, increasing Latino representation in federal, state and local government is needed in order to increase broader support for policies that will benefit Latino older adults.

***Involve younger generations.*** It is important to educate younger Latinos about what their parents need and to mobilize them so that they can advocate for their parents.

***Engage foundations in funding policy and advocacy.*** Key leaders also stated that a good strategy to advocate for the needs of Latino older adults is to have foundations provide policy and advocacy funding, which will also help build awareness.

***Work through networks of established organizations and build coalitions.*** When several organizations are advocating for the same issue, they are more likely to be successful than if it is just one organization or one individual. This is a practice that is currently used by the DAAA and BCAA to advocate for the needs of older adults. Both agencies work with other stakeholders in the area in order to push for policies that address the needs of older adults. In addition, one interviewee stated that advocacy needs to take place at various levels. For example, community leaders can ask organizations to advocate for an issue and, in turn, these organizations can advocate at the system level in the state legislature. Appendix A provides examples of how well-designed coalitions have been able to successfully advocate for Latino older adults. Carefully designed coalitions can create social change and improve the lives of historically marginalized communities.<sup>44</sup> In addition, researchers suggest that to create strong coalitions that will improve

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<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup>Mindiola, T. & Gutierrez, A. (1988). Chicanos and the legislative process: Reality and illusion in the politics of change. In Garcia, C. (ed), *Latinos and the political system*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press. And Bratton, K. A. (2006). The behavior and success of Latino legislators: Evidence from the states. *Social Science Quarterly*, 87 (1), 1136–57. And Wilson, C. (2010). "Descriptive representation and Latino interest bill sponsorship in Congress." *Social Science Quarterly* 91(4), 1043-1062.

<sup>44</sup> Wolff, T. (2001). The future of community coalition building. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 29, 263-268.



the future of historically underserved populations, it is important to learn from successful coalitions and apply the lessons learned from those endeavors.<sup>45</sup>

#### **Spotlight on the Illinois Coalition of Limited English Speaking Elderly**

An example of a coalition that has been formed to advocate, engage and serve older adults from ethnic/racial minority backgrounds is the Illinois Coalition of Limited English Speaking Elderly (CLESE). Several community-based organizations serving different ethnic groups have formed this coalition to help immigrants and refugees navigate the health care system. Minority older adults who live in Chicago and are not fluent in English can call a central phone number and they will be referred to a service provider that offers information and services in their own language and in a culturally appropriate manner.

One of the most effective strategies this coalition has been able to use is to advocate for the needs of these vulnerable populations while ensuring that the voices of ethnic minority older adults are heard and respected. For example, CLESE convened a conference in which 220 older adults from various backgrounds were able to speak directly to elected officials and authorities.

#### **Provide Services to Latino Older Adults**

Key leaders were also asked about the best practices and strategies to provide services to Latino older adults.

***Provide services in the communities where Latino older adults reside.*** Key leaders stated that having services such as health clinics, recreation centers or any other program that is designed to serve the Latino older population should be accessible in communities with large Latino older adult populations. For one, this would address the issue of transportation that many Latino older adults lack. Another strategy is to meet Latino older adults where they are. A few commented that many Latino older adults already attend church services within their communities and, therefore, expanding services in places where Latino older adults already congregate such as churches is an effective strategy to provide services.

***Develop partnerships.*** Key leaders also mentioned that services are already being provided at places such as Clínica Tepeyac and Servicios de la Raza and what is needed is to develop more partnerships with other organizations to better serve this community. Similarly, the BCAA also encourages organizations to work together to maximize resources.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, organizations that have successful strategies for reaching vulnerable populations can build on those models and target more narrowly Latino older adults in the communities they already serve. A few participants also mentioned that the Center for African American Health has been able to successfully serve its target population. One key aspect of this organization's success has to do with its outreach strategies.

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Boulder Area Agency on Aging. (2010). Age well Boulder County: A plan to create vibrant communities.

### Spotlight on Promotores de Salud

One example of a community-based approach currently used in the Denver metro area is the Promotores de Salud Model. Promotores are community health workers who work in areas of high medical needs and low resources to disseminate health-related information to vulnerable populations. There is no national certification or training program for promotores. However, research suggests the model is effective in encouraging healthy behaviors in vulnerable populations.<sup>47</sup> Promotores tend to come from within the communities they serve and, therefore, they have working knowledge of the culture. They also provide language-appropriate services in a setting that benefits the client.

**Use community-based approaches.** Research suggests that community-based approaches are effective strategies to reach and serve the Latino population.<sup>48</sup> There are several key strategies when utilizing a community-based approach.

- **Provide culturally sensitive and responsive services.** Key community leaders repeatedly commented on the importance of providing culturally sensitive and responsive services. For example, for Latinos, it is very important to relate directly to service providers rather than through institutions.<sup>49</sup> For example, in the Promotores de Salud model, promotores go to churches, salons, stores, community centers and pretty much anywhere where Latinos congregate to provide health information directly to the people and are available to answer questions as needed.<sup>50</sup>
- **Ensure language appropriate services.** Research indicates that lack of language appropriate services is a barrier for Latino older adult to access services.<sup>51</sup> Key leaders also mentioned the importance of having bilingual staff, printed materials in English and Spanish, and translators whenever there was no bilingual staff at hand. Research also suggests that programs that provide materials in a linguistically appropriate manner are able to provide effective services to Latino older adults.<sup>52</sup> In addition, as noted by some bilingual Latinos older adult focus group participants, even if a person knows English

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<sup>47</sup> Niño, T. (2011). Promotores de Salud. Department of Health and Human Services: Office of Minority Health.

<sup>48</sup> National EyeCare Institute. (n.d.). *Effective education to target populations: An excerpt from the National Eye Health Education Program Five-Year Agenda*. Retrieved from [www.nei.nih.gov/.../Effective Education to Target Populations.pdf](http://www.nei.nih.gov/.../Effective_Education_to_Target_Populations.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> The National Alliance for Hispanic Health. (2001). *A primer for cultural proficiency: Towards quality health services for Hispanics*. Retrieved from [www.hispanichealth.arizona.edu/...](http://www.hispanichealth.arizona.edu/...)

<sup>50</sup> *Supra*, see 47.

<sup>51</sup> Kim, G., Worley, C. B., Allen, R. S., Vinson, L., Crowther, M. R., Parmelee, P., & Chiriboga, D.A. (2011). Vulnerability of older Latino and Asian immigrants with limited English proficiency. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* 59(7), 1246–1252. And Heyman, J. C., & Gutheil, I. A. (2006). *Older Latinos' attitudes toward and comfort with end-of-life planning*. And Ninez, A.P., Hays, R., & Cunningham, W.E. (2006). Linguistic disparities in healthcare access and health status among older adults. *Journal of General Internal Medicine* 21(7), 768-791.

<sup>52</sup> *Supra*, see 41 and 47.

- very well, some of the health or financial terms might be too technical, and therefore, he/she would still prefer to receive the material in Spanish.
- **Train service providers.** Key leaders also suggested providing training to service providers on the needs of Latino older adults. This is a reasonable recommendation because, in addition to the factors already mentioned, research shows that it is important to consider important cultural factors when planning and implementing services for Latino older adults. For example, the concepts of **fatalismo (fatalism)** or **resignación (acceptance)** need to be understood when working with the Latino population. Fatalismo refers to a belief that a person has little or no control of what happens. Resignación refers to accepting one's faith without questions.<sup>53</sup> Thus, research suggests that this view of life can hinder whether or not older adults will access health care.<sup>54</sup> One key leader who works directly with Latino older adults stated that is not necessarily negative but that it can pose problems when an agency or person is trying to teach about preventive health care measures. Thus, it is important to understand if these views are held by the people agencies serve because they may interfere with a person's decision to seek help or treatment if one is ill.
  - **Consider the role of family.** Following the theme of culturally appropriate services, the majority of the respondents stated that taking family into account is extremely important. In addition, the importance of family in the Latino community is well-documented.<sup>55</sup> Since family plays a central role, Latino families often make decisions that are based on the best interest of the family, not the individual.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, considering that many Latino older adults still live with their families,<sup>57</sup> it will be important to have a plan for how and when the family should be engaged in the provision of services. One suggestion was to have an **educational component for caregivers**. Some children take care of their parents, but they do not know what their

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<sup>53</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2010). *Reference and resource guide for working with Hispanic/Latino older adults*. (HHS Publication No. (SMA) 10-4570). Retrieved from [kap.samhsa.gov/products/brochures/.../Reference\\_Resource\\_Guide.p...](http://kap.samhsa.gov/products/brochures/.../Reference_Resource_Guide.p...)

<sup>54</sup> Phipps, E. J., True, G., & Murray, G. F. (2003). Community perspectives on advance care planning: Report from the Community Ethics Program. *Journal of Cultural Diversity*, 10(4), 118–123. Retrieved from [proquest.com](http://proquest.com)

<sup>55</sup> Purdy, J. & Arguello, D. (1992). Hispanic familialism in caretaking of older adults: Is it functional? *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 19(3), 29-43. And Gallanti, G.A. (2003). The Hispanic Family and Male-Female Relationships: An overview. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing* 14(3): 180-185. And Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2010). *Reference and resource guide for working with Hispanic/Latino older adults*. (HHS Publication No. (SMA) 10-4570). Retrieved from [kap.samhsa.gov/products/brochures/.../Reference\\_Resource\\_Guide.p](http://kap.samhsa.gov/products/brochures/.../Reference_Resource_Guide.p)

And Cummings, M. R., Hernandez, V. A., Rockymore, M., Shepard, M. M., & Sager, K. (2011). The Latino Age Wave: What changing ethnic demographics mean for the future of aging in the United States. Retrieved from <http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/learning/report-latino-age-wave-what-changing-ethnic-demographics-mean-future-aging-us>

<sup>56</sup> *Supra*, see 53.

<sup>57</sup> Donlan, W.T. (2011). The meaning of community-based care for frail Mexican American elders. *International Social Work*, 54: 388. doi: 10.1177/0020872810396258

parents need or what services are available to help. One key leader did state that it was important to find the balance between engaging the family and allowing the older adult to have some discretion in the decision-making process.

- **Account for physical capabilities and limitations.** Key leaders also stated that service providers need to take into account that fact that, within the 55 and older population, there is a wide range of physical capabilities and limitations. For example, organizations and agencies serving older adults should account for things such as the fact that many older adults have lost some of their eyesight. Therefore, printed materials need to be in larger fonts and be user friendly. Furthermore, some Latino older adults are functionally illiterate. Consequently, service providers should be available to explain things verbally if needed.

#### **Spotlight on the National Hispanic Council on Aging and the Asociación Nacional pro Personas Mayores**

National organizations such as the National Hispanic Council on Aging (NHCOA) and the Asociación Nacional pro Personas Mayores (ANPPM/ National Association for Hispanic Elderly) provide numerous resources to help community-based organizations provide culturally appropriate services. For example, NHCA offers an electronic learning center, where providers serving Latino older adults can receive trainings on various topics. ANPPM offers a variety of printed materials, including informational pamphlets using the format of a telenovela (soap opera). According to the ANPPM, this is a format that is familiar to most monolingual Spanish Speaking Latinos. In addition, the format is designed for Latinos who have low literacy skills. The educational materials provide information in English and Spanish in five health topics of concern to the Latino community.

#### **Engage Latino Older Adults**

Interviewees were also asked to identify the best practices to engage Latino older adults.

**Increase information.** The most common response to this question was that it was important to increase information about available opportunities for engagement, services and programs for Latino older adults. In addition, interviewees and focus group participants stated that it was necessary to meet them where they are, even if it means knocking on their doors. Some key community leaders suggested using Spanish-speaking media to reach Spanish-speaking Latinos. A respondent stated that, at one point, Univision had some telenovelas known as encrucijadas that highlighted health issues in the Latino community as a way to increase awareness. He suggested that, in addition to discussing health issues, the encrucijadas telenovelas could address other relevant topics for Latino older adults and their families.

**Use terms other than “volunteer.”** In terms of engagement, some respondents stated that it was important to recognize that many Latino older adults are already engaged. However, some of them probably do not call it volunteering because they see it more as simply lending a hand or helping someone in need. One participant suggested that to increase the level of engagement of Latino older adults, marketing and outreach materials should use other words besides volunteering. For example, they can say, "help your neighbor" or "help your community." Another person said that it was important to highlight the fact their community needs them.

There is a strong emphasis on helping among Latino older adults and sometimes people forget that they have many talents and skills they can share.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The assessment gathered feedback from key leaders, Latino older adults and service providers, and as a result revealed many common trends and themes among the Latino older adult population in metro Denver. Latino older adults are sharing in both the opportunities and challenges facing all of metro Denver's older adults in the first part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, as revealed by the data, while they face additional challenges, they also possess cultural values and assets that can enrich the aging experience for Latinos as well as enhance the new narrative of aging that is currently being written by all older adults at this time in our nation's history. Now is the time to take action and capitalize on the assets that metro Denver's Latino older adults bring to our social fabric as well as to address the shared social challenges they face.

The following recommendations are derived from the analysis and synthesis of the information learned through the assessment, with the goal of helping Colorado Latino Age Wave move forward with its initiative. ***With all of the recommendations, it's important to engage Latino older adults in the process to rely on their assets and empower them for continued change.***

- **Support neighborhood-based and home-based programs.** There is a significant amount of skill and knowledge among the Latino older adult population to help support others as they age in place within their own communities. For example, there are “handymen and women” looking to support their neighbors as well as earn additional income who could be matched with older adults needing home repair. A next step could be mapping out the informal and formal assets and resources present in communities, building on existing informal relationships that already exist, and creating more formal program linkages.
- **Utilize the promotores model to train Latino older adults to help others navigate the system and increase access to services.** While the promotores model has traditionally been used in areas of health, the model can be used to train Latino older adults on how to guide other Latino older adults through complex systems, such as Medicaid, or locate other important services to help age in place. This presents a wealth of opportunities on many levels. First, it provides opportunities for Latino older adults to remain active and engaged in the community, a need expressed by many. Second, it builds on the existing assets of Latino older adults, such as skills, wisdom and community connections. Third, it helps reach Latino older adults with critical information, which many indicated is lacking, in a culturally appropriate and community-based approach. Through this approach, “promotores” can also be trained in the legal nuances of access for undocumented immigrants and help advise on eligibility requirements.
- **Build coalitions and partnerships among organizations serving the Latino community as well as older adults.** Engaging both types of organizations will present opportunities to rely on the strengths of each service area with the goal of building overall capacity. Service providers can work together to develop trainings, or share training opportunities. For example, if an older adult organization is training staff members on important issues in aging, it can invite Latino serving organizations to participate. Latino serving organizations can help older adult serving organizations better understand how

- to successfully outreach to and serve this population. This type of partnership and coalition building will also maximize resources in a time of decreased funding resources. It will also provide a venue for organizations with different strengths and expertise areas to advocate together for public policy change.
- **Support intergenerational programs that engage the entire family.** The importance of family was continually brought up when Latino older adults discussed aging in place. Whether acting as formal caregivers or simply providing ongoing support, family members play an important role. It is important to develop and support programs that train, empower and provide information to family members. This not only meets the needs of today's aging population, but it also empowers the next wave of Latino older adults and provides them with the information and resources as they age in place. It also builds on the strengths of the Latino populations in Denver by utilizing immediate resources in Latino older adults' lives.
  - **Increase funding to Latino-serving agencies to increase their capacity to serve older adults and increase funding to aging service providers to increase their capacity serve Latinos more effectively.** Hispanics in Philanthropy and other philanthropic organizations have sought to increase funding for Latino-serving community-based organizations and nonprofits by increasing awareness among the philanthropic community about the role and value of these nonprofits. It is important to continue to invest in and empower Latino-serving community groups and nonprofits, particularly as they adapt to better serve older adults. Similarly, it is important to build the capacity of agencies serving older adults to equip them to better meet the needs of their Latino constituents.
  - **Develop a public policy initiative that supports community-centered services.** There needs to be a public policy initiative that works with city and county agencies to make communities more walkable and accessible. For example, this includes issues such as sidewalks and traffic lights as well as land-use policies that allow for necessary commercial services and support services to be within walking distance in neighborhoods. In order to make neighborhoods and communities vibrant places for Latino older adults to age in place as well as young families to live and grow, individuals need to have close access to grocery stores with healthy foods and community gathering places.
  - **Invest in training to develop champions among Latino older adults.** Latino older adults in metro Denver bring a wealth of knowledge and passion and indicated they are seeking ways to remain engaged in the community. By identifying existing leaders in communities throughout Denver and proving them with formal public policy and advocacy training, there can be an opportunity to utilize individuals' assets and strengths to create long-term change, whether it is on a statewide policy level, or for concrete policy and practice changes in their own communities (e.g., sidewalk widening).
  - **Develop more effective communication strategies.** The assessment revealed a lack of effective communication and outreach strategies. Latino older adults and key leaders indicated that people do not know about services or how to access them. Similarly, provider survey respondents also indicated they need support in reaching the Latino older adult community. A program should be initiated that would identify and map natural networks to understand community communication; understand literacy and

language needs at the community level; and determine culturally relevant methods for distributing information. For example, information could be distributed using *telenovelas*, *radionovelas* and *fotonovelas*, small booklets/pamphlets that use symbols and illustrations to educate and inform. Similarly, an additional strategy could include creating a clearinghouse to support organizations to develop culturally and language appropriate materials and services. It would be beneficial to have an accessible resource that has appropriate translations geared toward local communities that take into account language and cultural factors.



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# MONTBELLO MARKET SCAN

## Final Report and Recommendations



Report for Montbello Organizing Committee (MOC)

Prepared by Joining Vision and Action (JVA)

August 8th, 2016

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## TABLE A. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	TIME-FRAME	NEEDS ADDRESSED	PRECEDENTS	PARTNERS
Continue efforts to attract commercial food retail	6-12 months	Healthy food access, attracting retail		OED, CO4F, Reinvestment Fund, ELK, local churches, Far Northeast Health Alliance
Engage management of Walmart Neighborhood Market in addressing neighborhood concerns	6-12 months	Healthy food access		Walmart Neighborhood Market
Work with existing corner stores to sell more healthy food	6-12 months	Healthy food access	Healthy Corner Store initiatives in Philadelphia and Los Angeles	DEH, Z-Mart
Form a community buying club	1-2 years	Healthy food access, civic participation	Bountiful Baskets, Sunshine Food Coop	GrowHaus, Bountiful Baskets
Expand existing food recovery efforts	6-12 months	Healthy food access		Denver Food Rescue, Food Bank of the Rockies, Montbello Cooperative Ministries
Work with nearby food wholesalers to open a storefront for residents	1-2 years	Healthy food access, attracting retail	A-Mart, Mountain Fresh Market	Del Monte Fresh Produce, United Natural Foods, McLane Food Service, JM Swank

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	<b>TIME-FRAME</b>	<b>NEEDS ADDRESSED</b>	<b>PRECEDENTS</b>	<b>PARTNERS</b>
<b>Convert a refrigerated truck to a mobile grocery</b>	1-2 years	Healthy food access	MoGro (Albuquerque), My Street Grocery (Portland), Twin Cities Mobile Market (Minneapolis)	
<b>Develop cooperatively-owned food retail</b>	3-5 years	Healthy food access, civic participation	Westwood Food Coop, West Colfax Food Coop, Nourish Community Market	RMFU Cooperative Development Center
<b>Activate the public right-of-way in the neighborhood interior through placemaking</b>	6 months – 2 years	Civic participation, neighborhood identity	City Repair, Project for Public Spaces	Extreme Community Makeover, WalkDenver
<b>Establish a Business Improvement District along the Chambers and/or Peoria corridors</b>	1-3 years	Attracting retail, neighborhood identity	West Colfax BID, RiNo BID, Federal Boulevard BID	Local businesses along commercial corridors
<b>Establish “third places” that all community members feel comfortable using as gathering spaces</b>	1-3 years	Attracting retail, civic participation, neighborhood identity	Corky Gonzalez Library, Whittier Coffee Shop, Evie Dennis campus	Libraries, schools, entrepreneurs
<b>Update the outdated Montbello neighborhood plan</b>	3-5 years	Attracting retail, civic participation, neighborhood identity	Globeville neighborhood plan, Westwood neighborhood plan	Department of Community Planning and Development
<b>Launch an annual festival celebrating Montbello’s identity and history</b>	1-3 years	Civic participation, neighborhood identity	Dragon Boat Festival, Five Points Jazz Festival	Churches, retailers, schools

# INTRODUCTION

Montbello is a large, diverse, and proud community at the outskirts of Denver. Like many inner-ring suburbs across the country, Montbello is in a time of transition as its housing stock ages and its demographics shift. Even as it swells in population and becomes more connected to the metropolitan fabric than ever before, Montbello is encountering a crisis of disinvestment, lacking the commercial and cultural hubs necessary for a complete community. Continued negative perceptions of Montbello as well as its automobile-oriented geography further compound these challenges.

Nevertheless, Montbello's current situation offers many opportunities for equitable and sustainable prosperity. The community's prime location between downtown and DIA, its abundance of young and diverse residents, and a growing regional economy all point towards a bright future for Montbello. With the right combination of long-term planning, organized community efforts, and dedicated capital investment, Montbello can be revitalized to ensure that its future is as proud as its past.

In the Spring of 2016, the Montbello Organizing Committee (MOC) hired Joining Vision and Action (JVA) to examine the neighborhood's current status and future opportunity through three overlapping lenses: increasing healthy food access, attracting retail, and strengthening civic participation and neighborhood identity. Over the course of April, May, and June, JVA staff investigated these opportunities through three research methods. A **quantitative analysis** evaluated demographic research such as household income, ethnic background, and spending patterns to establish a statistical snapshot of the neighborhood. A concurrent **qualitative analysis** employed a one-on-one interview process with fifteen community members representing the diversity of ages, ethnicities, and professions in the Montbello area. JVA worked with MOC to develop guidelines for the individuals to interview, and MOC provided JVA with names and contact information for interviewees. JVA staff developed a set of interview questions and recorded the interviews during June 2016, which were then uploaded and analyzed for common themes. Finally, a **best practices analysis** examined instances of communities addressing similar challenges throughout the Denver metro area and the country as a whole. From these best practices, JVA developed a set of "ingredients for success" that were turned into actionable recommendations for MOC.

For this study, JVA defined the primary study area as the region bounded by Peoria Street on the West, Pena Boulevard on the East, I-70 on the South and 56th Avenue on the North. However, many interviewees emphasized the close cultural and economic linkages between Montbello and the neighboring community of Green Valley Ranch. For certain aspects of analysis, therefore, an extended study area was employed that went as far east as Picadilly Road (see figure 1).

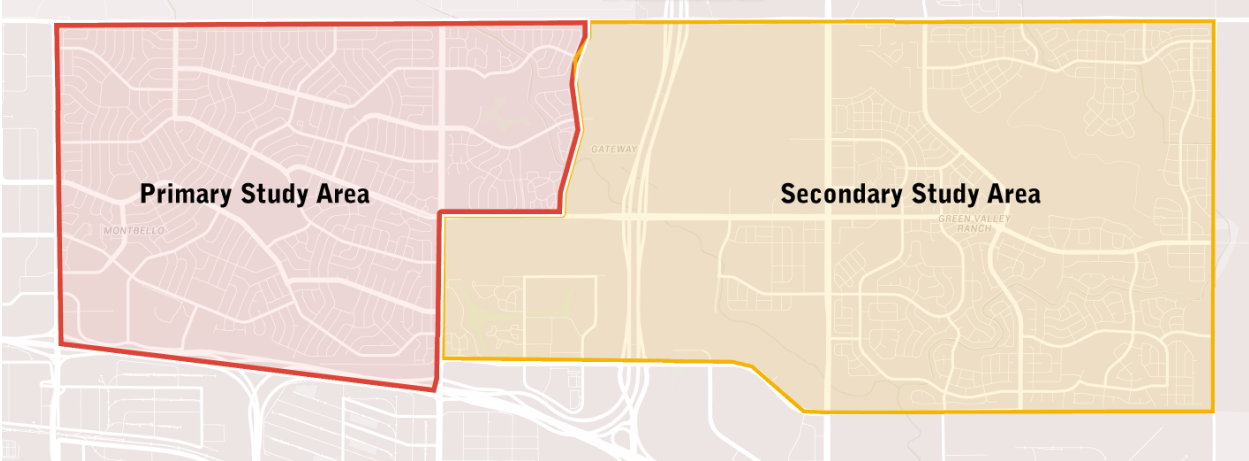


Figure 1. Primary and Secondary Study Areas.



# PART 1: CONTEXT

## Montbello's History

Established in 1966 with an area of 2,609 acres, Montbello is one of Denver's largest neighborhoods. Bounded by the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, I-70, Stapleton, and the open plains, the neighborhood has always been isolated from the rest of the metro area's residential fabric. Today, despite the redevelopment of Stapleton and the expansion of neighborhoods to the east, Montbello remains physically disconnected from metro Denver (see figure 2).

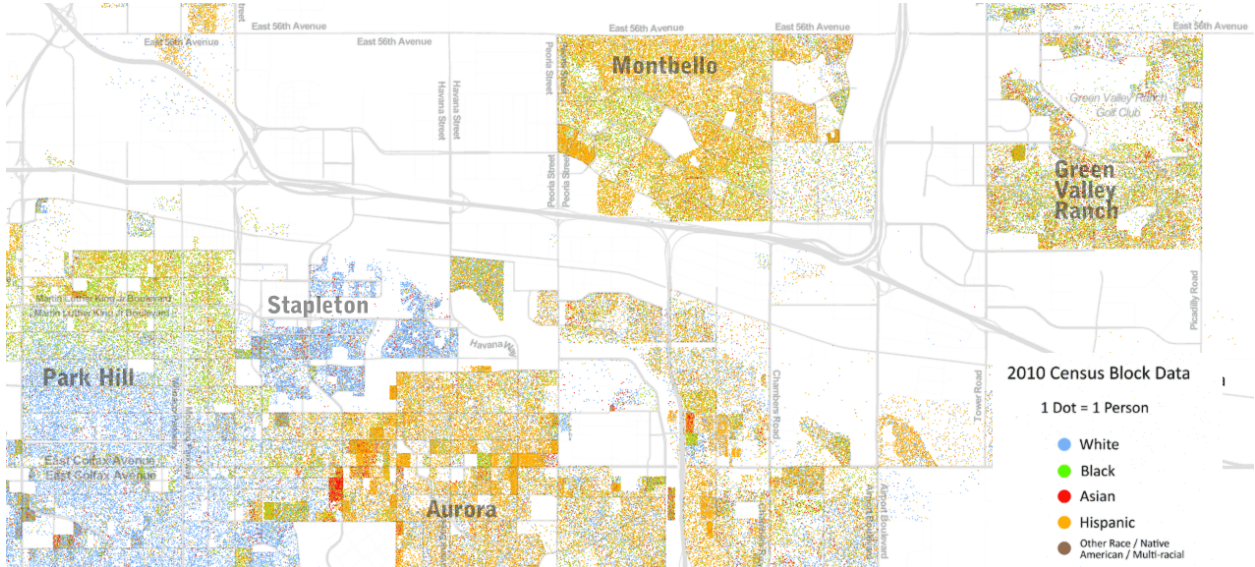


Figure 2. Dot density map of Northeast metro area showing Montbello's relative isolation

Like many communities, Montbello has experienced a great amount of change over the past 50 years. Originally comprised of an even mix of Caucasian and African American families, Montbello saw a large influx of Latino families starting in the 1990s. Between 1990 and 2010, the population of Montbello nearly doubled, with Latino families accounting for virtually all this growth (see figure 3).

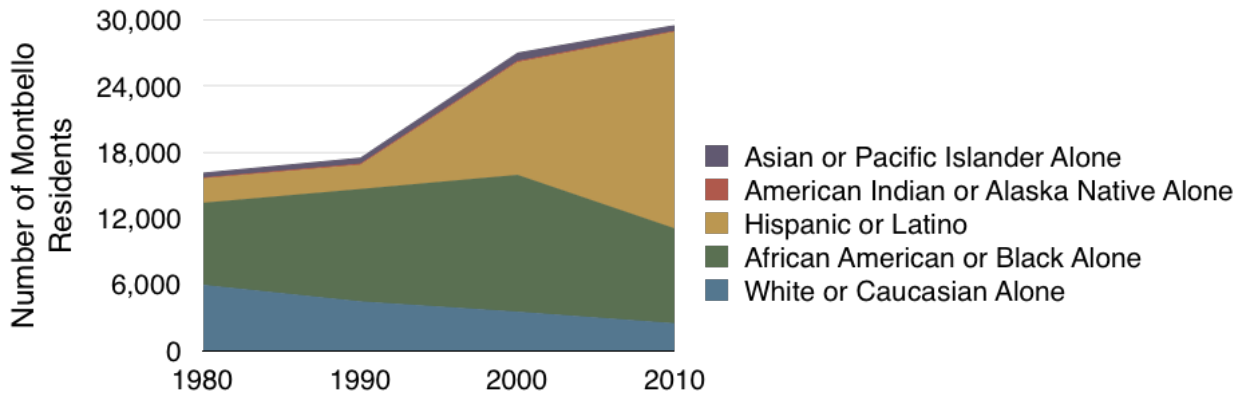


Figure 3. Demographic change in Montbello, 1980-2010

Traditionally a middle-class neighborhood, median household income in Montbello remained slightly below that of Denver as a whole between 1980 and 2000. Since 2000, however, median household income in the community has remained stagnant, even as Denver’s has continued to grow (see figure 4).

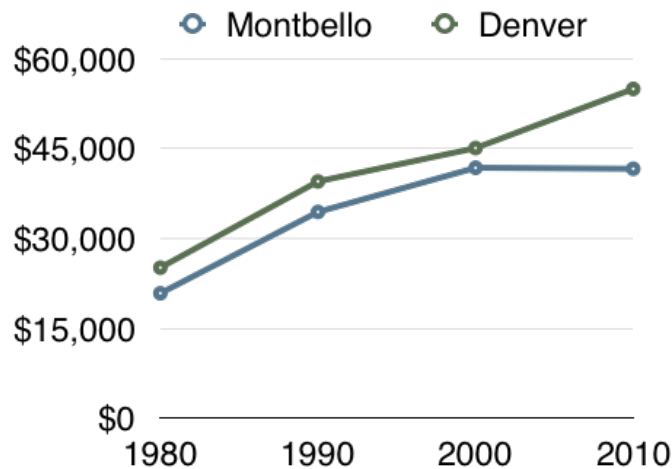


Figure 4. Median income for Montbello and Denver, 1980-2010

Over the last decade, one of the most significant changes in the community was the reorganization of Montbello High School. Located in the center of the neighborhood, the high school was considered by many residents to be a common source of pride for Black, White, and Latino residents alike. In 2010 the Denver Public Schools Board voted to phase out the high school and replace it with smaller charter school programs. The final class of Montbello High School graduated in 2015.

## Montbello Today

As of 2014, Montbello was estimated to house 33,282 individuals living in 11,725 households. Average household sizes in Montbello are just under 4 people per household—significantly larger than the Denver average of 2.6. This high household size means that, despite its large, suburban-style lots, Montbello is among the most densely populated of Denver’s edge communities (see figure 5).

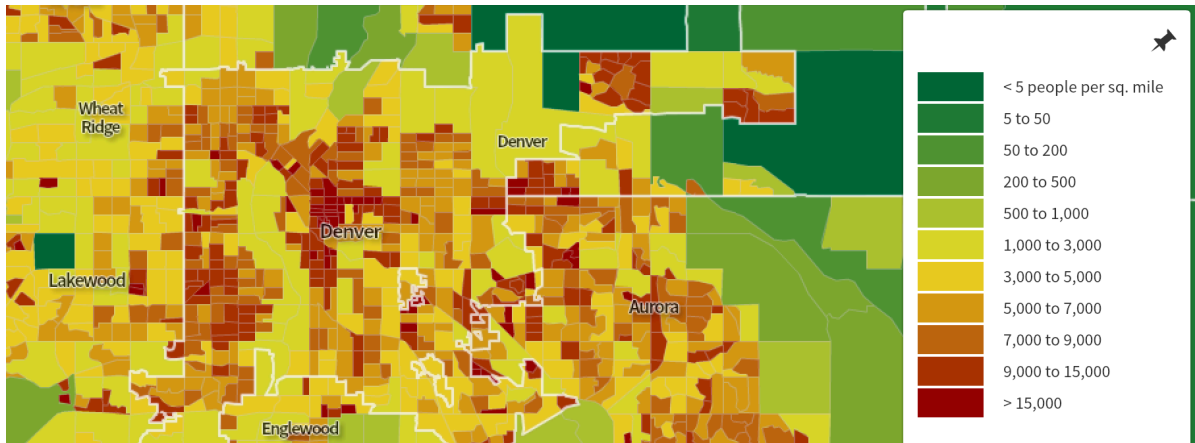


Figure 5. Population density of Denver area

Owner-occupied housing in Montbello is estimated at 62%, a higher figure than Denver County as a whole, which stands at 50%. The median home value in Montbello is \$185,757 and the average value of owner occupied houses is \$202,139.

Compared to Denver as whole, Montbello is younger and more diverse, with nearly half the population under 25 years of age and large populations of White, Black, and Latino residents (see figures 6 and 7). It is also significantly less educated: while 49% of Denver residents have a college degree, nearly two-thirds of Montbello’s adult population have no college experience (see figure 8).

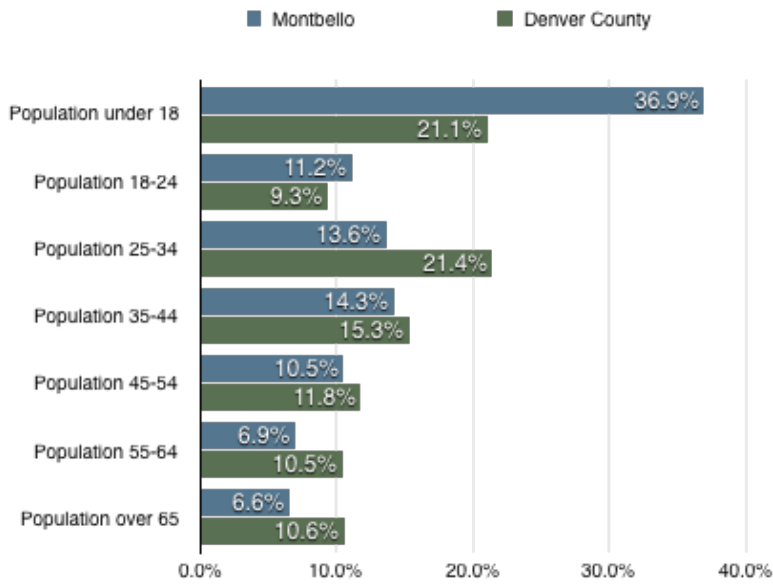


Figure 6. Age distribution for Montbello and Denver

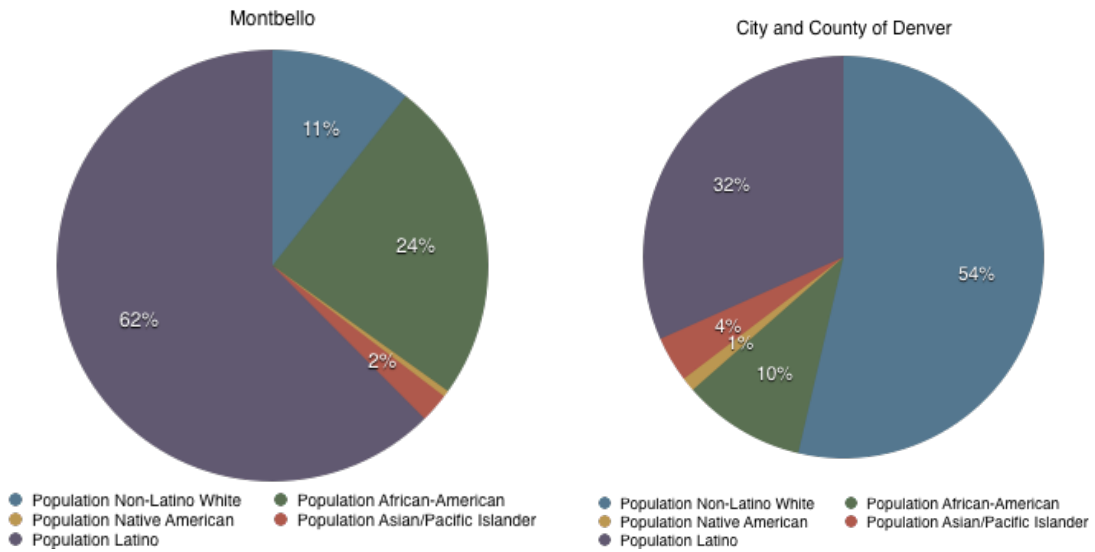


Figure 7. Race distribution for Montbello and Denver

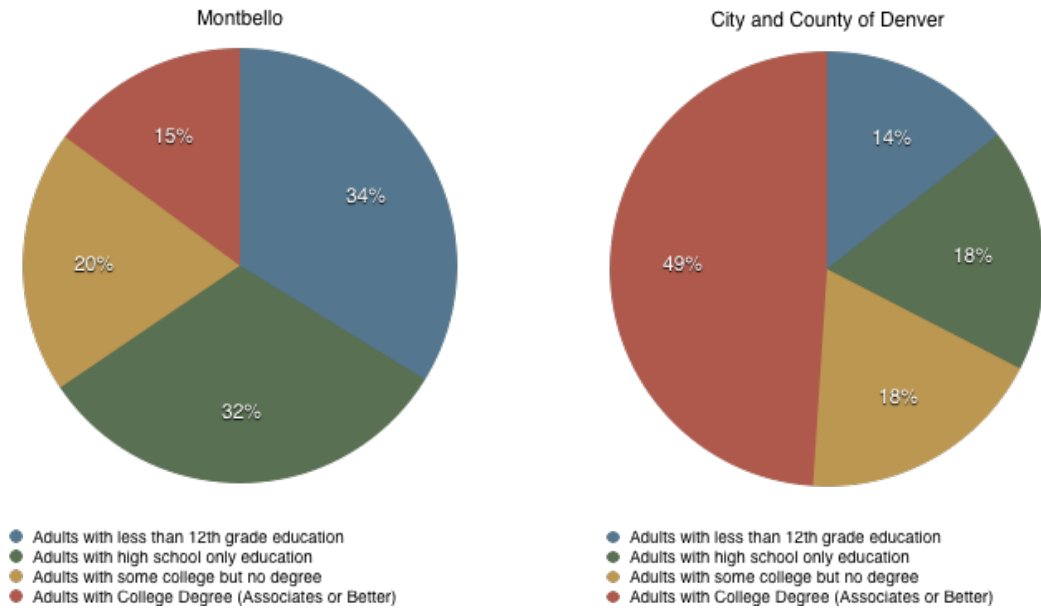


Figure 8. Educational attainment for Montbello and Denver

As for employment, Montbello residents are predominantly employed in blue-collar jobs including Construction (27.5%), Wholesale Trade (13.5%), and Transportation and Warehousing (12.3%).<sup>1</sup> Interviewees reported that a large number of their fellow residents are employed by the airport and its associated businesses, the nearby warehouses along the I-70 corridor, and the public sector.

This employment mix translates into a healthy balance of working- and middle-class income levels in the community, with a median household income of \$46,793 (see figure 9).

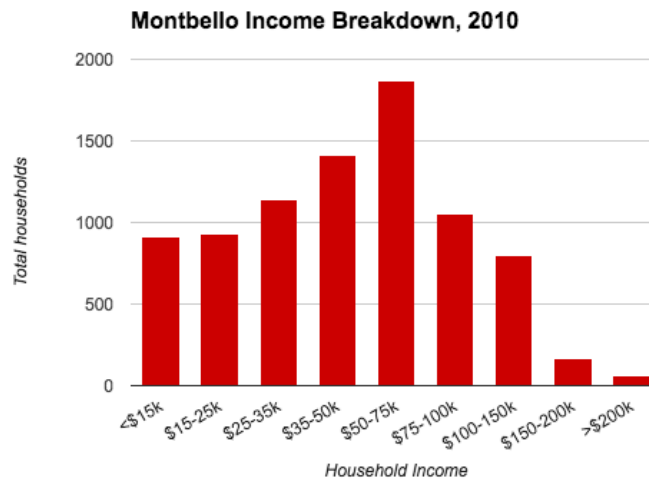


Figure 9. Income breakdown in Montbello, 2014.

<sup>1</sup> [onthemap.ces.census.gov]

## Current Assets and Challenges

Moving forward, the community of Montbello faces a number of challenges, expressed through statistics and confirmed by interviewees. From a structural perspective, the community's original design reflected mid-20th-century ideals of car commuting and a strict separation of residential and commercial activities. As a result, the interior of the neighborhood lacks places to gather besides churches and schools, and most Montbello residents live too far to walk to social activities. Many interviewees admitted that they did most of their socializing outside of the community due to the lack of cultural activities.

A more recent challenge is strain placed on public support services by the influx of lower-income Latino residents over the past 20 years. Montbello was designed as a middle-income community, and has had little time to adapt to the unique needs of its newest community members. Montbello High School was once a unifying community institution, and its closing was a stain on the community's cohesion that was mentioned by nearly every interviewee. Today's Montbello offers precious few opportunities for Black and Latino residents to develop meaningful cross-cultural relationships. As one interviewee described, "To an extent we tolerate one another as community members and neighbors... [but] a lot of the relationships are surface level."

At the same time, Denver's skyrocketing real estate market, as well as the recent opening of the A-Line commuter train to the south, threatens to displace many of these same residents and uproot the community cohesion that is just now beginning to coalesce. Many interviewees mentioned the threat of gentrification as one of the biggest challenges for the community's future. The opening of the A-Line has led to more immediate challenges, as well, with the closure of the neighborhood's park-and-ride and the alteration or cancellation of several bus routes serving the community.

Fortunately, several individuals and organizations are working to address these challenges through special events, political action, and capital improvements. Events like the Police Night Out, community barbecues, and "shop talk live" at the local barbershop are attempting to keep residents engaged in the neighborhood, while the recent renovation of the library has made it a more welcoming place to gather. Communication and collaboration remains an issue with these efforts: several interviewees remarked that many residents didn't seem to know about the opportunities available in their own neighborhood.

As a whole, however, interviewees remained proud of their community and optimistic about its future. Montbello's large lots, extensive park system, and access to open space were repeatedly cited as community assets. Despite the aforementioned challenges with cross-cultural integration, many interviewees mentioned Montbello's diversity as one of its biggest assets. And though many acknowledged Montbello's reputation for crime, most interviewees reported feeling completely safe in their community. This sense of safety is backed up by Denver's crime statistics: Montbello's most recent crime rate is 8.9 per 1000 residents, lower than crime rates

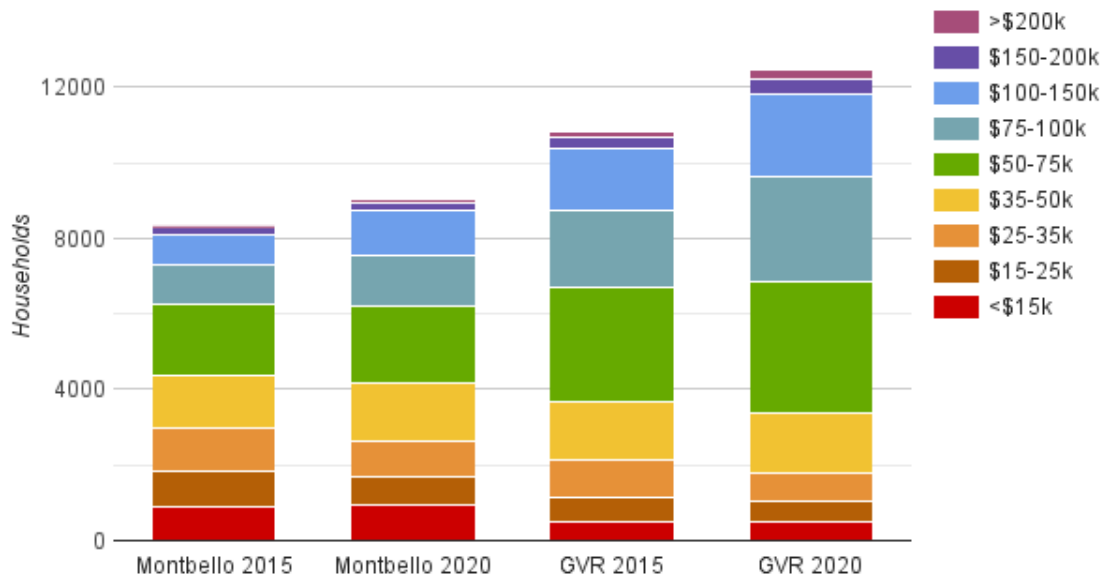
in more affluent communities such as Cherry Creek, Highland, and Stapleton.

## Montbello’s Future Trends

Looking forward to the next ten years, Montbello is well-positioned to benefit from Denver’s continued growth. The neighborhood sits squarely in the middle of Denver’s so-called “corridor of opportunity” from Brighton Boulevard to DIA, which is a primary focus of Mayor Hancock’s administration. According to the Mayor’s Office, the next three decades are expected to bring 40,000 new jobs to the corridor, with a cumulative economic impact of \$2.6 billion. Despite the cuts to bus service due to the recent opening of the A-line commuter train, the long-term effect of this mass-transit line is likely to be positive, integrating Denver’s Far Northeast more closely with the rest of the city.

Montbello has recently seen the construction of several new medium-density residential developments, both in the historic part of the community and in the Gateway area east of Chambers road. This development is projected to accelerate over the next several years, increasing Montbello’s population by 8.3% between 2014 and 2020 according to ESRI estimates. Median annual household income, meanwhile, is expected to increase from \$46,793 in 2015 to \$52,760 in 2020, with significant increases coming from households making \$75,000 or more (see Figure 10). Like the rest of Denver’s housing market, home values within Montbello are expected rise significantly between 2015 and 2020, with median home value increasing just under 18%.

**Figure 10. Income Distribution, 2015 and 2020**



## PART II. RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommendations for Food Access

The lack of retail outlets selling fresh produce and other healthy food was one of the most commonly repeated challenges in JVA's interviews. Since the Safeway on Chambers Road closed several years ago, the community has lacked a full-service grocery store. While the Walmart Neighborhood Market on Chambers and 48th is nearly the size of a full-service market and offers many basic staples, multiple interviewees expressed a displeasure for shopping there, citing issues with inventory, adequate staffing, security, and store cleanliness. As a result, most of the residents interviewed perform their food shopping outside the neighborhood, driving to full-service outlets in Green Valley Ranch, Northfield, Commerce City or even farther to purchase their groceries.

Unfortunately, Montbello is hardly alone in this regard. Throughout the country, low-income neighborhoods and communities of color have been systematically underserved by retail chains, contributing to a rise in diet-related illnesses in these communities. As recognition of this challenge has grown across the country, dozens of nonprofits, academic institutions, and economic development efforts have arisen to solve the market gap. These efforts have taken many different forms. Some offer market studies, tax breaks, and other policy incentives to attract existing grocery chains to underserved communities. Others have developed programs to incentivize the owners of existing corner stores to offer more produce and other healthy ingredients. Finally, many communities have engaged in resident-led initiatives such as buying clubs, cooperative grocery stores, and mobile grocery carts to take healthy food access into their own hands.

In keeping with MOC's current focus, the following section offers an in-depth exploration of the opportunities and challenges of attracting commercial grocery stores, followed by an overview of several promising alternative strategies.

### **Recommendation 1: Continue efforts to attract commercial food retail.**

As a part of their routine site selection process, food retail chains routinely perform sophisticated analyses. While the exact models of each business are proprietary, they tend to incorporate a relatively discrete number of key variables, including:

- Median household income
- Household size
- Number of college graduates
- Ethnic composition
- Housing prices
- Homeownership



Each of these factors are examined both for present-day realities as well as 2- to 5-year trends. Within a neighborhood, meanwhile, specific parcels are analyzed for their relative traffic volume, ease of access, street visibility, and proximity of competitors.

Despite their sophistication, however, these proprietary models are far from infallible, and often fail to account for the true demand in lower-income communities. In a 2005 study by researcher Kameshwari Pothukuchi, 32 efforts to attract healthy food retail in low-income communities across the country were examined. The study pointed out several failings with retailers’ typical site-selection analysis:

1. Total household incomes in these communities are often underestimated due to the proportionately larger size of the cash economy.
2. Undocumented residents not included in census data can distort total population assumptions.
3. Lower-income households spend a higher proportion of their income on food and apparel than other consumers, a fact not always incorporated into purchasing power models used by grocers.
4. Lower-income households are more likely to eat meals at home, meaning that a higher proportion of their total food budget comes from groceries.<sup>2</sup>

Given these and other inconsistencies, third-party market assessments are often necessary to demonstrate demand to retailers. In her assessment of the most successful efforts to attract retail stores, Pothukuchi identified six “ingredients for success” (see table B).<sup>3</sup> The following pages outline Montbello’s current position in relationship to these six ingredients.

<b>Table B: Summary of Pothukuchi’s Ingredients for Success</b>
Assess Market Demand
Identify Multiple Locations
Assemble Incentives & Develop Assistance
Recruit Multiple Operators
Engage Political Leadership at the Highest Levels
Partner with Community-based Nonprofits

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<sup>2</sup> Thompson, D. (2013) “Cheap Eats: How America Spends Money on Food”, *The Atlantic*, March 2013

<sup>3</sup> Pothukuchi, K. (2005). Attracting Supermarkets to Inner-City Neighborhoods: Economic Development Outside the Box. *Economic Development Quarterly*, 19(3), 232-244. doi:10.1177/0891242404273517

## 1. Market demand

With over 30,000 households, the Montbello/Green Valley Ranch area represents one of the largest communities in the Denver area. Yet there remains only one full-service grocer in the entire area: the King Soopers on Green Valley Ranch Boulevard and Tower Road, which, according to Denver’s Office of Economic Development, is the busiest King Soopers in the state of Colorado. Why have other grocery stores neglected what appears to be a clear business opportunity? It may be because the Montbello/Green Valley Ranch community currently lacks several of the demographic characteristics that retailers assume are necessary for a successful operation.

Nevertheless, there remains a significant gap between the current supply and theoretical demand for food. Using similar methods and assumptions as a 2008 study approximating grocery demand for the Elyria-Swansea market area, JVA staff calculated that Montbello and Green Valley Ranch residents are spending nearly \$115 million in groceries annually (see table C).

	<b>Montbello</b>	<b>Green Valley Ranch</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Households <sup>4</sup>	11,725	19,439	<b>31,164</b>
Average Household Expenditures <sup>5</sup>	\$45,434	\$49,301	
Total household expenditures	\$532,713,650	\$958,362,139	<b>\$1,491,075,789</b>
% annual expenditures on food at home <sup>6</sup>	8.08%	7.45%	
Total grocery demand	\$43,043,263	\$71,397,979	<b>\$114,441,242</b>
Total square footage of demand	84,036	139,395	<b>223,431</b>
Current Grocery Supply <sup>7</sup>	\$28,028,943	\$38,809,212	<b>\$66,838,155</b>
Leakage	\$15,014,320	\$32,588,767	<b>\$47,603,087</b>
Total square footage of leakage	<b>29,313</b>	<b>63,625</b>	<b>92,938</b>

With approximately \$66 million of that demand met within the neighborhood – primarily through the existing King Soopers and Walmart Neighborhood Market – there

<sup>4</sup> point2homes.com

<sup>5</sup> point2homes.com

<sup>6</sup> US Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Survey, <http://www.bls.gov/cex/tables.htm>

<sup>7</sup> ESRI Marketplace Profiles, 2016

remains a “leakage” of over \$47 million in grocery spending that occurs outside the community.

At standard annual grocery sales of \$512 per square foot, this leakage represents approximately 93,000 square feet of unmet retail demand – significantly larger than most new grocery stores.

Once 5-year projections for future growth are taken into account, the potential demand becomes even more pronounced. Population estimates and real estate projections confirm that the Montbello/Green Valley Ranch area is one of the Denver metro area’s fastest growing regions, with an annual population growth of approximately 3%. With a population growth of several thousand households combined with an expected rise in average household income, total grocery demand is anticipated to grow by over \$30,000,000, representing an additional 61,345 feet of grocery demand (see Table D). Combined with the existing 92,938 of unmet demand, there is expected to be enough grocery spending power between the two communities to support two additional full-sized grocery stores.

	<b>Montbello</b>	<b>Green Valley Ranch</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Households <sup>8</sup>	12,675	22,372	<b>35,046</b>
Average Household Expenditures <sup>9</sup>	\$52,760	\$55,097	
Total household expenditures	\$668,720,906	\$1,232,608,958	<b>\$1,901,329,864</b>
% annual expenditures on food at home <sup>10</sup>	8.08%	7.45%	
Total grocery demand	\$54,032,649	\$91,829,367	<b>\$145,862,017</b>
Total square footage of demand	105,491	179,284	<b>284,776</b>
Grocery Supply with no change <sup>11</sup>	\$28,028,943	\$38,809,212	<b>\$66,838,155</b>
Leakage	\$26,003,706	\$53,020,155	<b>\$79,023,862</b>
Total square footage of leakage	<b>50,769</b>	<b>103,515</b>	<b>154,283</b>

## 2. Potential Location

Despite the large physical size of the Montbello neighborhood, its zoning and existing development patterns have left few options for full-size grocers to locate. The most obvious location east of Peña Boulevard – the previous Safeway site at Chambers Road

<sup>8</sup> point2homes.com, ESRI Marketplace Profiles

<sup>9</sup> point2homes.com, ESRI Marketplace Profiles

<sup>10</sup> US Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Survey, <http://www.bls.gov/cex/tables.htm>

<sup>11</sup> ESRI Marketplace Profiles, 2016

and Green Valley Ranch Boulevard – was recently leased by a Sav-A-Lot, which plans on offering some discount food items but not nearly enough to satisfy the cumulative demand.

There are a handful of large undeveloped parcels within historic Montbello. Many of these are currently already slated for new residential or community projects, but several remain available for commercial development. The parcel along 52nd Ave east of Crown Boulevard, the parcel on Maxwell Place and Chandler Way, and the parcel on Deephaven between 52nd and Durham are all available currently. While these sites are centrally located within the Montbello community, the available parcel size and much lower traffic counts are unlikely to attract chain retailers.

On the east side of Peña Boulevard, there are many undeveloped parcels that have the appropriate size and traffic count to justify a full-size grocer. However, the distance of these parcels from the core “food desert” in Montbello – and their relative proximity to the existing King Soopers – make these sites less attractive to retailers and Montbello residents alike.

Given all these factors, the most encouraging option may be the currently undeveloped land east of Chambers Road. The masterplan for the so-called “Denver Connection” – a planned community spanning Peña Boulevard between 40th Ave and Green Valley Ranch Boulevard – calls for a mixed-use district on the southwest side of Peña and Green Valley Ranch.

### **3. Incentives and Assistance**

Over the last several years, a number of local and statewide financing mechanisms have been developed to incentivize grocery retail development in underserved communities. The Colorado Fresh Food Financing Fund, or CO4F, was established in 2013 as a collaboration between the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority and the Colorado Health Foundation. The Colorado Enterprise Fund has established a similar revolving loan fund for smaller-scale retailers. As of May 2016, Denver’s Office of Economic Development was in discussion with both of these institutions to commit \$750,000 in financing in addition to its own commitment of \$250,000.

### **4. Recruit multiple operators**

Pothukuchi’s study recommends that communities seeking to attract grocery stores identify multiple companies that may be interested and use the threat of competition as leverage to secure one. The grocery retail marketplace has diversified significantly over the last 20 years, with a variety of stores targeted to different consumer groups. Which kind of store is best suited to Montbello?

Montbello’s size, education levels, and diverse racial makeup would appear to make it ideal for a middle-market grocer such as Safeway or King Soopers. Of course, Safeway’s recent departure from the neighborhood renders it unlikely to return soon. Meanwhile, the King Soopers at Green Valley Ranch is only two miles away from Montbello’s most

promising supermarket location along Chambers. However, there are several places in the Denver metro where two King Soopers are this close, so it may not be a disqualifying factor.

Alternatively, MOC may also have success recruiting a niche retailer. With Montbello's growing Latino population and large family size, a Latino-focused grocery such as Avanza or a discount store such as SuperValu. Organic retailers such as Natural Grocers, Sprouts, and Whole Foods tend to locate in areas with higher income and education levels than Montbello has at present. However, substantial new residential developments planned over the next few years are projected to raise the community's total population by several thousand, most of whom are likely to be in the upper-middle-class. These demographic changes may make the Montbello/Green Valley Ranch area more attractive to these niche retailers.

Denver's Office of Economic Development has been actively recruiting retailers for over 12 months, and has thus far solicited initial interest from Hy-Vee, SuperValu, Winco Foods, Ridley Family Markets, and Aldi.

#### **5. Recruit leadership at the highest levels**

MOC members have met three times with Mayor Hancock in the last eighteen months about attracting food retail. The financing incentives and demonstrated interest mentioned above are a direct result of these dialogues, and show the value in engaging elected officials and city agencies.

#### **6. Partner with community-based nonprofits**

A 2008 report on retail siting by the nonprofit Social Compact notes that, in addition to quantitative analyses, retailers frequently take into consideration concerted efforts by local residents.<sup>12</sup> While MOC has been active for over a year in attempting to attract healthy food retail, it may be able to magnify its impact by partnering more closely with additional community organizations to coordinate social media campaigns, listening sessions, petitions, and other efforts to prove the community support for a full-service grocer. MOC's recent award of a competitive planning grant from the Kresge Foundation provides an ideal opportunity to strengthen existing partnerships and form new ones.

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<sup>12</sup> Social Compact. (2008, March). Inside Site Selection: Retailers' search for strategic business locations. Retrieved from [www.ICSC.org](http://www.ICSC.org) | [www.socialcompact.org](http://www.socialcompact.org)

<b>Table E. Summary of Montbello/GVR’s status for each ingredient for success</b>		
<b>Ingredient for Success</b>	<b>Current status in Montbello/GVR area</b>	<b>Diagnosis</b>
Assess Market Demand	Approximately 93,000 square feet of unmet retail demand – much larger than a full-size grocery store	Good
Identify Multiple Locations	Few attractive development locations near the heart of Montbello	Fair
Assemble Incentives & Develop Assistance	\$250,000 in incentives committed from OED, with ongoing negotiations to offer and additional \$750,000 from CO4F and Colorado Enterprise Fund	Good
Recruit Multiple Operators	Operators with demonstrated initial interest include Hy-Vee, SuperValu, Winco Foods, Ridley Family Markets, and Aldi	Good
Political Leadership at the Highest Levels	Mayor’s office, City Council and Office of Economic Development are actively engaged in recruitment process	Good
Partnership with Community-based nonprofits	MOC and several partners are already active, but may be able to magnify efforts through additional strategic partnerships.	Fair

Overall, the prognosis for attracting traditional grocery retail to Montbello in the short term is mixed. Many of the “ingredients for success” are lined up, including proven demand, political support, financial incentives, and active grassroots engagement. Nevertheless, from the perspective of a chain retailer, the lack of suitable development sites make new grocery retail a difficult sell.

In the meantime, however, there are several short-term strategies to increase food access without a full-service grocery. These recommendations comprise the remainder of this section.

## **Recommendation 2: Engage management of Walmart Neighborhood Market in addressing neighborhood concerns**

At present, the closest and largest source of food in Montbello is the Walmart Neighborhood Market. Some interviewees reported frequently shopping there, with one going out of their way to support it. However, the general sentiment among interviewees was overwhelmingly negative. The store was described by one participant as “nasty and dirty,” while two more said they only shopped there when they absolutely had to. Interviewees complained about the length of the check-out line, the lack of a pharmacy, and prices that were perceived to be higher than regular Walmart.

While the size of the Walmart Neighborhood Market is insufficient to meet the community’s food needs, it nevertheless is theoretically able to provide over two-thirds of the demand. It may be that pressuring Wal Mart to be more responsive to community complaints will prove easier than attracting a brand-new store. This pressure may take the form of meetings with store management, boycotts, social media campaigns, and listening sessions.

## **Recommendation 3: Work with existing corner stores to sell more healthy food**

Several cities, including Oakland, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles, have developed “healthy corner store” programs to provide greater food access in underserved communities. Denver’s Office of Environmental Health began a similar program in 2015 to incentivize corner store owners to offer healthier products.

The only independently-owned corner store in Montbello is Z-Mart, located at 14125 E 52nd Ave. Z-Mart is a current participant in the Healthy Corner Store Program, but few residents know of its involvement. A concerted marketing effort on the part of MOC may drive more traffic to Z-Mart and incentivize it to continue carrying fresh produce.

## **Recommendation 4: Form a community buying club**

Community buying clubs are becoming a common way for lower-income residents to pool their resources and achieve economies of scale in their food purchases. By partnering with food wholesalers, grassroots groups such as Bountiful Baskets and the Sunshine Food Cooperative have successfully brought affordable food to Denver-area communities with minimal overhead. The GrowHaus delivers weekly food baskets to drop-off points throughout Denver, and may be interested in partnering with MOC to offer them to Montbello residents at an affordable price point.

## **Recommendation 5: Expand existing food recovery efforts**

A number of food pantries and food banks are located in or near Montbello, including the Food Bank of the Rockies and Montbello Cooperative Ministries. In the Spring of 2016, Denver Food Rescue began distributing donated healthy food to approximately 50 families per week at three sites in the community: KIPP College Prep, Maxwell Elementary, and Academy 360. Increased

support and collaboration between these institutions and community partners could help address food insecurity for many more families in the area.

### **Recommendation 6: Work with nearby food wholesalers to open a storefront for residents**

Montbello's location along a primary rail and interstate corridor halfway between Downtown and DIA has made it ideal for manufacturers. Among these are several large-scale food distributors, most notably Del Monte Fresh Produce, United Natural Foods, McLane Food Service, and JM Swank. By opening a retail storefront at their facility, these wholesale organizations have the opportunity see increased sales and build brand recognition. Several companies in the metro area, including A-Mart in Swansea and Mountain Fresh Market in Northeast Park Hill, have experimented with this trend and are seeing encouraging results. The owners of the latter store in particular have demonstrated an interest in community engagement, and would likely collaborate with MOC and its partners in recruiting a similar wholesaler to operate in Montbello.

### **Recommendation 7: Convert a refrigerated truck to a mobile grocery**

Several communities across the country, from Portland to Minneapolis to Albuquerque, have addressed the challenges of food access through "mobile groceries." These are refrigerated trucks stocked with fruits, vegetables and other staple goods that gather outside schools, churches and other community hubs. Applying such an approach in Montbello would represent an intermediary solution, meeting more demand than a corner store while requiring less up-front investment than a food cooperative.

### **Recommendation 8: Develop cooperatively-owned food retail**

An increasing number of well-organized communities that lack grocery stores are turning to food cooperatives as a solution to food access. While recommendations 2-7 are all relatively inexpensive to launch, none of them are likely to scale large enough to meet the fresh food demands of the entire neighborhood, and many of them solve the challenges of food access in culturally-unfamiliar ways. In contrast, food coops offer a familiar brick-and-mortar experience that has the potential to serve thousands of households. As opposed to national chain grocers, meanwhile, cooperatives have a much greater control over product selection, prices, and hiring practices, and the income they receive is kept circulating in the local community.

The process of developing a cooperative generally takes several years of planning meetings, legal development, and fundraising. As a result, many communities considering cooperatives hire a consultant to perform a feasibility study and provide recommendations. If a community does elect to create a food cooperative, the process of launching and running one has the added benefit of creating closer community cohesion between individuals.

Recent national success stories of coops in food deserts include the New Orleans Food Co-op, the Eastside Food Coop in Minneapolis, and the Renaissance Community Co-op (RCC) in Greensboro, North Carolina. Locally, the Stapleton, Westwood and West Colfax neighborhoods are all in the process of developing cooperatives to serve their communities.



<b>Table F. Comparison of Alternative Food Access Strategies</b>			
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Timeframe to launch</b>	<b>Upfront costs</b>	<b>Projected food demand met</b>
Engage management of Walmart Neighborhood Market in addressing neighborhood concerns	6-12 months	Minimal	10-20% (plus demand met by existing store conditions)
Work with existing corner stores to sell more healthy food	6-12 months	Minimal	1-3%
Form a community buying club	1-2 years	\$5-10k	3-15%
Expand existing food recovery efforts	6-12 months	\$5-10k	3-10%
Work with nearby food wholesalers to open a storefront for residents	1-2 years	\$50-\$100k	5-15%
Convert a refrigerated truck to a mobile grocery	1-2 years	\$75-150k	5-15%
Develop cooperatively-owned food retail	3-5 years	\$300k - \$2m	10-50%

## Recommendations for Economic Development and Social Capital

The lack of healthy food retail in Montbello is a pressing issue that many interviewees noted as a concern to their day-to-day well-being. But based on interviews, it is only one expression of deeper-rooted challenges in the community around neighborhood cohesion and economic development. When asked about where they socialize, for instance, many interviewees lamented the lack of comfortable business or civic establishments within the neighborhood where they could gather. As one longtime resident put it, “there is not much of a social climate here.”

Montbello’s original planners created a community with a large residential core bounded by retail corridors along the edge arterial roads. This development model was common practice during the late 20th century, but contemporary urban planners acknowledge that it creates over-dependence on automobiles and drains the “social capital” from a community. Consequently, many modern urban planning efforts champion mixed-use districts that co-locate smaller-scale retail and other cultural activities with residential areas. While a community like Montbello can’t be transformed overnight into such a mixed-use district, a number of relatively inexpensive interventions can help encourage pedestrian activity and improve community cohesion.

Given these challenges, MOC may wish to consider policies, programs, campaigns and other interventions aimed at these systemic issues in parallel with its efforts at improving food access. The following recommendations offer solutions that can be implemented on a 3- to 5-year timeframe.

### **Recommendation 9. Activate the public right-of-way in the neighborhood interior through placemaking**

The rapidly growing practice of “placemaking” employs participatory techniques such as painted crosswalks, sidewalk tables, pocket parks and more to encourage pedestrian activity and face-to-face interaction. Organizations like the Project for Public Spaces and City Repair offer national support for these kinds of activities, while local organizations involved in placemaking include Walk Denver and Extreme Community Makeover.

### **Recommendation 10: Establish a Business Improvement District along the Chambers and/or Peoria corridors**

Business Improvement Districts, or BIDs, are voluntary zones established by communities to fund improvements to commercial corridors. Businesses within the BID boundary pay into a levy which is used to fund activities to improve the district’s appeal. Projects funded via the BID process often include marketing campaigns, streetscape improvements, and security services.

A BID along the Chambers or Peoria commercial corridors could pay any number of improvements to increase safety and attractiveness, in turn bringing both new customers and new businesses. It could also help fund events such as an annual festival (see Recommendation 13).

### **Recommendation 11: Establish “third places” that all community members feel comfortable using as gathering spaces**

For many interviewees, Montbello High School functioned as central institution that all parts of the community had in common. “In some ways,” reported one respondent, “they cut the heart out of Montbello with the closing of the high school.” Since its closure, another explained, the community has splintered, leaving a “pain in Montbello right in our center.” Many people continue to find gathering places elsewhere - in churches, the rec center, the Boys and Girls Club and local barbershop, among others. Yet none of these locations appear to play the same central role that the high school did.

A critical component of growing social capital in Montbello is to encourage so-called “third places”: spaces for individuals to socialize outside of class, work and home. One strategy is to adapt existing buildings into these sorts of gathering places. The recently-renovated local library, for instance, could attract more traffic by including a locally-run coffee shop, similar to the Bold Beans social enterprise run by Girls, Inc at the Corky Gonzalez Library. The Montbello High School building or other schools could be activated as neighborhood centers by co-locating nonprofits there, in the manner of the Evie Dennis campus in Green Valley Ranch. The new building currently being planned by ELK could serve as a community gathering space with the right strategic goals and mix of programming.

Additionally, third places can be established by welcoming small-scale retail into the residential center of Montbello. Institutions such as coffee shops, breweries or neighborhood restaurants would encourage more pedestrian activity and face-to-face interaction. In order for these kinds of establishments to be built, however, they would need to get a variance from the existing zoning code, or parts of the neighborhood zoning would need to be changed.

### **Recommendation 12: Update the outdated Montbello Neighborhood Plan**

Throughout Denver, development and major infrastructure improvements are guided by official Neighborhood Plans drafted by the office of Community Planning and Development. As the city continues to grow and its needs change, these plans are updated every generation or so. Montbello has one of the oldest neighborhood plans in the city, having been adopted in 1991. A fresh planning process would allow city officials, residents and institutions to come together in establishing a 21st-century vision for Montbello that may include such elements as affordable housing, greater density, neighborhood retail, and improved bus service.

### **Recommendation 13: Launch an annual festival celebrating Montbello's identity and history**

Interviewees noted that most of their social and cultural activities took place in Green Valley Ranch, Northfield, Stapleton or other neighborhoods, lamenting that “there’s nothing to get excited about” in the community of Montbello itself.

One potential solution is an annual festival celebrating Montbello’s diversity, history and cultural heritage. The Dragon Boat Festival in Sloan’s Lake, the Cherry Creek Arts Festival and the Five Points Jazz Festival are all examples of annual neighborhood-based events that bring the local community together while welcoming visitors from throughout the metro area. Montbello’s upcoming 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration will be a good prototype of what an annual festival might look like for the community.

# CONCLUSION

Montbello in 2016 is at a pivotal moment in its history. With the metro area in the midst of a boom, the diverse, middle class community at the edge of town is poised to become more central to Denver's future than ever before. Yet this increased prosperity can cut both ways, displacing current residents even as it finally gains the amenities that it has long needed. How Montbello's leaders respond to the community's new centrality will make a profound difference in shaping the next several decades of Montbello's development.

The coming of commuter rail and residential development in the far Northeast may herald a long-term trend of rising affluence. Nevertheless, Montbello's short-term challenges remain focused on the effects of prolonged disinvestment. In particular, the issue of access to fresh food remains paramount, with millions of dollars of demand going unmet every year. The addition of a new grocery store to the neighborhood would quickly alleviate these concerns, and there remain many factors pointing favorably towards the development of new commercial food retail. However, the lack of suitable sites and competition from the existing Walmart Community Market may serve to dissuade retailers for a while yet.

Fortunately, there are many alternative solutions that can help close the gap. From healthy corner stores to mobile grocers to full-scale food cooperatives, Montbello can choose from an array of grassroots efforts to access fresh, affordable food in a way that fits with local capacity and culture.

Meanwhile, Montbello faces greater issues around gentrification, community cohesion and urban planning. Strategic and tactical interventions such as placemaking efforts, BIDs, small-scale retail and an annual festival can foster greater community interconnection while attracting more jobs and services to the neighborhood. With its growing influence among residents and city officials alike, MOC has the opportunity to tackle these issues head-on, co-creating a vision for a more integrated and convivial community for generations to come.



**JVA CONSULTING, LLC**  
*partners in community and social change*

# Opportunity Youth in Denver



## **Environmental Scan**

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## Executive Summary

There are more than 6.7 million young people (ages 16 to 24) in the nation that are both out of school and out of work, and, therefore, are not in positions to create self-sufficient lives and become assets to their communities (White House Council for Community Solutions, 2012). These youth, known as "Opportunity Youth" (OY), are a source of untapped potential. In order to better understand the landscape of OY in Denver, Colorado, this report was commissioned by Rose Community Foundation and the Denver Opportunity Youth Collaborative (OY Collaborative). The following is a summary of the findings included in the full-length report.

**Who: Opportunity Youth face multiple significant challenges *and* have high aspirations for overcoming them.** In Denver County, there are approximately 73,508 youth, ages 16 to 24 (U.S. Census, 2010). Applying Burd-Sharps & Lewis's estimate of a 13.4% disconnection rate, there are an estimated 9,850 OY in Denver. To supplement this profile, researchers heard directly from opportunity youth. In focus groups, it was clear that the barriers from each individual's past affected their success in education, employment stability and relationships (e.g., involvement in the criminal justice system, lack of skills, parenting responsibilities). Despite these challenges, OY expressed aspirations for completing education, attaining employment, and improving relationships with families and children. When asked what is holding them back from success, approximately 40% said parenting, 30% said criminal record and 25% said that getting help is too hard.

**Where: Denver's OY are diverse and found throughout the city.** Opportunity youth are found geographically across Denver, with discrete pockets of concentration of large numbers and/or large percentages of youth ages 16-19 in census tracts across the city. While data do not address the 20–24 year olds that are OY, they show where outreach and engagement should focus. This also highlights the difficulty of using current data for this purpose (i.e., census age brackets are not connected through age 24, and the data collected herein cannot fully determine *where exactly* OY are in Denver—this is a mobile population). In addition, particular youth "subgroups" are key for identification and outreach purposes, as they are more at risk of becoming OY (i.e., youth currently/formerly in foster care, homeless youth, immigrant youth, youth currently/formerly in the juvenile/criminal justice system, LGBT etc.).

**How: Pathways to education for Denver OY exist, but increased access and quality are needed.** The "pathways schools" at Denver Public Schools (DPS) are an alternative model for youth to attain a high school diploma or General Educational Development certificate (GED), and in some cases, begin technical career training. However, the formal K–12 education system limits access to students after age 20; as a result, OY ages 21+ pursue other options to finish their K–12 education, such as institutions (e.g., Emily Griffith Technical College, Community College of Denver), community based organizations (e.g., Mile High Youth Corps) or government agencies (e.g., Office of Economic Development).

**Why: Pathways to employment for Denver OY are limited.** Another critical stage for OY is securing stable employment. OY often face added barriers to their entry into the workforce

(e.g., education levels, lack of work experience, social/personal challenges such as learning disabilities). The pursuit of middle-skill jobs (jobs that require more than a high school diploma but not a four-year degree) with a high likelihood of job openings in the next decade (e.g., electricians, nursing assistants, licensed practical nurses, vocational nurses) is one promising pathway (National Skills Coalition, 2011). While many organizations address the employment needs of OY, the pathways linking these groups to OY are not strong enough to ensure or secure OY employment. A current gap is the lack of “formal connection” between those serving OY and employers and apprenticeship programs. This finding was also discovered by Jobs for the Future, which visited Denver in January 2014 to conduct an “asset map” for the OY Collaborative (The Aspen Institute, 2014). It is imperative that Denver providers to OY also provide wraparound services, including OY’s need for connections to caring adults (e.g., mentors, counselors) and other support services (e.g., housing, transportation, mental health care, obtaining identification).

**Future Action: Creating networks and systems for service providers promises to enhance the quality, continuity and efficacy of available supports.** The environmental scan identified more than 180 organizations that serve Denver OY through education, workforce development and/or other basic services. However, despite the fact that these organizations address the many needs of OY, no system exists to coordinate services. Therefore, there is both a significant opportunity *and* a critical need to nurture a system that fully addresses the challenges of working with this population. While many of these organizations were not created to address OY, the needs of OY are central to their work, as seen by the fact that 68.6% of surveyed organizations believe that “working with OY is a direct part of their organization’s mission and goals.” The following recommendations are based on the findings of the environmental scan and include:

- (1) Create an OY provider network that develops multiple points of entry into a single system and builds formalized linkages through interagency agreements
- (2) Develop a shared vision for the OY network of the ultimate outcomes as well as metrics and measures of success to advocate for policy measures to support OY
- (3) Connect youth to “satellite hubs” via engaged staff with an OY-centered focus
- (4) Strengthen connections for OY to the workforce
- (5) Assemble sustainable financing for the system
- (6) Build the capacity of OY-serving organizations
- (7) Establish a mechanism to collect ongoing youth input and create processes for incorporating this input into ongoing program improvement
- (8) Advocate for policy measures that support OY

Based on the research presented herein, there is strong reason to believe that creating partnerships among organizations that work with OY, and supporting connections among services through a “collective impact” approach, may best harness the exceptional existing services, while helping to ensure that more OY in Denver reach their full potential.

## Introduction and Background

*[Opportunity youth] have energy and aspirations and do not view themselves as disconnected. To the contrary, they are eager to participate in their communities, in fact, to own the development of their lives. They want to create a successful future but need the tools and opportunities to create that success. –White House Council for Community Solutions, 2012*

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Every year, there are more than one million new youth and young adults who become disconnected from education and workforce systems (Corcoran, Hanleybrown, Steinberg, & Tallant, 2012). These young people are diverse in circumstances and demographics, but they are united in their disconnection from the systems designed to help them prepare for their future. According to Schmitz (2012), "These young people come from every part of America. They are Caucasian, African American, Asian American, Latino, Native American, gay, straight, male, female, urban and rural. There is a wide range of reasons for their disconnection. Some have faced huge barriers such as child abuse and bad schools. Some have struggled with addiction and juvenile delinquency. Others have family responsibilities because of parents or siblings who have special needs or because they have children of their own. In most cases, they lack the work experience, educational background, transportation, or how-to knowledge to access educational and career opportunities." These youth are known as "Opportunity Youth" (OY) because they represent "enormous untapped potential for our society" (Powell & Powell, 2012).

The City of Denver currently has an opportunity to re-engage a large portion of these OY in order to enable them to shape better, more promising futures. Opportunity youth are defined as 16- to 24-year-olds who are disconnected from school or work (i.e., not participating in education, employment or training) and/or who are without family or support networks (Corcoran et al., 2012). Of the 73,508 individuals in Denver County who are 16 to 24 years old (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), an estimated 9,850, or 13.4%, qualify as OY (Burd-Sharps & Lewis, 2012). Re-engaging these youth represents not only a significant social and community benefit, but it also has positive economic consequences. Belfield, Levin, & Rosen (2012) estimate that every year, each OY costs both a taxpayer burden (e.g., welfare and social service payments, lost taxes, health care paid for by taxpayers) of \$13,900 and an additional social burden (e.g., lost earnings, health expenditures, crime costs) of \$37,450. This means that collectively, OY in Denver cost an average of over \$500 million each year in combined taxpayer and social burden costs.

The Denver Opportunity Youth Collaborative (OY Collaborative) is a collective impact community collaboration strategy to build and deepen pathways that achieve better outcomes in education and employment for OY. Led by Rose Community Foundation and supported by the Forum for Community Solutions at the Aspen Institute, the OY Collaborative is a group of community leaders focused on the re-engagement of Denver OY in education and employment. To better understand and assist Denver's OY population, the OY Collaborative engaged JVA Consulting

(JVA), a Colorado-based research, planning and consulting firm, to conduct an environmental scan of the literature, the data, the services available and the youth voice.

This report provides an overview of the current landscape of OY in Denver and discusses the following topics:

- The demographic characteristics of OY in Denver
- The academic literature and research findings on OY
- The issues, challenges and opportunities facing Denver's OY
- Existing education and employment pathways that support OY
- Available support services and systems

Additionally, the report makes recommendations to strengthen the service system for OY and discusses directions for future research. It is our hope that this report will serve as a resource for informing future strategic conversations focused on: making collaborative decisions on foundational programs, developing pathways for OY, identifying priority OY populations, and accessing and leveraging state and city systems to track OY.

## Methodology

To better understand the opportunities and challenges in working with OY as well as to provide a baseline for the OY Collaborative's implementation plan and for achieving the goals outlined above, JVA researchers engaged in multiple research and data collection processes across a four-month span from December 2013 to March 2014. The multiple methods utilized by researchers included:

- Reviewing comprehensive literature on OY, both nationally and in Denver County
- Conducting site visits to five OY-serving organizations and conducting informal interviews with 38 OY at these organizations
- Administering surveys to Denver-based providers serving OY
- Conducting 21 key informant interviews with community leaders serving OY
- Facilitating two focus groups with local youth who are likely OY
- Surveying 58 youth

A steering committee of the OY Collaborative provided professional input, expertise and guidance to the project. Committee members reviewed the JVA research processes and data collection instruments, and they also provided feedback on the initial report.

## Data Collection Methods

As a part of the research process, JVA researchers both reviewed existing data (e.g., scholarly articles, practitioner reports, publically available local and national demographic data) and collected original data through multiple methods (i.e., surveys, focus groups, site visits). This

subsection outlines all processes used by researchers to review, synthesize and collect data for this report.

### **Comprehensive Literature Review**

A document and literature review was conducted to better understand the realities of OY in Denver County, and nationally, to gain deeper knowledge regarding the barriers impacting OY, and to better articulate future directions for success. A comprehensive and diverse body of literature and research from both academic and practitioner sources was reviewed, as well as data that emerged from each of these sources. Demographic data were also used, including the following variables: (1) neighborhoods more at risk for OY prevalence; (2) factors that contribute to OY status (e.g., foster youth, homeless, juvenile justice, LGBT); and (3) dropout data from Denver Public Schools (DPS).

### **Site Visits**

To better understand flagship organizations (i.e., promising organizations) that directly serve the needs of OY, JVA conducted five site visits and met with 38 OY at the following organizations:

- Center for Work Education and Employment (CWEE)
- Colorado Youth for a Change (CYC)
- Denver Inner City Parish
- Mile High Youth Corps (MHYC)
- West Career Academy

Site visits included key informant interviews with staff (described below). At each site, JVA researchers toured the organization and met with a group of OY selected by the site staff. In addition, surveys were administered to OY at each organization (described below), and researchers engaged OY in informal interviews about their experiences.

### **Provider Surveys**

JVA conducted a comprehensive online survey with organizations whose work focused either in part or entirely on services or programs related to OY. The survey was delivered via SurveyMonkey in January and February 2014, and included the following topics: (1) the extent of each organization's involvement with OY; (2) demographics of OY served by each organization; (3) the services each organization provided to OY; and (4) information regarding interagency collaboration of OY services and the types of services provided to this population.

### **Key Informant Interviews**

JVA interviewed 21 leaders from the Denver community who have deep insights into OY and the systems that serve them. Each interview lasted 45–60 minutes and included discussion of the following: (1) promising practices in serving OY; (2) policies and practices limiting or facilitating OY access to services; and (3) gaps in services for OY. These community leaders provided insight into the system that currently exists for OY in Denver and shared their best thinking for addressing issues surrounding this population.

### Youth Focus Groups

To better understand the experiences of OY directly, two 60-minute focus groups were held with groups of OY in Denver. Focus group questions were developed to: (1) examine the unique needs and desires of OY in Denver; (2) ascertain perceived gaps and opportunities for the programs and systems geared toward OY; and (3) hear OY's ideas about solutions that could assist them.

### Youth Survey

A short survey was administered to 58 youth during site visits and focus groups from December 2013 to February 2014. Survey questions focused on: (1) challenges faced by the respondents (i.e., criminal records, foster care, homelessness); (2) respondents' current school or work status; (3) barriers faced by respondents that prevented them from achieving their goals; and (4) the services and people that supported the respondents.

### Analysis

All collected data were analyzed. As applicable, data were quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed, then triangulated to find commonalities and themes. Analyses included frequencies, descriptive statistics and cross-tab analyses. Qualitative data from key informant interviews and focus groups were cleaned (including being very minimally edited for readability) and then analyzed using coding and thematic pattern matching. Evaluators synthesized results from the quantitative and qualitative data—often using themes supported by direct quotes—to tell a more complete story of OY in Denver County. The results from the data collection approaches are described by theme in the report, rather than by the individual method.

### Study Limitations

The research design used multiple data collection methods and data sources to minimize potential limitations. Despite these efforts, a few limitations are worth noting. First, the estimates and trends of OY were derived from various sources of information; no one system exists that collects data about inputs, outputs and outcomes for OY in Denver. Second, when considering the results of the provider survey, it is important to note that they are not a representation of all providers of services to OY. Rather, the results represent the unique situations and perspectives of those organizations that chose to participate in the survey. Third, the key informant interviews and focus groups—while in-depth—only represent the insights and experiences of those who were interviewed. In addition, it is important to note that all results in this report represent the unique situations and perspectives of only those individuals who participated and may not be representative of the total OY population.

### Findings

The purposes of this report are to provide an overview of the current landscape of OY in Denver, make recommendations to strengthen the service system for OY and discuss directions for future research. To accomplish these goals, all data and research were reviewed and analyzed to produce findings regarding: characteristics of local OY; issues, challenges and opportunities faced by local OY; and existing services, systems and pathways designed to support OY.



This section outlines research findings that: (1) provide an overview of definitional, demographic and other key characteristics of local and national OY, including identifying important subgroups of youth who may be at a higher risk to become OY; (2) document the specific demographic characteristics and life situations of the Denver OY who participated in data collection efforts for this report; (3) identify the promising practices of organizations currently serving OY and detail three pathways—education, employment, and basic needs/support services—for OY in Denver; and (4) describe networks and systems that could be built to better serve local OY, including documenting barriers faced by OY and OY-serving organizations.

### Profile of Opportunity Youth

Because the national OY population represents a vast and diverse spectrum of youth, it is critical to understand the definition of OY as well as the specific characteristics of OY at a local level, including how they may differ in important ways from the national population of OY. To explore these definitional, demographic and other notable characteristics, the following section depicts a profile of OY both nationally and locally (i.e., Denver County). Data included in this section were gleaned from the document and literature review, key informant interviews, and OY and OY-provider survey data.



### Who are Opportunity Youth?

OY are defined as 16- to 24-year-olds who are disconnected from school or work, and/or who do not have a family or support network (Corcoran et al., 2012; Fernandes & Gabe, 2009). Many data sources refer to individuals in this situation as “disconnected” youth rather than OY, and terms are used interchangeably in this report.

There are some common ways of classifying OY. First, OY are commonly defined as either “*young and close*” or “*old and far*,” referring to: (1) age relative to the traditional high school population; and (2) proximity to completing a high school credential. Opportunity youth who are considered *young and close* are between 16 and 18 years old and are close to obtaining their high school diploma or GED. Those who are considered *old and far* are between 18 and 24 years old and have a high school credit deficit that will make it unlikely they will graduate before they age out of or leave a formal system of care at age 21 (Bridgeland & Milano, 2012).

A second way that OY have been classified is by the terms *chronic* or *under-attached*. *Chronic* refers to those young people who have not been engaged in work or school since age 16, and *under-attached* describes those with limited education or work experience who may be more easily engaged (Bridgeland & Milano, 2012).

Finally, at some point in their high school career (up to age 21), students can further be classified within one of four categories: *on-track*; *young and off-track*; *old and off-track*; and *significantly off-track* (Knous-Dolan, Perez-Oquendo & Sturgis, 2009). In this definition, *young*



refers to 14- to 16-year-olds and *old* refers to 17- to 20-year-olds. *Off-track* signifies that a student is behind approximately one or more grade levels, as compared with peers. Students who are *old* and *significantly off-track* may not be about to earn a traditional diploma prior to age 21, at which point they age out of the K–12 system (Knous-Dolan, et al., 2009).

### Prevalence and Demographics of OY Nationally and in Denver

This subsection explores the prevalence of OY both nationally and locally, and identifies their demographic characteristics, including: geographic location, population trends and race/ethnicity. Nationally, it is estimated that more than 6.7 million young people (ages 16 to 24) are out of school and out of work, and therefore not in positions to create self-sufficient lives and be assets in their community and workforce (White House Council for Community Solutions, 2012). In Denver County, there are approximately 73,508 youth who are 16 to 24 (U.S. Census, 2010). Applying Burd-Sharps & Lewis’s estimate of a 13.4% disconnection rate in Metro Denver, there are an estimated 9,850 OY in Denver.<sup>1</sup>

Nationally, the prevalence of disconnected youth is not evenly distributed among racial/ethnic groups, with disconnection rates of 22.5% for African Americans, 18.5% for Latinos/as, 11.7% for whites and 8.0% for Asian Americans (Burd-Sharps & Lewis, 2012). In Denver County, there was insufficient data to perform a full breakdown by race/ethnicity, but Lewis and Burd-Sharps (2013) found that Latino youth in Metro Denver were more likely to be disconnected than the national average (19.1% in Metro Denver vs. 14.7% nationally). Moreover, whites appeared to be less disconnected (10% in Metro Denver vs. 11.7% nationally). Other ethnic groups such as Asians and Native Americans had too small of a population to estimate accurately using the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (Lewis & Burd-Sharps, 2013).

### Does Geography Matter?

Nationally, Lewis and Burd-Sharps (2013) found that high rates of poverty, high rates of adult unemployment, low levels of adult educational attainment and a high degree of residential segregation by race in communities appeared to contribute to youth disconnected rates.

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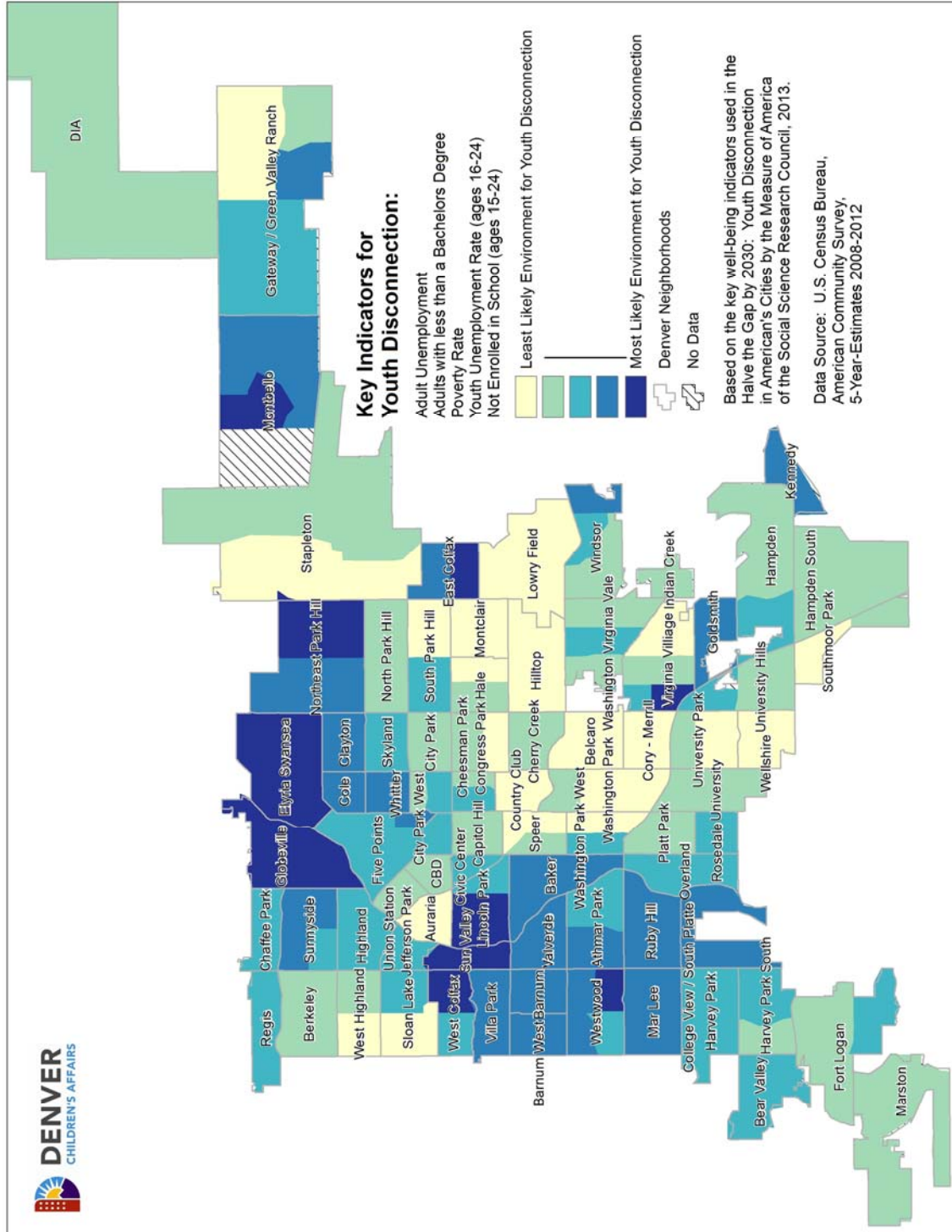
<sup>1</sup> The 13.4% estimate considered youth disconnected if they met the following two criteria: (1) youth 16 to 24 who were not in school or working; and (2) youth who were out of a job but looking for employment. Burd-Sharps and Lewis (2012) did not consider the following youth as being disconnected: (1) part-time students; (2) part-time workers; or (3) youth enrolled in a residential correctional or medical facility but enrolled in a course of study. The data to create the 13.4% estimate were derived from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS). This estimate reflects the total number of youth in *Denver County* (i.e., 73,508) multiplied by the percent of disconnected youth in the Denver *metro* area (i.e., 13.4%). However, because there is no comprehensive system that tracks OY in Denver County, it should be noted that this number is an estimate. In fact, as Burd-Sharps & Lewis (2012) noted, “One of the challenges of studying this population is that several different official data sources exist, each of which differs slightly in what data they make available and for what segments of the population. The result is that researchers working with different datasets, and often with different definitions of what constitutes disconnections, come up with different numbers for this indicator” (p. 13).

### *Where Denver's OY Live*

The phenomena that Burd-Sharps and Lewis noted nationally holds true in Denver. OY are found throughout Denver, with high concentrations (percentages) and numbers in geographically distant neighborhoods across the city as the map in Figure 1 demonstrates. Even within specific Denver neighborhoods, there may be high concentrations of OY in one census tract, and few in another.

The map depicted in Figure 1 highlights the census tracts (regions of Denver neighborhoods as divided by the Census) that have higher prevalence of disconnected youth ages 16–19. This map, created by the City of Denver, shows areas where OY (under age 20) may be more prevalent. While not fully indicative of OY through age 24, it does show the geographic diversity of OY in Denver. Jobs For the Future's Asset Map Memo mentions this map as a way to look into neighborhoods in need of a pathway development strategy (The Aspen Institute, 2014).

Figure 1: City of Denver disconnected youth (16–19) by tracts 2008–2012



### **Suburban Youth Likely Accessing Services in Denver**

The population of Denver County's 18- to 24-year-olds grew by only 1.6% between 2000 and 2010 (Greenberg & Gallagher, 2011), a low rate as compared with the growth rates of this population in surrounding counties (depicted in Table 1 below).

**Table 1: Growth rate of 18-to 24-year-old population in Metro Denver (2000–2010)**

County	Rate of Growth of 18 to 24 Population from 2000 to 2010
Denver	1.6%
Adams	21.2%
Arapahoe	33.5%
Douglas	151.2%
Jefferson	30.9%

Source 1: Greenberg & Gallagher, 2011

This is consistent with the new research suggesting that suburban poverty is growing nationwide and many of today's poor live in the suburbs, where affordable housing has shifted (Kneebone & Berube, 2014). JVA'S research, however, revealed an influx of youth from other communities into programs offered in Denver. At site visits and in focus groups, OY in programs in the City of Denver reported attending high schools in cities all over the metro area, from Westminster to Littleton to Aurora. This was confirmed by a service provider report that homeless OY often travel to Denver for resources. These findings indicate several important conclusions: (1) opportunity youth are dispersed within and around the Denver metro community; (2) resources to serve OY are concentrated within the city and county of Denver; and (3) there is likely need for current services to be more geographically proximate to the OY they seek to serve.

### **K–12 School Dropout Rate**

Reviewing dropout rates provides critical insight into who is most at risk of becoming an OY. As Bridgeland and Mason-Elder (2012) found, dropping out of high school is not usually a sudden choice; rather, it is often a reflection of a long-term track of being disengaged. In addition, this population represents a cohort of youth eager for re-engagement. Dropping out of high school often causes regret, as “nearly 75% of dropouts say that if they could relive the experience, they would have stayed in school” (Bridgeland & Mason-Elder, 2012). Table 2 delineates by race/ethnicity the youth who dropped out of DPS in the last school year.

**Table 2: DPS dropout statistics by race/ethnicity<sup>2</sup>**

	Total Number of Students Grades 9-12	Dropout Rate	Total Number of Dropouts	Percent of Total Dropouts
<b>Native American/Alaskan Native</b>	329	6.1%	20	1.1%
<b>Latino</b>	20,959	5.6%	1,174	65.1%
<b>African American</b>	5,899	5.1%	301	16.7%
<b>Two or more races</b>	1,017	3.9%	40	2.2%
<b>White</b>	6,673	3.5%	234	13.0%
<b>Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</b>	85	3.5%	3	.002%
<b>Asian</b>	1,280	2.4%	31	1.7%

Source 2: Colorado Department of Education, 2013

Notable, is the high number of Latino students in this cohort who dropped out of school. Latino students were approximately 58% of the DPS population and represented 63% of all dropouts in 2012–2013 (Colorado Department of Education, 2013).

**Promising Practices in Dropout Prevention:** Colorado Youth for a Change (CYC), a notable organization in Denver, performs dropout recovery and prevention. CYC speaks to ninth graders at area schools to prevent future dropouts and goes out into the community to find those who have dropped out and reconnects them to education pathways. In neighboring Aurora, CYC created Aurora Futures Academy, an alternative high school that provides a flexible learning environment for OY ages 17–21 to gain a GED, an associate degree, a technical certificate from Pickens Technical College or a combination of all three.

### Youth Unemployment

The youth unemployment rate is relatively similar across race and ethnicity in Denver, with slight increases seen in the African American youth population (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Denver youth unemployment rates, 2012**

Age	White Alone	Black or African American Alone	Hispanic or Latino	Population Age 16 and Above
<b>16–19</b>	28.5%	34.0%	28.9%	31.7%
<b>20–24</b>	5.6%	7.7%	4.6%	5.7%
<b>Population Age 16 and Above</b>	5.8%	13.6%	8.7%	7.2%

Source 3: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2012

<sup>2</sup> From “Dropout Rates by District, Grade, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity” Colorado Department of Education, 2013. <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/dropoutcurrent>. Calculations on DPS dropouts (Table 3) were made by starting with the total number of 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade students enrolled in DPS from 2012 to 2013: 36,242 students. The dropout rate for this cohort was 5% or 1,812 students.

### Identifying “Subgroups” of Denver OY

While there is certainly not one specific reason or life event that causes youth to disengage from employment and education, it is important to understand the factors that may contribute to that disengagement. This section discusses specific populations and/or characteristics of youth in Denver who may be at a higher risk of becoming OY, supplementing this information with empirical findings from the OY literature.

A thorough review of available data (see, e.g., Bridgeland & Mason-Elder, 2012; Corcoran et al., 2012; Knous-Dolan et al., 2009; Lewis & Burd-Sharps, 2013; Office of Children’s Affairs, 2013) did indicate notable subgroups of youth who may be at greater risk for becoming OY, including:

- Youth in foster care
- Youth who are homeless
- Youth who are immigrants
- Youth in the juvenile/criminal justice system
- Youth who identify as LGBT<sup>3</sup>
- Youth who are parenting

These groups are not isolated from each other; OY may be part of these groups at the same time or at different times (e.g., from foster care to homelessness). It is important to note that the subgroups of youth identified in this section (i.e., representing those who are at a greater risk of becoming OY) may *also* represent priority subgroups of OY themselves, in that they represent both high-risk populations of youth and also face additional challenges from being OY and are listed in no ranking order.

#### Youth in Foster Care

One subgroup of youth who may be at a higher risk of becoming OY is the subgroup with those who are either currently in or who were previously in foster care (including those who were in but aged-out of foster care). Like other factors, time in foster care serves as a compounding factor, as national data suggest that foster youth are more likely to be homeless, have less housing stability and rely more on public assistance compared with youth with similar risk factors (Berzin, Rhodes, & Curtis, 2011). Further complicating matters, research suggests that foster youth may be less ready for college compared with their peers (Unrau, Font, & Rawls, 2012). According to the Denver Department of Human Services (2013), an estimated 1,600 Denver youth are in foster care. While it is difficult to determine how many of these young people are OY, the provider survey asked

*“When you’re in this kind of position like foster care it makes it ten times harder to be where you want to be.”*

– Youth focus group participant

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<sup>3</sup> Although academic research is limited regarding LGBT and immigrant youth, these subgroups were included in this section based on the researchers’ interviews with providers and OY.

providers to identify youth served by identity subgroups, and foster care youth were selected by 40.9% of total providers.

Some OY in focus groups mentioned the difficulties and support they received in foster care. While a handful described feeling supported by adults in the foster system (e.g., a foster mother, a case manager), more OY respondents enumerated the reasons for why foster care created difficulties in their lives. Therefore, youth in foster care may be especially vulnerable to becoming OY and may need additional resources to prevent this outcome. Housing and overall support systems are necessary for youth aging out of foster care.

Many providers spoke about the many challenges of emancipating from foster care, as seen above, but there was not consensus as to what the best solution is for addressing these challenges. One organization that aims to ease the path of foster youth to the working or educational world is Bridging the Gap at Mile High United Way. Another mentioned in the provider survey is the Chafee Program at the Department of Human Services. In recognition of the significant and unique needs of foster youth, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) recently created a new position of State Coordinator for Foster Care Education to help improve educational outcomes for foster youth.

*“[We need] some kind of a housing and support program for kids emancipating out of foster care, something that is beyond homeless program—before they become homeless. We spend so much money on people coming out of prison for example, why not youth housing programs organized with places that help them along as they emancipate?”*

– Key informant interviewee

### **Youth Who Are Homeless**

Another risk factor that increases the likelihood of a youth becoming OY is homelessness. Youth who are homeless face not only unstable housing and relationships, but are also at an increased risk of experiencing harmful life factors, such as abuse and dropping out of high school (Merscham, Van Leeuwen, & McGuire, 2009). In 2013, the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI) conducted a point-in-time survey that focused on homelessness among unsheltered unaccompanied minors and youth 18 to 24 years old. The survey identified 921 homeless youth, an 18.5% increase from the 777 counted in 2012. Other findings from this report included:

- 384 (41.6%) of all homeless youth in Colorado were in Denver County
- Youth comprised 13.4% of all reported homeless persons in Denver County
- 3.2% of all metro area homeless respondents reported having been in foster care
- 10.6% of all metro area homeless respondents reported being discharged from jail, prison or a halfway house
- 43% of homeless youth in Denver County were white, 26% African American, 18% Latino, 7% mixed-race, 5% Native American and 1% Asian and/or “other”

*“There is a huge gap in housing—most of the folks that we deal with are technically homeless. These OY have very unstable or temporary housing. Lack of affordable housing is a huge issue in the lives of OY because if you get a job at minimum wage you can't get an apartment in Denver—[this is a] huge source of instability.”*

– Key informant interviewee



In one Denver study from Urban Peak (N = 182), a subgroup of homeless youth was found to have a higher incidence of mental illness, substance abuse and suicide ideation (Merscham, et al., 2009). A large portion of this sample (82.4%) reported physical abuse, sexual abuse, sexual assault or rape, death of a parent or other major life trauma. In terms of mental health, 21.4% had schizophrenia, 26.9% had bipolar mood disorder, 20.3% had depression and 8.2% had post-traumatic stress disorder. The majority of homeless youth (66.5%) reported struggling with suicide ideation currently or in the past (Merscham et al., 2009). In addition, according to DPS 2012–2013 school year data, 328 homeless youth had dropped out of school.

Their life situations are exacerbated by a lack of affordable housing in the city. A few key informants discussed how a lack of sufficient affordable housing prevented youth from connecting with viable pathways to education, employment and security. Supporting this perspective, some community leaders in interviews discussed how providing OY with stable housing may be key in helping this population complete their education or attain a job that would provide a living wage. Clearly, homeless youth in Denver appear to face a number of obstacles concurrently that may increase the likelihood that members of this group will be or are currently OY.

**Promising Practices with Homeless Youth:** Urban Peak remains the notable organization for homeless youth in Denver, providing a shelter and transitional housing. Urban Peak engages in street outreach as well as drop-in services, and it was mentioned the most times in the provider survey as a trusted partner and referral source (See Table 6).

### *Youth Who Are Immigrants*

A different subgroup of youth who may be at a higher risk of becoming OY is youth who are immigrants. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 97,763 immigrants in Denver County in 2012. The majority of immigrants—64% (62,568)—were from Latin America, primarily Mexico; in addition, 18% were from Asia, 9% from Europe and 7% from Africa.

In Denver, graduation rates of immigrant students are slightly lower than the total population, which is one factor leading these young people toward becoming OY. Specifically, using LEP (Limited English Proficiency) as an indicator, the graduation rate of LEP students in Denver Public Schools was 52.7%, compared with the overall graduation rate of 58.8% (Colorado Department of Education, 2012). In addition, regarding the prevalence of OY who are immigrants, over half (59.1%) of providers surveyed identified first-generation immigrant youth as the population they primarily served. Similarly, 40.9% of providers stated they work primarily with youth immigrants, 40.9% identified undocumented immigrant youth and 31.8% identified primarily working with refugee youth. Providers are clearly working with OY facing the complications that immigration can have on youth and their families.

*“Immigration status is huge—we [at DPS] serve 58% of Hispanic students and 38% are ELL. It’s a very transient population. Students being undocumented can interfere with work. [Even though] college is now an option [for all], work can be obstacle. A student that is undocumented cannot take jobs that they want.”*

– Key informant interviewee



Regarding employment, immigrants are disproportionately employed in lower paying jobs with less upward mobility and less job security. According to the Migration Policy Institute (2009), “nearly half (49.4%) of immigrants from Mexico and Central America have less than a high school education—and are disproportionately employed in low-value added jobs that are most vulnerable during recessions.” Paradoxically, at the end of 2012, nationally, 69% of foreign-born Latinos were in the workforce vs. 64% of native-born Latinos. And, the unemployment rate among foreign-born youth 16 to 24 years old was 14.3% vs. 16.4% for native-born youth (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). This suggests that more Latino immigrant youth are employed than native-born youth, but they also have fewer educational credentials and will remain in lower paying jobs with little opportunity for upward mobility. Addressing barriers that immigrant youth face in education, including postsecondary opportunities, will go a long way in improving the lives of those immigrants who may become OY.

Related to immigrant status in particular, the need for documentation is integral. However, many other OY experience the need for documentation as a barrier, though due to different circumstances. For instance, half of all participants in the Urban Peak focus group lacked ID or documentation, unrelated to immigration status. In many cases, community leaders interviewed shared how OY who lacked social security numbers had a difficult time accessing services.

Over half of the providers who responded to the online survey reported working with immigrant youth. For example, the Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition, self-identified as a resource for immigrant youth, provides mentoring, life skills and literacy training, legal and police services, as well as advocates for policy change.

*“We run into a lot of issues with documentation. [OY have] no social security numbers and don't have access to a lot of the things that people with a social security number have access to. We've run into that time and again. We've had to help them get services when they don't have that social security number.”*

– Key informant interviewee

### **Youth in the Juvenile/Criminal Justice System**

Another subgroup of youth who may be at a higher risk of becoming OY are youth who are in the criminal justice system. These youth commonly have a more difficult experience in finding employment and stability. Among adults 18 and older, the 18–24 age group comprises the largest percentage of Colorado criminal case convictions (Colorado Department of Safety, 2011). Furthermore, in Colorado, African American and Latino youth are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system.

Consider the following findings from the Colorado Department of Safety (2011):

- African American youth represent 5% of all youth in Denver County but characterize 15% of all juvenile arrests.
- African American male youth are the least likely to receive probation at 64% (compared with an average of 73% for other racial/ethnic groups) and the most likely to be committed to the Department of Youth Corrections at 14% (compared with an average of 5% for other racial/ethnic groups).

- Latino youth make up 24% of Colorado’s population, and they comprise 38% of youth admitted to secure detention facilities and 35% of youth committed to the Colorado Department of Youth Corrections.

Considering the role of the juvenile justice system as it relates to OY, African American and Latino youth fare more poorly than white youth in incarceration and other criminal justice outcomes (e.g., probation) in Colorado. As a result, African American youth may be at greater risk of becoming OY compared with other demographic groups as a result of criminal justice engagement. Additionally, because educational services and employment directly correlated to successful outcomes for youth who were discharged from the criminal justice system—with youth who had higher educational achievement being much more likely to succeed both in the criminal justice system and after being discharged—it seems likely that educational attainment serves as a protective factor that may prevent youth in the juvenile justice system from becoming OY in Colorado.

Furthermore, of the 1,270 committed youth discharged in 2010, 40% (514) received mental health services and 6% (77) received substance abuse disorder (SUD) treatment (TriWest Group, 2011). While many of those receiving mental health services also received SUD treatment as part of that care, it is of interest to note that Colorado Client Assessment Record (CCAR) indicators of need suggest that far more committed youth need SUD treatment (63.5%) and relatively fewer need mental health treatment (22.2%). This seems to indicate that while mental health treatment is important and necessary, there is an *even greater* need for treatment for the abuse of alcohol and treatment for drug abuse among youth involved in the criminal justice system. Youth in focus groups confirmed this, often mentioning addiction, drug or alcohol use as detriments to their goals, and described needing more self-control to better their lives.

About one-third of OY at focus groups reported being on probation or having a criminal record, and they talked about their experiences in relation to their current situations. One OY at a focus group even talked about how he was participating in Mile High Youth Corps as a way to avoid jail time. In focus groups, many OY shared that they had a criminal record and that their record prevented them from being successful—for example, in getting a job.

*“If you’re on probation sometimes [employers] don’t even wanna look at you.”*

– Youth focus group participant

Denver organizations work with many OY who have been involved in the juvenile justice system. The provider survey asked respondents to identify youth served (by identity subgroups), and 43.2% selected youth with criminal records, 38.6% adjudicated youth, and related, but not mentioned in this data, 34.1% youth in gang activity. In Denver, the Community Reentry Project is working to ensure that youth with criminal records or youth that are incarcerated do not lose their chance at education and employment. Other organizations working with youth involved in the juvenile justice system are Bayaud Enterprises and Mile High Youth Corps.

### *Youth Who Identify as LGBT*

Approximately 3.2% of the Colorado population (Gallup, 2012) and 8.2% of the Denver County population (The Williams Institute, 2011) identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender (LGBT).

Youth who identify as LGBT are rarely mentioned in published research and studies regarding OY, yet were frequently cited as high risk to become OY by those interviewed for the scan. They are more likely to be homeless—approximately 40% of youth served by Urban Peak are LGBT—(Urban Peak, 2014), lack support from their families (Centers for Disease Control, 2014) and are more likely to be victims of violence and harassment at school (Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, 2012). Findings from a national study of middle and high school students found that a majority of LGBT students (63.5%) report feeling unsafe as a result of their sexual orientation (Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen, & Palmer, 2011). In Colorado, more than 25% of LGBT students reported missing classes or days of school because of feeling unsafe in their school environment (Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, 2012), and 26% of LGBT youth in Denver report that they have non-accepting families (Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, 2012).

While a majority of providers surveyed (56.8%) indicated that they serve LGBT youth, there are a limited number of organizations that specifically target LGBT youth. This gap between services and need makes increasing support services for LGBT youth and LGBT homeless youth critical to better supporting OY.

**Promising Practices with LGBT Youth:** The primary organization providing services specifically to LGBT youth in Denver is the GLBT Community Center of Colorado - Rainbow Alley. Rainbow Alley provides drop-in services and referrals, as well as general mentoring and support for youth ages 6 to 21. Rainbow Alley was referred to often in provider interviews as a safe place for LGBT youth to feel secure in their identity. The GLBT Community Center also serves individuals of all ages in similar capacities and programs.

### *Teen Parents*

A subgroup of youth who may be at a higher risk of becoming OY includes teen parents, a reality that can quickly alter a youth's pathway in education and require the use of new support systems. According to data from the Colorado Department of Public Health (2011), from 2009–2011, Denver County had an average teen birthrate higher than the rate of the state. Table 4 represents the



average number of live births to youth in a particular age group for every 1,000 births in Denver County or Colorado. For instance, 33.2 of every 1,000 births in Denver County occur among youth ages 15–17. Furthermore, Denver County consistently has a higher birth rate than the state for *all* age groups. When asked in the provider survey, 52.3% work with parenting mothers, 40.9% with parenting fathers, and 43.2% with pregnant women (OY).

**Table 4: Average birthrate to teen mothers (2009–2011) by age group**

	Ages 10-14	Percent	Ages 15-19	Percent	Ages 15-17	Percent	Ages 18-19	Percent
<b>Percent per 1,000 births</b>								
<b>Colorado</b>	0.4	0.04%	32.7	3.27%	17.2	1.72%	54.8	5.48%
<b>Denver</b>	0.8	0.08%	54.6	5.46%	33.2	3.32%	81.1	8.11%

Source 4: Colorado Department of Public Health, 2011

Until recently, the general consensus was that early motherhood has a strong negative impact on both educational and employment outcomes (Corcoran, 1998). In fact, there is evidence that policymakers tend to make decisions based on this assumption (Kane, Morgan, Harris, & Guilkey, 2013). Recent studies, however, have questioned this conventional wisdom. For instance, based on a review of the literature, Kane and colleagues (2013) found that the relationship between early pregnancy and limited educational attainment is inconsistent at best. This uncertainty is consistent with prior research indicating that poor outcomes associated with teenage pregnancy are the result of the disadvantaged status of many young mothers, or alternately stated, the result of factors *preceding* the pregnancy rather than the pregnancy itself (Smith, Battle, & Leonard, 2012). Whether pregnancy and parenthood lead to one becoming an OY or are just additional factors added to many others, for Denver’s OY, these subgroups need to be addressed.

According to the 2013 report *The Status of Women and Girls in Colorado* by the Women’s Foundation of Colorado, families led by a single mother have the lowest median annual income of all family types (including single-father and married-couple families). With a median annual income of \$26,705, single-mother families on average fall below the self-sufficiency standard, indicating the need for public or private assistance to support a family in Colorado (Hess & Hegewisch, 2013). Therefore, being a teen mother may increase the likelihood that a young woman is at risk for becoming an OY, but it is important to consider that teen pregnancy on its own may not be the single greatest determinant, and other factors are likely to contribute to a teen parent becoming an opportunity youth.

Approximately half of participants in the Mile High Youth Corps focus group (79% male and 21% female) reported being parents. Forty percent of OY who responded to the survey reported being parents. Given that more males responded to the survey than females, a significant number of OY parents are men.

Other OY at the focus group expressed that their experiences as parents caused difficulties in their ability to achieve goals. For example, one young mother spoke about

*“Because you don’t have anyone else [to motivate you], you have to put your kids ahead of yourself.”*

– Youth focus group participant

how she did not attend school past ninth grade because she was pregnant with her second child and could no longer continue going to school. Many youth reported being in the MHYC program in order to be better models and provide for their children. This reality brings to light the need for a focus on a two-generation approach, which has potential to both increase return on investment in early childhood education *and* postsecondary education for parents (Ascend at the Aspen Institute, 2011). The idea of “mutual motivation,” where young parents are motivated by their children to achieve and thus become more involved in their child’s education (Ascend at the Aspen Institute, 2011), was revealed in the Denver focus groups as well.

Overall, focus group participants talked about their children being the reason for their engagement in programs and their children acting as their sole support system. Having children as a young person without a doubt increases the likelihood a youth will become an OY. However, the youth in the focus groups had struggled to reach their goals but were seeking help and opportunities in part due to the presence of their children. This suggests a relationship between OY parents and models for re-engagement.

### **Other Factors**

Overall, the seven factors listed above are notable in Denver and should be given attention when looking to ensure all OY have access to education pathways, workforce pathways and basic needs services. Youth with disabilities should also be of note, as nationally, Lewis and Burd-Sharps (2013) estimate that approximately 13% of disconnected youth may have a disability compared to 4% of youth who are connected. In fact, youth with disabilities may be twice as likely to drop out of high school when compared to their peers (Levin-Epstein, & Greenberg, 2003).

Other categories that arose in the provider survey, but were not highlighted above are: behavioral health issues, learning disabilities and substance abuse/use. In addition, as previously noted, Latino youth are more likely to be disconnected than the national average. While this factor cannot be linked to predictive factors, it does help to show where providers and OY Collaborative could focus (Lewis & Burd-Sharps, 2013).

## **Voices of Denver’s Opportunity Youth**

***“There is a way forward and the young people themselves tell us how. These young people don’t want a hand-out, they want a hand-up. They seek relationships with successful peers, professors, and business mentors who can help them learn how to access education and jobs.” (Schmitz, 2012).***

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While data both on and from OY, including many direct quotes from local OY, are included throughout this report, this section focuses specifically on documenting the voices and perspectives of OY who represent the Denver-area OY community. The researchers feel strongly that the inclusion of these voices represents a critical factor in both ensuring the accuracy of local data and in contextualizing data in the local realities of OY. In addition, local OY provided

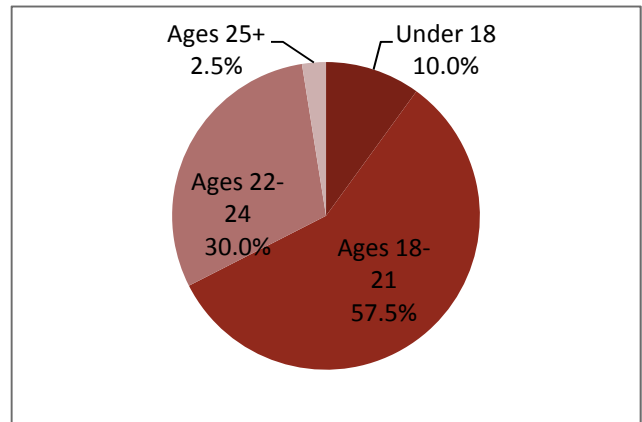
invaluable feedback that led to the development of the proposed recommendations and that helped ensure that the recommendations are relevant, feasible and have potential to make a positive impact on OY in Denver.

To collect this data from OY, JVA researchers met with youth during the site visits to programs serving OY, conducted a survey of local OY and facilitated two focus groups with OY at Denver-based organizations. This section contains a description of the demographic characteristics of those OY who participated in data collection efforts (e.g., surveys, focus groups) and describes some of the life situations they have experienced.

It is our hope that these illustrations will help paint a vivid picture of the realities of life for the diverse OY who seek services in Denver.

The survey findings reflected two distinct groups of OY: (1) those 21 and under who can still access resources through publicly funded schools; and (2) those over 21 who are no longer eligible for a free education and accompanying services. Slightly more than half of the OY at site and focus groups were ages 18 to 21, and a third were 22 to 24 (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Ages of surveyed OY (N=58)**



### Life Situations of Surveyed OY

The following section highlights main themes in the lives of OY. Figures 4 and 5 below show the life situations of surveyed OY, divided by OY ages 18 to 21 and OY ages 22 to 24. While both groups have common experiences, such as dropping out of school, parenting status and living in unstable housing, there are some notable distinctions.

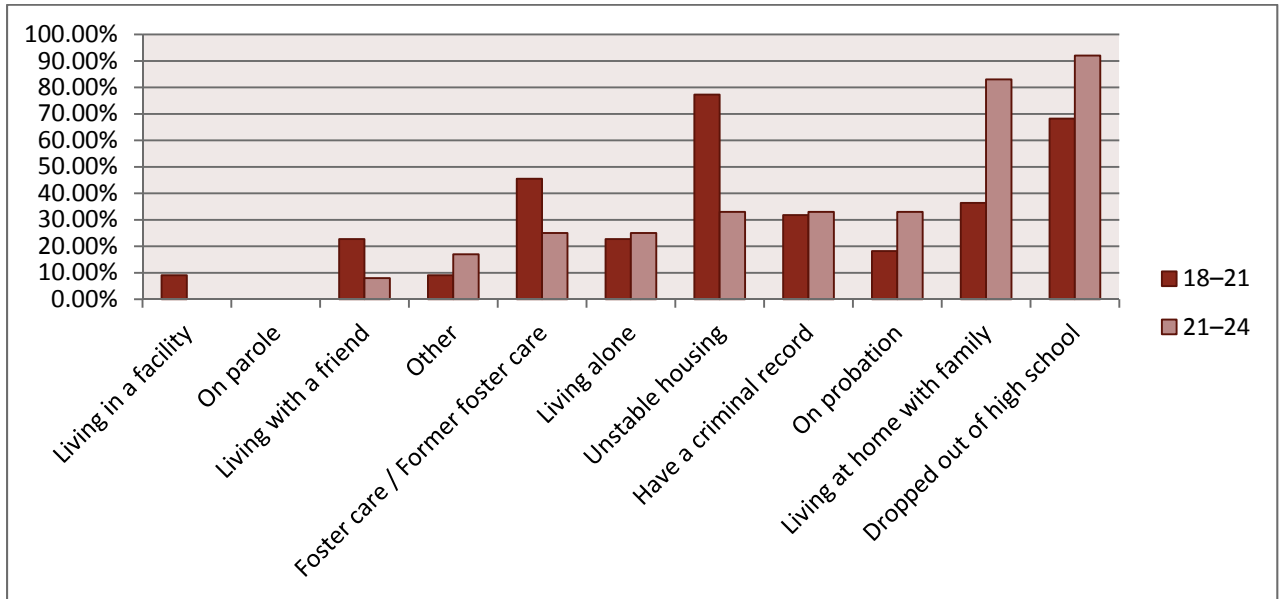
**Education.** First, the life circumstances of the older OY surveyed show they are more likely to stray from traditional educational attainment. More than 90% of OY ages 22–24 had dropped out of school at some point during their educational careers, while a slightly lower 70% of OY ages 18 to 21 had dropped out of school (see Figures 3 and 4).

**Parenting.** Older OY were also more likely to have children, with two-thirds of 22- to 24-year-olds taking the survey reporting being parents and one-third of 18- to 21-year olds reporting being parents (see Figures 3 and 4).

**Housing.** 77% of younger youth reported being in unstable housing situations (homeless, couch surfing or in a shelter), while 33% of older youth reported being in such unstable housing situations. Interestingly, more 22 to 24 year olds reported living at home with their families, which may be due to more of these OY being parents themselves and requiring additional support. Other notable categories were having a criminal record, being on probation, and being in foster care or formerly in foster care.

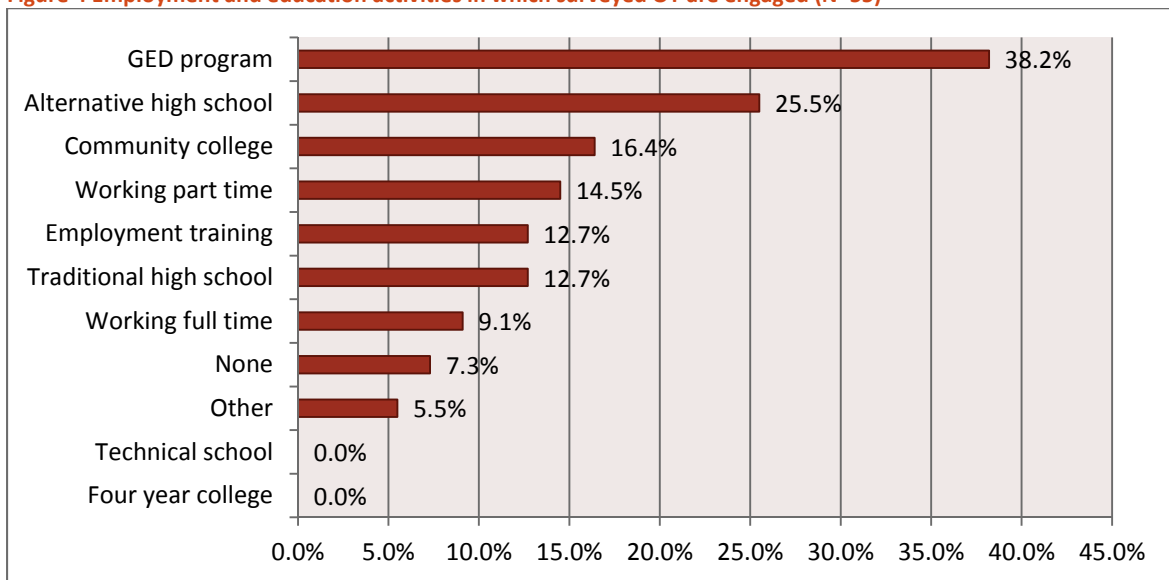


Figure 3 Life situations of surveyed OY by age group (N=22 for 18–20; N=12 for 21–24)



**Employment.** OY that took this survey at site visits and focus groups were in various stages of combined education and work (see Figure 4). Many were simultaneously engaged in education and work at the time of this survey. About 38% of surveyed youth were in GED courses, and 26% were enrolled in an alternative high school. While none of the OY surveyed reported being in a four-year college or technical school, 16% reported enrollment in community college.

Figure 4 Employment and education activities in which surveyed OY are engaged (N=55)



Youth focus groups delivered an invaluable perspective on OY needs and realities to the environmental scan. The following themes highlight such perspectives that were used to inform the recommendations presented in the subsequent sections.

## Goals and Needs for the Future

The OY at focus groups had a lot of thoughts on their future goals, with the strongest opinions centered on completing education, attaining employment and improving relationships. Some goals were job specific, but others were more focused on the type of people they would like to be in the future, showing that OY desire success but realize they will need assistance in achieving their aspirations.

*"I want to be a better parent in the future. I want to make sure that I'm good to my children."*

*"[My goals are] [Mile High Youth] Corps, career, and education...[and] to get out of this housing program."*

*"[I want to] build broken bridges...[and] relationships that ended badly."*

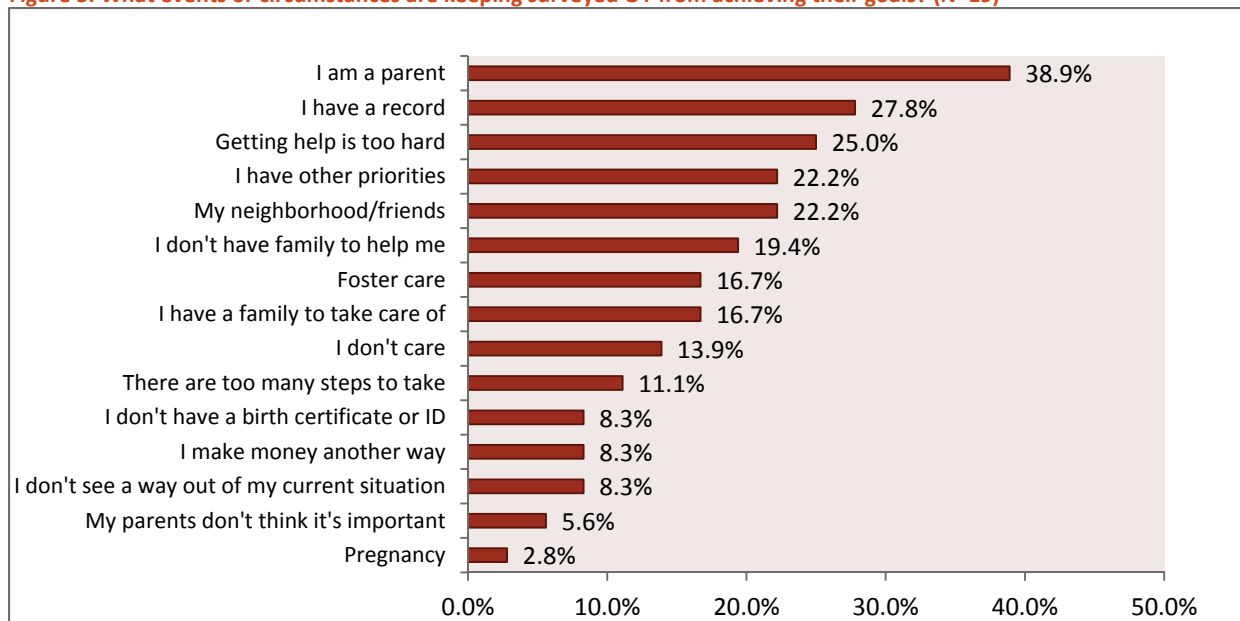
*"[I want to] work until next year and then get part time work and then get a GED and then go to Westwood apprenticeship for architecture."*

*"[I want to] obtain my associate of science degree."*

*"[I want to] start college and keep [a] job."*

**Barriers that prevent success.** The barriers to success for opportunity youth are numerous and can seem insurmountable. When OY were surveyed about the barriers that have prevented them from achieving their goals, the most frequently cited reasons were parenting/children and having a criminal record.

**Figure 5. What events or circumstances are keeping surveyed OY from achieving their goals? (N=19)**



In focus groups, youth often focused on how their life situations, past experiences and family difficulties negatively affected them and created barriers to moving forward.



*"When you're in...foster care it makes it 10 times harder to be where you want to be."*

*"My family makes me want to do drugs and alcohol. My parents just suck."*

*"I came to a point where I can't trust anyone. My parents, my family, my friends, my brother."*

*"I had serious anger issues based off of s--- that happened in the past. I don't let myself feel sad. I make myself immune to that emotion. ... I wanted that father-son relationship my whole life but he moved in when I was 13 and abused me with a belt the whole year."*

*"None of those [people] ever did anything for me. [I've been] kicked out of multiple places. Screwed by many professionals. Family loves to screw me. I came to a point where I could screw myself and not get broken up about it."*

*"My mom was a drug addict. ... [I was] adopted and then beat in the adopted home. [I was] taken away from that, sent to my bio grandma [in Denver], and got raped. So [I rely on] nobody."*

**Barriers to gaining employment.** When specifically asked about barriers to gaining employment, youth mentioned their involvement in the justice system, their lack of skills and presuppositions that potential employers might make about them.

*"I'm on diversion; if you're on probation sometimes they don't even wanna look at you."*

*"You try to get a job and they just say, 'Naw, still not good enough.' Some people are quick to judge."*

*"There are certain skills people want and you just don't have them."*

*"[You need] speed – being fast. Like working fast. A lot of jobs require you to be fast and on your feet all the time."*

Other notable barriers cited by OY survey respondents include being from certain neighborhood and a lack of family support. While not explicitly asked in the survey, during a focus group with at-risk homeless OY at Urban Peak, the issues of self-reliance and distrust of adults were a frequent theme.

*"I came to a point where I can't trust anyone. My parents, my family, my friends, my brother."*

The Urban Peak OY were outspoken in their descriptions of the events in their lives that may have caused their attitudes toward adults and authority. For example, some talked about sexual assaults, parental abuse and abandonment. In addition, the lack of stable housing and absence of social supports in the lives of these OY were also apparent. In fact, many OY became emotional when describing the ways in which they had been let down by adults in their lives.

**What they need to achieve goals.** When talking about what they need to achieve their goals, the young people talked about transportation, money, education, mental health care and personal growth. Some of the transportation needs include a bus pass or a car. A job and money

were obvious requirements for achieving any goals, along with scholarships and grants to pay for school. When it came to education, OY said they required good teachers, school supplies, books and the ability to study and learn. The more intangible needs talked about were the need to be able to get up for school on time, friends, family, a support system, room to grow and learn, and staying out of trouble. Health care and mental health treatment were also mentioned as needs to be successful.

*"It's necessary to have all of those [resources] to be successful and reach my goals."*

*"[I need] a stable environment. It's hard to [meet goals] if you don't have a stable environment. Then you have no support and you're really f-----. [I need] guidance."*

Many OY also reported that getting help is difficult, thus demonstrating that OY may have trouble accessing services.

*"It was all confusing... [You have to] fax [paperwork] in to case manager and follow up all the time. ... It would be easier to go to one place and have everything and do whatever you need"*

### Who Do Opportunity Youth Count On/What Works?

While many of the OY in focus groups were rather negative about their life situations and exuded a focus on their self-reliance, some did speak to supportive people in their lives and their more positive outlooks. Some OY cited teachers, family members and case managers as people who have helped get them the assistance they require.

*"Whenever I think about someone in my family who tried to help give me a better start, it helps me. I look at my stepdad and he tried to provide something my bio mom and dad weren't prepared to do."*

*"My mom just helped me get the financial aid I needed for college."*

*"Even though [case managers] are always pushing, they're always there."*

*"My college teacher got me a job at the school."*

*"My professionals were always trying to control me but they helped me out because they were always looking out for what would be better for me."*

**What they want from adults: respect.** Throughout the focus groups, a theme that emerged was a desire to be understood and respected by adults. These young people want to be respected and they want authority figures to earn their respect. The caseworkers need to meet them where they are and not evaluate them on a set of pre-judgments.

*"They nag at you a lot when you do something bad. They shouldn't make a big deal about it because I know I did something stupid. You don't need to listen to people telling you what you did wrong. I know I did something wrong; now how do we move forward from that?"*

*"I'm 21 [but] they tell me I can't come back drunk after the bars."*

*"The more I avoid the staff the more independent I feel."*

*"We're adults here and they treat us like we're little a-- kids."*

*"Some people who work here seem like they don't really care about you. Sometimes they don't even give you a chance."*

However, the OY not only expressed themselves as self-reliant but accountable for their actions. This reality speaks to the transitional age OY often fit into (not a young teenager, yet not an independent adult). Many youth in focus groups often challenged each other to think more about their accountability, and for those who assume responsibility for their own their lives, the feeling was quite strong.

*"Even if you have all those [resources], in the end it comes down to your choice. If you have all that support and you don't make the choice to put the effort in and accomplish your goals, you won't."*

*"Don't expect respect. Earn it."*

**Caring adults make a difference.** The youth in focus groups often had strong opinions on how the organizations they have worked with, or sought assistance from, can be improved, centering on the idea of caring staff. Primarily, having a caring person who has been in their position and can understand the struggles they go through may be the most effective way to get through to the oldest and most distrusting group of OY.

*"Hire people who know how to work with kids who have problems."*

*"There's one person who understands the youth and that's Rachel. Rachel is there for us."*

*"The night staff [at Urban Peak] is always encouraging you to see yourself better than you can see yourself at some points and see the same things they struggled with."*

The voices of the youth in Denver are an integral part of this puzzle. Overall, the views expressed in the focus groups highlight the difficulty in serving a transitional age group, as they desire respect and value self-reliance, but know they cannot do it alone.

## Pathways for OY in Denver: Education

Education increases the likelihood that youth will have jobs and be able to support themselves and their families (Knous-Dolan, et al., 2009). In addition, individuals with lower levels of education “experience the most significant declines in employment and greater wage deterioration” (Colorado Department of Higher Education, 2014). Education is a key factor in the future success of OY; however, traditional pathways often lead to dropping out, failing out, or a long process of attempting to attain education credentials through other means (GED and certifications). To ensure OY can succeed in attaining education, multiple pathways should be accessible to them, to fit their current life circumstances or realities. Ensuring that OY have these opportunities will also require the involvement of all players: schools, employers and community-based organizations. According to the Colorado Department of Higher Education (2014), there is a “leaking educational pipeline”—for every 100 students who enter a Colorado high school, only 22 graduate college. For this reason, it is of critical importance to ensure that OY in Denver County receive high school credentials, plus further training or postsecondary education.

*“These kids need to see a pathway to get from point A to point B. ... Maybe they want to be a mechanic but they don't know how to find those programs [or] connect with those programs. The biggest need is matching their interests with [the right] pathway.”*

– Key informant interviewee

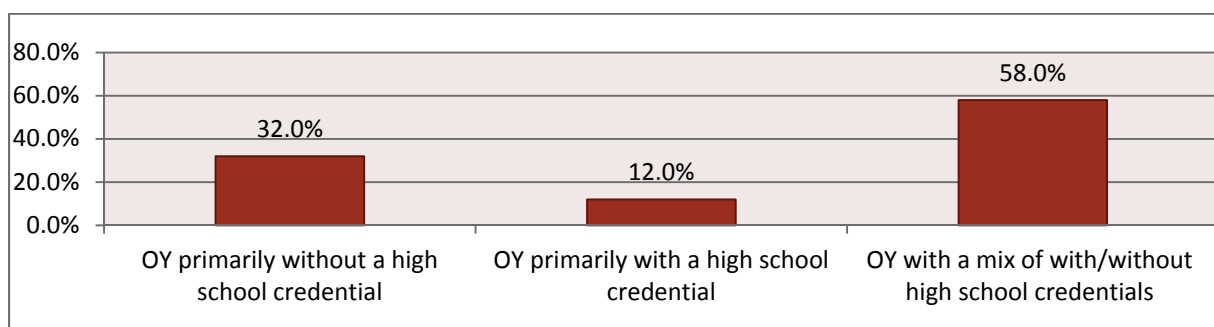
During the focus groups, a number of OY expressed that they wanted to complete high school diplomas or GEDs, and some shared that they hoped to complete associate degrees as well. This positivity is affirmed in the White House Council for Community Solutions report (2012), where 73% of surveyed youth are “very confident or hopeful about achieving their goals,” and 67% surveyed desire to finish high school or college and “know they can achieve it” (White House Council for Community Solutions, 2012).

*“I want to work until next year and then part-time work, then get a GED, and then go to Westwood apprenticeship for architecture.”*

– Youth focus group participant

Providers were asked if they primarily work with OY with a high school credential (GED or diploma) or without a high school credential. More than half (58%) of respondents work primarily with a “mix of both,” 32% primarily work with OY that do not have a high school credential, and only 12% work primarily with youth with a high school credential (see Figure 6). This shows the importance of connecting OY, no matter their age or situation, back to education.

**Figure 6: Education levels of OY clients of survey respondents (N=51)**



Borrowing from health care best practices, the idea of a “continuum of care” is vital to education outcomes among the OY population in Denver. Such services go beyond the social safety net to meet and support individuals on their level, at their pace. Figure 7 depicts the education pathways available to OY in Denver, details of which will be explained in this section.

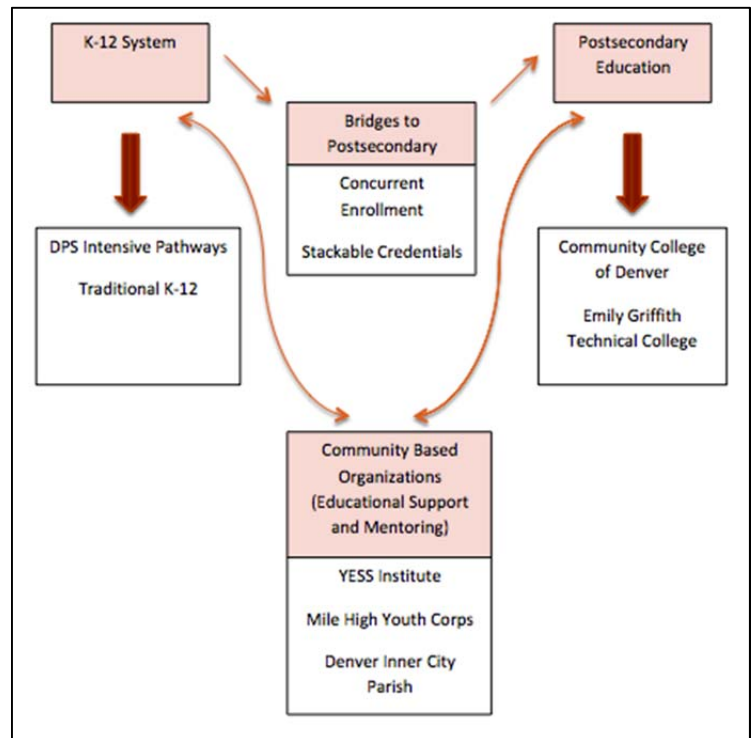
### K–12 Alternative Education

Often, a traditional education track is not feasible for OY due to out-of-school factors, including pregnancy, learning disabilities and trauma. However, up to age 20, OY can be reconnected back into K–12 education with the goal of completing their diploma or GED. An extensive alternative education system has been created in Denver to try to meet the needs of these students who cannot easily access

traditional education. This system includes the placement of students into Intensive Pathways Schools, typically based on that student’s proximity to graduation. Proximity to graduation, for youth up to age 21, breaks into four categories: *on-track*; *young and off-track*; *old and off-track*; and *significantly off-track*, with *young* referring to 14- to 16-year-olds and *old* referring to 17- to 20-year-olds. *Off-track* signifies that a student is behind one or more grade levels. Students who are *old and significantly off-track* may not be able to earn a traditional diploma prior to age 21 (Knous-Dolan et al., 2009). Alternately, students are considered to be on track to graduation if they have obtained credits similar to those of their peers in their typical age range.

There are approximately 76 alternative education campuses (AECs) in Colorado, 16 of which are in Denver (see the Alternative Education Map from The Piton Foundation in Appendix C)<sup>4</sup>. To be an AEC in Colorado, the student population must either be 95% *high risk* or 95% special education students. The *high-risk* group addresses the circumstances of OY in Colorado and is defined by a student who meets at least one of the following criteria: prior dropout, adjudication, expulsion, chronic suspensions, pregnant and/or parenting, drug and/or alcohol abuse, gang affiliation, adjudicated parent, domestic violence in family, victim of abuse and/or neglect, migrant, homeless, severe psychiatric or behavioral disorders, or over-aged and under-

Figure 7: Denver's education pathway



<sup>4</sup> 11 AECs are recorded on the map in Appendix C; however, as of February 2014, DPS reports now having 16 pathway schools.

credited (Donnell-Kay Foundation, 2013). In 2011, Colorado HB 11-1277 expanded eligibility criteria for AECs to students behind for their age or grade level, thus allowing more options for students who have struggled in the K–12 system. Both Jobs for the Future and the Donnell-Kay Foundation recommend Colorado refocus on academics and outcomes in AECs, particularly around the adoption of the Common Core Standards (Donnell-Kay Foundation, 2013).



In Denver, there are two primary options for those taking an alternative path to K–12 completion: (1) *intensive pathways*; and (2) *postsecondary pathways*. *Intensive pathways* schools aim to meet the needs of students who have aged-out of traditional high schools or are at risk of dropping out of

school. *Postsecondary pathways* schools have faster tracks to high school graduation, along with greater college preparation or greater career pathways preparation. A student on a postsecondary pathway can choose the Diploma Plus or GED Preparation course, and can then participate in Career Technical Education (CTE), Advanced Placement courses or concurrent enrollment in college (Denver Children’s Corridor, 2013).

A goal of AECs and the pathways schools is to minimize dropout rates in Denver and increase graduation rates. DPS reports that students who take CTE courses at DPS pathways schools complete high school at a higher rate than any comparison rate over the last eight years, and at a rate 10% higher than the district’s median extended completion rate (Saboe, 2013). In addition, DPS has shown that students who take 3+ CTE courses over four years complete high school at greater rates than comparison groups. Attendance rates, satisfaction scores from the School Satisfaction Survey, and overall higher high school completion rates are linked back to CTE courses and DPS pathways schools, emphasizing the need for more focus on these alternate pathways (Saboe, 2013). In the 2012–2013 school year, 2,451 participated in a concurrent enrollment course.<sup>5</sup>

In Denver, the pathways school with the highest completion rate<sup>6</sup> in 2012–2013, according to the Colorado Department of Education, was CEC Middle College of Denver (CEC), which attained

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<sup>5</sup> The number of students that participated in concurrent enrollment was determined through a phone call to DPS; however, this information is not publically available. Other information regarding attendance in CTE courses is also not publically available.

<sup>6</sup> The completion rates include all students who graduate on-time with a regular diploma plus students who complete on-time with a GED or non-diploma certificate (Colorado Department of Education, 2013).

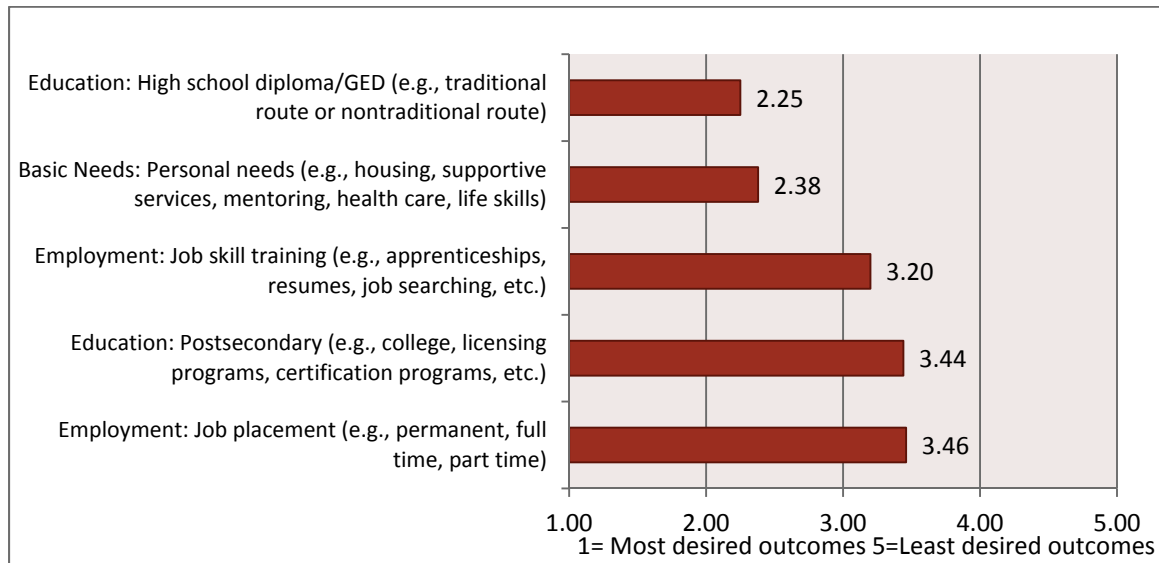


an 87% completion rate. CEC had high completion rates in 2011–2012 as well, with 89% completion rate in four years and 92% completion in five years (Colorado Department of Education, 2013). Other pathways schools with available data from 2012–2013 do not fare as well, with completion rates ranging from 16.3% to 69.2% (Colorado Department of Education, 2013). In an effort to evaluate the pathways schools at DPS, data from the Colorado Department of Education (2013) was examined. In total, the following eight pathways schools had available data for the 2012–2013 academic year: (1) CEC Middle College of Denver; (2) Contemporary Learning Academy High School; (3) Denver Center for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning at Wyman High School; (4) Denver Online High School; (5) Emily Griffith Technical School; (6) P.R.E.P. High School; (7) Summit Academy; and (8) Vista Academy High School. It should be noted that there are 17 pathways schools in DPS and that each of these pathways programs may serve a different demographic of students (e.g., teen parents, students in juvenile justice) (Colorado Department of Education, 2013). The average graduation rate for each of these eight pathways schools mentioned above was 40% (Colorado Department of Education, 2013). Unfortunately, preliminary findings are inconclusive due to a small sample size and substantial variance of graduation rates and completion rates. Further research is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of these pathways schools, and to determine other indicators of effectiveness that DPS might employ. Although the completion rates from the most recent school year are not the only indicator of success, and understanding the limitation of the four-year completion data, this data shows a drastic difference in pathways schools that should be acknowledged. In addition, the data available through the Colorado Department of Education also does not have available data for each pathways school in DPS, making a full measure of success difficult to portray.

**Promising Practice: DPS Alternative K–12 Education:** West Career Academy aims to help students earn either a high school diploma or GED with unique classroom curriculums. Florence Crittenton High School serves girls ages 14–21 who are pregnant or parenting, and aims to ensure they graduate, learn how to be nurturing mothers or deliver their children safely, and pursue postsecondary education with marketable job skills (Florence Crittenton Services of Colorado, 2013). CEC Middle College is a technology and career-oriented pathways school in Northwest Denver. DPS students can attend CEC Middle College full time or part time, gaining postsecondary credits or an industry certificate (Career and Technical Education Certificate) while completing their high school diploma (Denver Public Schools, 2013).

The majority of surveyed providers (75%) list “education” as a primary goal for OY at their organization (organizations were asked to check all that apply). About 55% list “workforce” as a primary goal, 50% list “basic needs” as a primary goal, and 46% list “wraparound” as a primary goal for the OY in their programs. In addition, Figure 8 shows that the two most important outcomes for OY, according to surveyed organizations, are education and basic needs.

Figure 8: Provider survey respondents' top desired outcomes for OY (N=48)



### Educational Needs of OY

Education is vital to the success of OY, and therefore the education system must recognize and address the unique needs of this subpopulation. According to practitioners in the field who work directly with OY, an educational system that is flexible, personalized and better adapted to contemporary society is needed.

A number of OY discussed resources that could help them reach their goals, such as good teachers, school supplies, books, and the ability to study and learn. Other OY did not have a clear sense of what education could do for them, feeling it had not done much for them previously, or that they learned more “on the street” than in the classroom.

### Postsecondary Education

In Colorado, jobs require postsecondary credentials (Colorado Department of Higher Education, 2014). As such, the 2014 Legislative Report on the Skills for Jobs Act recommends that Colorado invest in K–12 *and* provide financial aid to control costs of postsecondary education (Colorado Department of Higher Education, 2014). Therefore, efforts should be made to ensure that students at risk of dropping out of high school can attain their diploma or GED, *and also* that these students attain postsecondary education or training to remain in step with opportunity.

By 2020, a projected 74% of Colorado jobs will require postsecondary training or education. College graduates working in Colorado can earn an average of \$20,000 more in their first year of employment, as compared with high school-only graduates (College Measures, 2013).

Measure of America (2013–2014) and the U.S. Census Bureau (2011) data indicate that the 16–24 youth unemployment rate is 18.8% (Lewis & Burd-Sharps, 2013), and for individuals with some college, the unemployment rate is as low as 8%, decreasing to 4.5% for those with a bachelor’s degree or higher (Colorado Department of Higher Education, 2014). The unemployment rate in Colorado is 13.5% for individuals with less than a high school education,



compared with 10.7% for individuals with a high school diploma (Colorado Department of Higher Education, 2014).

As recommended in the 2014 Legislative Report on the Skills for Jobs Act, career pathways systems in Colorado need to integrate state and local partners working for broad-based employment opportunity. As such, the U.S. Department of Adult and Vocational Education is providing technical assistance for the creation of a Colorado career pathways system, according to a 2014 report (Colorado Department of Higher Education, 2014).



### **Community Colleges**

Community colleges play a big role in making career pathways realistic for OY. Individuals who attain an occupational or career-oriented an associate of applied science (AAS) degree reach high labor market success overall; according to College Measures (2013), “The median first-year wages for AAS graduates from nearly every community college are *higher* than the statewide median of first-year wages of bachelor’s degree graduates” (College

Measures, 2013).

Thanks to federal student loans and Pell Grants, low-income students are more easily connected to postsecondary education. Between 2011 and 2012, over \$35 billion was granted to a total of 9.4 million U.S. students, with an average award of \$3,650. However, due to recent cuts, funding dropped to \$32.4 billion for a total of 8.9 million students in 2012–2013; the Congressional Budget Office predicts stable numbers for 2013–2014. Other programs, like the Chafee Educational and Training Voucher, help former foster youth enroll in postsecondary programs. Through this national program, approximately 16,000 former foster youth receive an average of \$3,000 (Bridgeland & Mason-Elder, 2012).

### **Stackable and Portable Credentials**

An innovative approach to providing flexibility for students to attain postsecondary education is the *stackable* and *portable* credentials option. Earning *stackable* credits is a way for students to earn short-term credentials that have labor market value, which can be built upon to access advanced jobs or higher wages. Students enter the job market faster, with more flexibility in career growth. *Portable* credentials are verified and accredited programs that allow for flexibility in when and how they are attained (i.e., online learning), and are customized for the individual student (Austin, Mellos, Rosin, & Seltzer, 2012).

*“Stackable certificates provide a pathway for [students] to do both work and school. We have to help them get an education so they can get a high-paying job [and] support themselves and their families.”*

– key informant interviewee

A 2010 Jobs for the Future summary of lessons learned offers a number of programs across the nation that are enacting promising practices in relation to stackable credentials, accelerated learning and flexible accreditation programs (Uhalde & Kazis, 2010).

### **Postsecondary Remediation**

Often the path to postsecondary education is hampered by ill preparation for college by OY. National estimates state that only one-third of high school graduates are prepared for college work.

Forty percent of those enrolled in college in 2011 needed remediation courses in at least one subject, and 66% of students enrolled in two-year colleges in Colorado needed remediation (Colorado Department of Education, 2012). At the Community College of Denver (CCD), 87% of students needed remedial education (Colorado Department of Higher Education, 2013). In 2011, 90% of African Americans and 78% of Latinos/as at two-year colleges needed remediation.



Many benefits have been attributed to remedial courses, as they help all students track toward graduation and increase skill attainment. By placing students in courses with other students who are at the same skill level, teachers may be able to better tailor their teaching to students' needs (Bettinger & Long, 2009). However, there is a high degree of uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of traditional remediation and the adverse effects that it may create, such as social stigma on remedial education students. In addition, remediation leads to more requirements for graduation and longer time to attain a degree, which can increase the likelihood of dropping out (Bettinger & Long, 2009). Regardless of these possible negative effects, Martorell and McFarlin (2011) explain, "Remediated students would likely have worse outcomes than non-remediated students in the absence of the program". Essentially, remediation's effects are nuanced (Bettinger et al., 2013). Bahr (2012) suggests that another possible solution to ensure student engagement is "immediate institutional interventions, such as counseling and tutoring...to increase the rates of college-level skill attainment among those students who enter at low skill levels" (Bahr, 2012).

Some colleges are enacting flexible schedules and programs to address these obstacles (e.g., balancing school and work, taking care of a family, etc.), illustrated through more online options and industry-specific or career-oriented programs. Community colleges are employing innovative strategies to help students in need of remediation. One approach of Community College of Denver (CCD) is the FastStart program, which condenses four math courses into two to help students complete programs at higher rates (Bettinger et al., 2013). Research has shown these students are more likely to pass math courses (Brancard, Baker & Jensen, 2006). CCD's

FastStart math cohorts outperformed its remedial math student population on course progression measures in a study by Bragg, Baker and Puryear (Bragg, Baker, & Puryear, 2010).

Another innovative option is to include workforce connections and employment-related programs into community colleges, such as through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) (Bettinger et al., 2013). Remedial education can be used as an on ramp to college and academic support, but it is most effective if additional support systems are offered beyond the remedial level.

### ***Other Considerations in Postsecondary Education***

The Community College of Denver, as well as other local colleges, includes remedial courses and targeted assistance through advising, tutoring, etc., to help students with life responsibilities such as dependents or concurrent employment (Bettinger et al., 2013). For example, the Colorado Community College System has a program that provides high-risk students with navigators to help them with intensive “case management, career exploration support, and guidance through the college transition process” (Rodriguez & Colorado SUN Navigators, 2007). Research supports the notion that “enhanced” advising has great effect on course success and transfer rates for students at the lowest levels of remediation (Bahr, 2012).

Advising can also bring to light obstacles that students face, such as balancing work and school, family responsibilities, employment and child care support, which can lead to greater transportation expenses and significantly less time to study. For example, survey results show that more than half (53%) of all students ages 22–30 indicated that family commitments were a major reason why they could not complete a degree (Bettinger et al., 2013).

*“Most students come from families where higher education wasn’t on the table. ... They need a navigator: a staff [member] whose job is to walk the students through the college admissions procedure.”*

– Key informant interviewee

Education and career training are essential factors in the well-being and future success for youth. As such, it is critical to ensure that OY in Denver County earn high school credentials and have clear pathways toward further training and/or postsecondary education. The programs and services that exist to serve Denver’s OY, whether on the traditional track or part of an alternative pathway, are a vital part of a pathway to success; however, ensuring that all OY are aware of and have access to these educational opportunities requires a collaborative approach involving not only schools and service providers, but also employers and community organizations.

## Pathways for OY in Denver: Employment

A second pathway for OY in Denver is toward employment. This section discusses the current needs of industry in Colorado and documents pathways to employment for OY in Denver. Collaboration is essential for removing the barriers to education and gainful employment among Denver’s OY population. OY may not follow the traditional education pathways (K–12 diploma, graduation from a four-year college), but postsecondary education and workforce entry should be attainable. The “2014 Legislative Report on The Skills for Jobs Act” outlines jobs that will likely be available in the next decade, emphasizing the need for postsecondary training to ensure employment (Colorado Department of Higher Education, 2014).

*“Building in that support...being connected to the most appropriate educational fit [and] being supported in the work setting once placed in a job [are essential for OY].”*

– Provider survey respondent



### Engaging OY in the Workforce

A focus on career is often, but not always, combined with education and emphasized at a much earlier stage in the education system (prior to OY leaving) (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2011). This earlier emphasis is important for OY, as many disengage (or “become” OY) even after attaining a high school credential because they are unable to find meaningful employment. According to key informants, OY need to see an achievable path to success. Social scientists speak of the need for relevant goals and defined pathways. As with many in poverty, OY may often be focused on short-term needs instead of long-term goals.

While there are many organizations aiming to address the employment needs of OY, the pathway is not direct enough to ensure employment. More direct pathways and stronger employer relationships will help close the gap. Opportunity youth frequently lack access to job connections. Providing OY with a clear path to job opportunities has been shown to be critical to engagement. Linkages to job opportunities can be made through involving local businesses and colleges in initiatives to train and provide experiences to OY such as internships, apprenticeships or skill-building opportunities (Corcoran, et al. 2012).

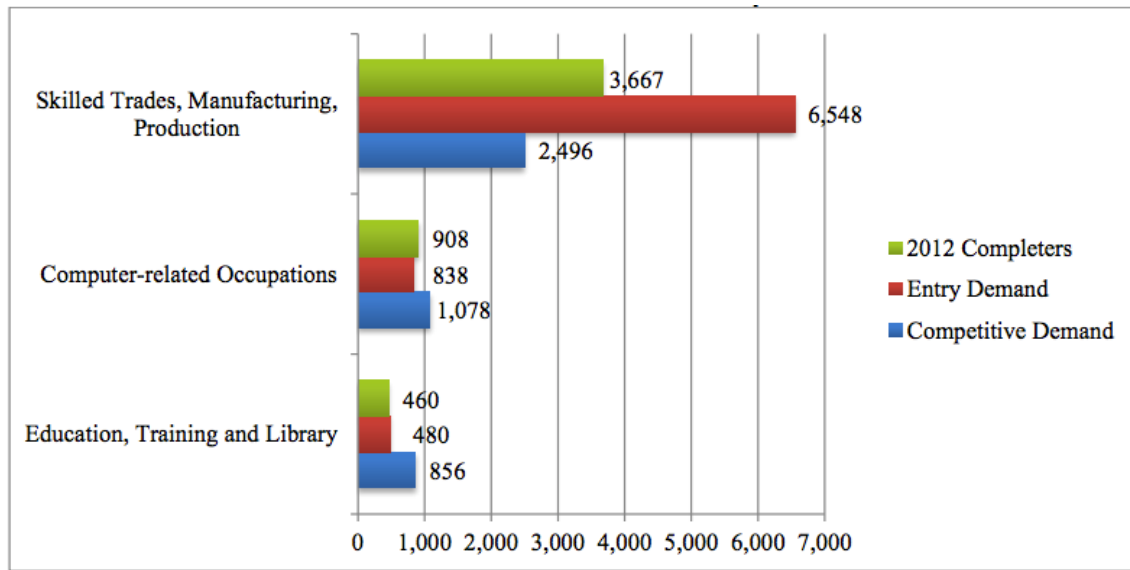
### Industry Needs

Skills2Compete Colorado is a statewide initiative aiming to close the mid-level jobs gap between availability of jobs and need for skilled workers (National Skills Coalition, 2011). Figure 9 shows the extreme disconnect between skilled trade, manufacturing and production positions available and the number of people in Colorado completing those credentials. These mid-level jobs requiring certifications, but not bachelor’s degrees, may be a strong area of focus for OY training/placement.

*“[There is] an increased need on the part of employers for well-trained young people”*

– Provider survey respondent

Figure 9: 2012 credential completion rates as compared to demand for Colorado middle-skill job categories



While there are not many apprenticeship programs in Denver, there are established organizations that train workers for the future. The Construction Industry Training Council (CTIC) of Colorado has apprenticeship programs in carpentry, electrical, pipefitting, plumbing and sheet metal (CITC, 2014). Another apprenticeship organization is the Colorado Building and Construction Trades Council AFL-CIO (Colorado Building and Construction Trades Council, 2014). Private firms also offer apprenticeship opportunities. RK Mechanical, a large Denver metro construction firm, offers four-year apprenticeships in plumbing, piping, sheet metal and HVAC (RK Mechanical, 2014). Casey Industrial, as determined in a key informant interview, provides informal apprenticeships with the company as well.

*“It becomes a matter of priorities. A priority should be education, which leads you to a job. A lot of young people I support and connect with, their priorities are more around ‘my family of choice’, and ‘friends I can count on’. They’re often not interested in looking long-term.”*

– Key informant interviewee

Reaching out to organizations that offer low- to middle-skill apprenticeships to create long-term partnerships will be useful in ensuring OY are trained in applicable skills that lead to stable jobs at the end of their education. From there, the integration of ongoing support services can ensure OY are employed for the long term.

### Pathways for OY in Denver: Basic Needs and Support Services

A third pathway for OY in Denver is toward addressing basic needs and providing support services including connecting OY with a caring adult and wraparound service. These services are critical, because OY have dealt with, and continue to face, myriad challenges and barriers in their personal life that impact their success in completing education and finding employment. Even after OY have found satisfying employment, ongoing support may be necessary to ensure continued success. For this reason, it is imperative that Denver providers to OY do not neglect supporting other aspects of OY and that they are capable of addressing multiple needs or

*“It’s hard to [meet goals] if you don’t have a stable environment. Then you have no support and you’re really [in a bad situation].”*

– Youth focus group participant



being connected to organizations that can address these needs. To this end, this section discusses the need for these services and documents pathways to both supportive services (e.g., connecting with a caring adult) and wraparound services for OY in Denver.

For this reason, Denver providers must consider wraparound support to OY and be capable of addressing multiple needs, or connecting to organizations that can address those needs. In the provider survey, individuals were asked, “which OY does your organization serve most frequently?” By checking all that applied, it was clear that providers commonly work with youth with behavioral health issues (48%), learning disabilities (46%) and substance use/abuse (46%). This small subset of data, even from a limited number of service providers in Denver, shows the need for organizations to be aware of the multiple needs OY face.

In focus groups, common themes that arose were education, skills and personal motivation. Related to this topic, a handful of OY discussed how they needed a stable environment in order to be successful. The importance of these various factors are not automatically associated with education or workforce programs (although many are integrating them), yet should not be ignored when working with OY in Denver.

### Connecting with a Caring Adult

The need for strong connections with caring adults is important.

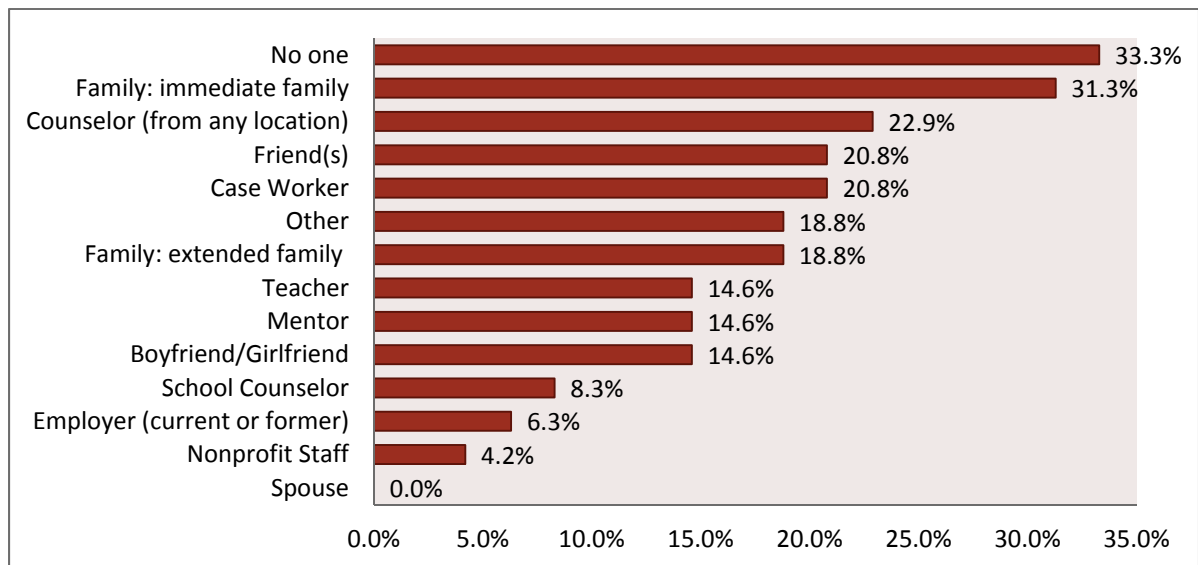
Opportunity youth were surveyed about the supportive individuals who have helped them pursue education and employment. As Figure 10, below, indicates, their most frequent answers included: no one (33%), immediate family (31.3%) and counselors (22.9%). With support systems being such an important factor for success for OY, understanding these systems and how they break down should be an area of further study.

Thus, whether mentoring comes in the form of a program, family member, caseworker or counselor, OY need greater stability.

*“Family situations result in students dropping out because they don’t have the support to continue on.”*

– Key informant interviewee

**Figure 10: Those who have helped OY pursue education and employment (N = 48)**



Supporting this perspective, many OY also described other needs (i.e., life skills), such as being able to get up for school on time; having friends, family and a support system; having room to grow and learn; staying out of trouble; and having access to health care and mental health treatment. When asked what barriers prevent them from achieving their educational goals, OY mentioned alcohol, addiction, lack of education and friends who do not help them make good decisions. Given the challenges OY may face as they pursue paths in education and employment, it is important to help OY access pathways that reflect best practices. Personalized education plans, directed at an OY's particular goals, or effective case management may help OY finish their education.

*“I came to a point where I can't trust anyone: [not] my parents, my family, my friends [or] my brother.”*

– Youth focus group participant

Creating ways for OY to be receptive to the influence of a mentor is critical. When OY were asked what resources could assist with their needs, more than half (54%) reported being able to rely only on themselves. Aligned with the idea of self-reliance was the need to feel independent *and* respected by adults in charge of programs. When engaged in punitive programs, OY participants said they would walk out and not get the support they need, or not buy into it in the first place. For some OY, experiences led them to believe that they could trust no one.

Service providers said repeatedly the people working with OY were the reason their organizations were successful. Also critical to gaining the trust of OY is an ongoing relationship over a significant length of time. As a result, increasing the stability in the lives of OY through ongoing relationships could ensure their future success.

The presence of a caring adult to guide OY and connect them to relevant and useful support services emerged as a critical best practice in the OY engagement process. Mentoring programs also show positive effects on youth participants, with strongest evidence surrounding the use of mentoring as a preventive intervention for youth with challenged backgrounds including conditions of “environmental risk and disadvantage” (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002). The analysis shows a need for innovative approaches to mentoring, with mentors who have backgrounds and prior experience in such roles being the most impactful (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002).

However, more recent research shows nuanced results in the effectiveness of mentoring programs, with other programs showing “no effectiveness.” When it comes to mentoring programs for OY, programs that work to establish effective, strong and long-term relationships should be identified and deployed (Rhodes 2008).

*“If they could just have someone they connect with that would stay connected with them throughout the process. ... What I've seen is once they've built a relationship with someone like a caseworker, it changes. ... Every time the stepping stone falls out, they're grappling to make a step forward.”*

– Key informant interviewee

### Wraparound Services

A second important area is wraparound services: those that provide a comprehensive array of services to support youth's many and varied needs and encourage their success. In considering support and wraparound services that can be offered to OY, it is critical to link this with support

services that provide the stability OY *want*. When OY were asked about the types of services that they needed to achieve their goals, they talked about transportation, money, education, mental health care and personal growth. A job is also necessary for achieving goals, along with scholarships and grants to pay for school. Opportunity youth expressed more than once how caring adults helped them access the support services they need.

Government agencies provide necessary support services to OY, but they do not assist undocumented OY, or those without proper identification or papers. Nonprofits such as Denver Inner City Parish and Servicios de la Raza provide wraparound services. Drop-in centers, such as Rainbow Alley at The GLBT Community Center of Colorado, provide a safe place for LGBT youth.

In addition, the social-emotional needs of OY must be addressed to help them build confidence and prepare for the workforce. Many OY become discouraged after encountering complex and inadequate support systems, which often leave them feeling unwanted. Programs have achieved success by creating an environment where OY can discover their strengths and passions in an environment of supportive peers and adults (Corcoran, et al., 2012).

The combination of the key informant interviews, existing literature and the comprehensive survey shed insight into the current education and workforce pathways for OY in Denver. The main findings from the original data collected align well with the current data and best practices enumerated upon earlier. Education, workforce and basic needs are the categories addressed by service providers and government agencies in Denver.

### Networks and Systems

The previous sections described three pathways necessary for the success of OY in Denver: pathways to education, pathways to employment, and pathways to basic needs and supportive services. This section describes the potential for network or system building within and across these pathways, including documenting themes in current services provided by Denver providers and discussing systemic challenges faced by local OY and OY-serving organizations (e.g., evaluation, capacity and funding).

As was documented in the previous three sections regarding pathways for Denver OY, there are many service providers and government agencies that address needs within these three pathways. In fact, the environmental scan identified over 180 organizations that serve the needs of Denver's OY population in some way through education, workforce development and/or other basic services (e.g., housing, health care, life skills training).

As Figure 11 illustrates, the surveyed organizations, when taken together, provide all three of these types of services, with provision of basic services (life skills, social skills, mentoring) followed by services geared to education (enrollment, alternative education, tutoring) and employment (job placement, training). However, each organization is

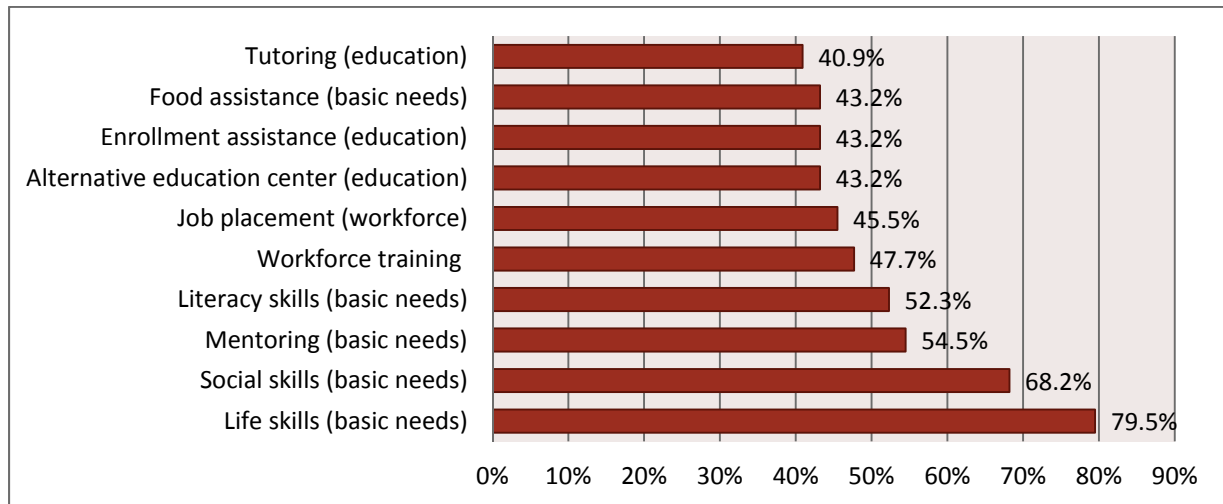
*“People aren't talking to each other in the way that they need to. ... I might have zero idea if a student shows up to my school if he is on probation. I won't know that unless he happens to have a probation officer that knows to outreach to me. I might have three students with three different probation officers that work in different ways. Consistency is difficult, communication barriers [exist].”*

– Key informant interviewee



typically targeting one of the services and often does so without formal coordination with other organizations that are or could be providing needed complementary services to OY.

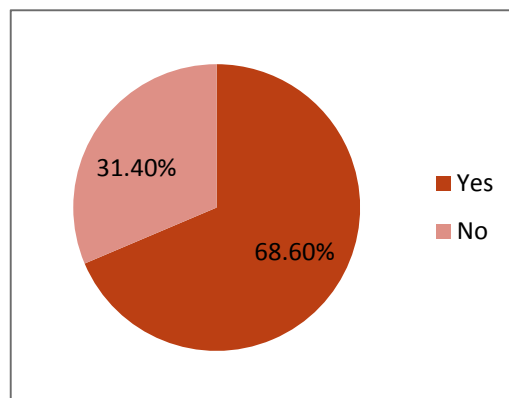
**Figure 11: Top 10 services provided to OY by surveyed organizations (N=45)**



However, despite the fact that these organizations address many challenges that OY face—including providing resources to help combat homelessness or that encourage pathways toward employment and education—these organizations can only do so much with Denver’s large, mobile and ever-changing OY population. In addition, looking holistically at these three pathways—distinct, but interconnected and overlapping in many ways—and the many providers that offer diverse services, there does not appear to be a system for either connecting OY to these services and organizations, or for referring OY to other services or organizations that can best meet their needs. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, at present, no official system exists in Denver to serve OY. Given the fact that there are many organizations that work with OY in Denver, there is both a significant opportunity and a critical need to nurture a system that can address the unique challenges of working with this population.

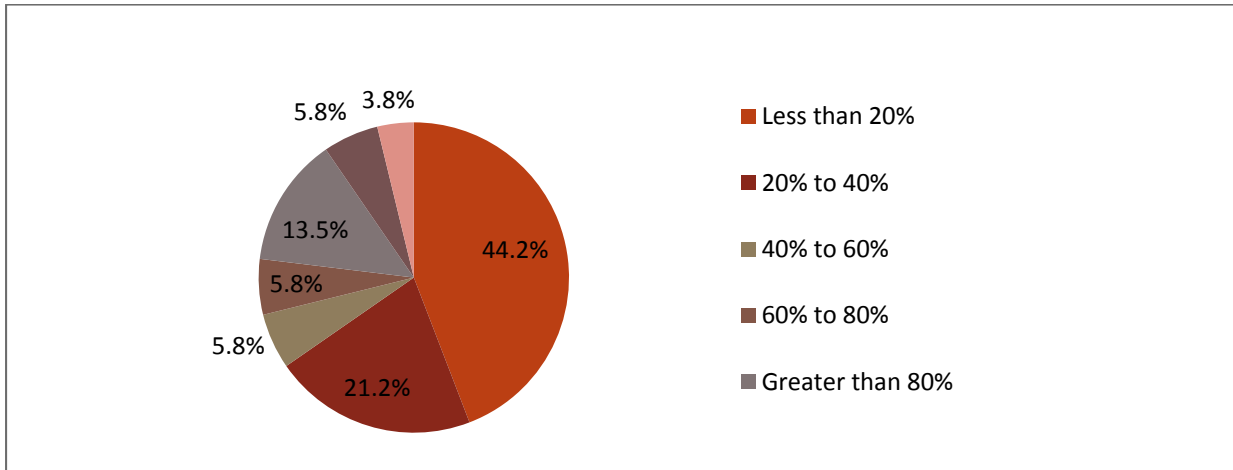
It is important to note that only a handful of organizations (e.g., Colorado Youth for a Change, Emily Griffith Technical College, Mile High Youth Corps, Urban Peak) specifically target OY. At the same time, the provider survey shows that 86.6% of the organizations that took the survey believe that working with OY is a direct part of their organization’s mission (Figure 12). This shows an interesting connection between the organizations that explicitly were created to address OY (such as Colorado Youth for a Change) and the organizations that work directly with OY but, perhaps, were not created for this goal (such as Mi Casa Resource Center). As seen in Figures 12

**Figure 12: "Is working with OY a direct part of your organization's mission?" (N=51)**



and 13, there are many potential “allies” in the effort to provide OY services. While these organizations may not have been created originally or solely to serve OY, and do not serve equal numbers of OY, 68.6% of survey respondents do believe their services for OY are a direct part of their mission. Convening these allies will assist the OY Collaborative in pathways development (education and employment), and aligns with recommendations set by the Jobs for the Future Asset Mapping Memo (The Aspen Institute, 2014).

**Figure 13: Percentage of clients in surveyed organizations that are OY (estimates) (N=50)**



The crosswalk of service providers, and the OY they serve, can be used as a resource to understand which groups of OY obtain services and resources (see Appendix B). The crosswalk is informed by a survey that was sent to approximately 140 providers in Denver. The categories in the crosswalk are informed by the literature and key informant interviews. While this information may accurately reflect the full range of services and populations served, as this was self-reported and unverified, it can be useful in learning who is connected to OY in Denver, to what extent, and highlight areas where more research will need to be conducted.

### **Systemic Challenges for OY and OY-Serving Organizations**

In addition to the barriers OY face, highlighted in the previous sections, OY also are struggling to work through a series of systemic barriers such as fragmented services, inadequate programs or pathways, and lack of funding for age groups over 21 (Corcoran, et al., 2012). Youth and providers in the focus groups and interviews directly acknowledge that OY take a “pathway” that is disjointed, with points of engagement and disengagement due to colliding life circumstances that emphasize systemic barriers for Denver OY.

### **Evaluation**

It is essential that if Denver providers are seeking to work together to address the needs of OY, shared data and common tracked outcomes are necessary. While there are movements toward

greater shared data in Denver, as seen through the Colorado 9to25 collaboration<sup>7</sup> and the Mile High United Way Shared Indicators Project,<sup>8</sup> it appears that not all organizations are using data in the same way or tracking the same outcomes.

Many providers surveyed already collect data on the OY they serve. For example, 93% of surveyed providers reported collecting demographic data regarding OY participants/clients, 69% collect school history information (credits earned, GPA, etc.), 57% collect parenting status, and 48% collect income (respondents having been able to select more than one option). However, the tools used to track such data are varied, which can be referenced in Appendix H. In addition, fewer providers (40%) track OY after they leave their organization, making longitudinal data collection efforts difficult. To do this, JVA recommends that common outcomes, tracking systems and means to connect data to individual OY be agreed upon by the many agencies and organizations serving OY.

*“This piece [on measuring effectiveness] is increasingly recognized as a way to improve practice, but part of that equation needs to consider developing resources to support this effort. We already have job duties and adding another one on top of that probably won't lead to the most accurate data”*

– Provider survey respondent

For more information on how surveyed organizations are using data, see Appendix H. However, as this is just a small sample of organizations in Denver that work with OY, further research will be needed to understand how to establish common outcomes and metrics for OY success.

### **Capacity**

With more than 180 organizations that work with OY (at one point or another), it might be obvious that these organizations have varying capacity for service, varying budgets and varying target groups. For example, not all programs that work with OY address OY from ages 16 to 24; rather, some organizations provide services only up to age 18, or up to age 21. Regarding capacity, the provider survey shows that while many organizations work with OY in Denver, 46% serve only between one and 50 OY per month, and another 18% serve between 50 and 100 OY per month.

*“All youth-serving agencies should agree to share basic information on clients to cut down duplication of services and time for re-entering primary client information.”*

– Provider survey respondent

<sup>7</sup> Colorado 9to25 is a collaboration that via meetings and trainings and a positive youth development approach, leaders and youth will work together to increase awareness to services, promote best and promising practices, share accountability and promote policy change (Colorado 9to25, 2013 “one pager”: [www.colorado9to25.org](http://www.colorado9to25.org)).

<sup>8</sup> The Shared Indicators Project aims to “strengthen and align multiple partners with multiple goals.” The Children’s Corridor, The Piton Foundation, Mile High United Way, Mayor’s Office of Children and Education, and the Civic Canopy have been involved in this effort (<http://www.denverchildrenscorridor.org/shared-indicators>).

In addition, providers are often doubling up on unnecessary work, when already stretched for internal capacity, by serving each OY as a “new case” even when their client or participant has been involved in many other services beforehand. This siloed access to client information and lack of shared data limits the capacity of organizations to address the needs of OY.

### Funding

Funding sources for addressing the needs of OY are critically divided by age groups, with OY ages 21 and up often left out of youth/student funding streams, even though their needs may be similar to the younger age cohort of OY. With growing attention to the needs of OY across the U.S., it will be important to include as many service providers as possible to either apply for funding jointly or simply to increase local awareness. The Aspen Institute Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund that provides support to the Denver Opportunity Youth Collaborative which commissioned this report is an example of community projects that can be used to help youth from across the age span make connections to education and employment. Government grant programs that align well to OY efforts include Social Innovation Fund, Promise Neighborhoods and Choice Neighborhoods. The federal budget includes Performance Partnerships Pilots for Disconnected Youth that allows communities to use money from different federal funding streams to pilot new approaches. The OY Collaborative may consider these as well as other funding streams as potential sources of revenue for their work.

When asked in the survey “what is the primary age group of OY you work with,” (having been allowed to submit multiple responses) led to answers of 68% serving ages 16-18, 61% serving ages 19-21, and much less (42%) serving ages 22-24 (see Figure 14). This greatly affects the funding streams used by such organizations and should be understood more in-depth to see if current funding and services fully meet the needs of Denver’s OY. Survey respondents, when asked about their funding sources for OY programming, most often stated that funding comes from federal, state and local sources. For details on funding sources of the surveyed organizations, see the crosswalk in Appendix B.

### Coordination of Networks

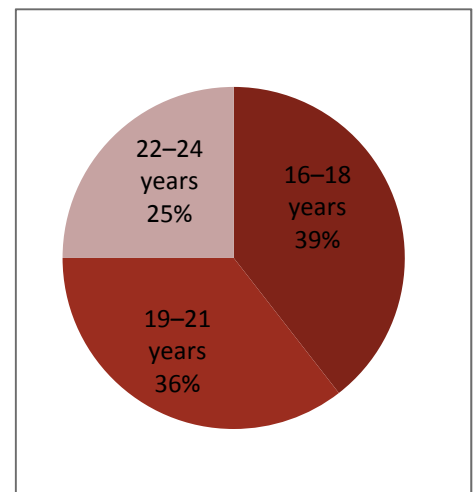
One approach to creating community alignment around the disjointed pathways of OY is to ensure that OY have greater awareness and access to information and programming that assists them at different stages.

This approach to assisting OY in Denver will maximize available resources (e.g., trained staff, programs, information), while ensuring the most promising and/or effective programs are

*“I really think that money is number one. We have to allocate the money in the right way and the organizations there to help need to not have limits on how many youth can be helped all year. ... We need to facilitate conversations with people sitting in the same room and streamline the process to have fewer steps involved but have the people involved have the knowledge to actually help.”*

– Key informant interviewee

Figure 14: Primary age groups that OY survey respondents work with (N=45)



engaged. In addition, this approach could improve the referral of services offered throughout the city. For example, if Organization A is already trusted among teachers, caseworkers and neighbor communities in Denver, Organization B could partner with Organization A to more effectively reach more OY. When individuals access services, they most often rely on the coordinated efforts and resource sharing of multiple agencies. In addition, many agencies may have their own agendas, service orientations and funding services that may not always line up with the complex needs of the populations that they serve (Provan, Veazie, Staten, Teufel, & Shone, 2005). Therefore, strategies that can strengthen the availability of existing services are critical for OY in Denver.

Representatives of OY-serving organizations also responded to the survey. They were asked to provide lists of organizations that engage with OY in Denver, organizations from which they receive referrals and organizations that are making the greatest impact. The 49 respondents named more than 180 organizations, illuminating the vast array of services that exist (see Appendix E for a full list). However, Appendix F shows the only organizations that were named more than once by survey respondents, leading to the conclusion that while many services exist, they do not all work in tandem to provide the best services possible for OY. The organizations most frequently mentioned in the survey are Bayaud Enterprises, CCD, CYC, DPS, Emily Griffith Technical College, Goodwill, MHUW and Urban Peak. These organizations may provide a good starting point for outreach to strengthening connections and networks for OY in Denver. Furthermore, this points to the need for a virtual network for providers to OY so that duplication of services is avoided and providers can have a greater awareness of what is available.

*“Who to ask [for help]...it was all confusing... paperwork to fax it in to case manager and to follow up all the time. A one stop place would be easier.”*

– Youth focus group participant

*“[It is] really important to erase the barriers to access resources and programs that agencies and systems put in place. Every door is the right door; there's no wrong door.”*

– Key informant interviewee

In addition, youth discussed the types of services that were available to them, and some OY described how the system was broken and difficult to navigate. The theme of a broken system also emerged when discussing accessing documents and services. However, the OY in the focus group discussed systems less than other key themes.

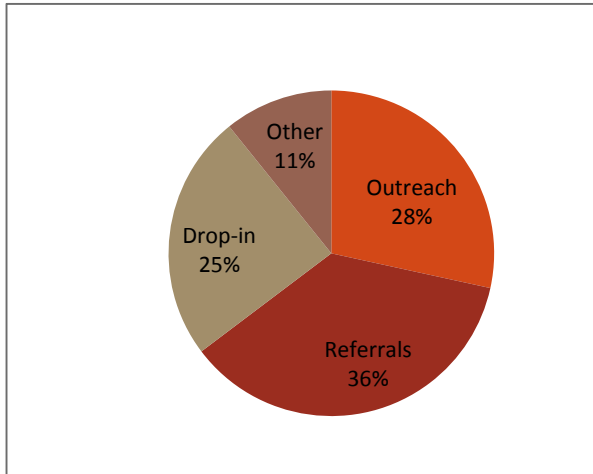
### **Gaps in Outreach**

With so many organizations that serve OY in Denver, and so few partnerships among them, understanding the outreach methods to OY (or conversely, how OY are referred to area organizations and services) is key. Figure 15, below, shows that OY become connected to surveyed organizations in multiple ways, which need to be explored further, especially through previously cited organizations that were identified as uniquely connected to the OY population.

*“Honestly...word of mouth...has been our best recruitment tool. We do very little recruitment or advertising and we end up with more kids than we know what to do with. If we get a youth in our program and they have gotten something out of it, they tell their friends. That has more weight.”*

– Key informant interviewee

Figure 15: How OY become connected to surveyed organizations (N=44)<sup>1</sup>



In interviews, providers outlined numerous promising practices to best reach out to and serve OY, including utilizing crossover recruiting from other programs offered at the same facility (e.g., if an OY is sentenced to a DUI class, he or she might be recruited into a GED program at the same organization), social media or word of mouth.

Other practitioners spoke about the values of going to where OY are, such as street outreach and having drop-in center hours.

Overall, effective outreach appears to involve the collaboration with OY and youth peers, whether for word-of-mouth, or knowing where to go for direct “street outreach.” If Denver organizations and agencies can work together to share their best practices, and connect and improve referral sources, more OY can be presented with opportunities for future success.

In sum, this findings section has summarized existing research and an analysis of original data collected for this report. First, the definitional, demographic and other key characteristics of OY were discussed, providing a profile of OY both nationally and in Denver. As a part of this profile, six important subgroups of youth who may be at a higher risk to become OY were identified, including youth who are or have been in foster care, are homeless, are immigrants, identity as LGBT, have been in the juvenile/criminal justice system, or are parenting. Second, this section included a subsection dedicated to describing and publishing the voices of the Denver OY who participated in data collection efforts for this report, documenting their demographic characteristics and some of the life situations they have experienced, in hopes of painting a vivid picture of the realities of life for the diverse OY who seek services in Denver. Third, this section identified the promising practices of organizations currently serving OY and detailed three pathways—education, employment, and basic needs/support services—for OY in Denver. Fourth and finally, this section described networks and systems that could be built to better serve local OY, including documenting barriers faced by OY and OY-serving organizations.

*“Trying to tap into any place that youth might want to be [is our outreach]. We have drop-in hours at Urban Peak, we go to homeless shelters and Rainbow Alley, [we do] street outreach on 16th Street Mall with Stand Up for Kids, we go to court, [and] we partner with diversion...to connect with as many kids as possible.”*

– Key informant interviewee

## Recommendations for the Future

*"[Opportunity youth] represent enormous untapped potential for our society [and] start out life with big dreams that include graduating from college. Notwithstanding challenging life circumstances, including living in poverty, they remain optimistic about their futures and believe they will achieve their goals in life. They accept responsibility for their decisions, but also yearn for support along what they hope will be a road to opportunity. Our society often treats them as problems to be addressed, but their voices show that they are potential to be fulfilled and can become key leaders in our society if given a chance." (Powell & Powell, 2012)*

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Despite the challenges that Denver OY experience on their pathways toward academic and economic success, OY—as their name suggests—embody an opportunity for successful lives. Opportunity youth represent a diverse group of young individuals who, for one reason or another, have become disconnected from education systems and the job market. Indeed, findings from this environmental scan indicate that certain communities in Denver County (e.g., Globeville, Montbello, North Capitol Hill, Westwood) may be at greater risk for OY prevalence, while specific subgroups of youth (e.g., foster youth, homeless, immigrants, LGBT) may be at increased risk for becoming OY.

As one step toward better serving this population, this section outlines *eight actionable recommendations* that were developed from a synthesis of existing data and original research collected for this project on OY in Denver County. These recommendations may help the OY Collaborative to promote promising practices and strengthen the existing systems. Each recommendation is described in more detail in this section.

### 1. Develop shared vision, metrics and measures

The environmental scan revealed a large number of organizations that are serving OY, either as a specific focused population or simply as part of their larger body of work. These organizations provide myriad services, including education, employment and support services. There is a great opportunity to leverage and align the work of the Denver-area OY-serving organizations by developing a shared vision of the ultimate outcomes of their primary activities as well as metrics and measures by which success will be measured. The OY Collaborative, composed of many critical systems and organizations serving OY, is in a key position in the short term (within a year) to convene the players to develop a shared vision of a future for OY in Denver.

Over the longer term (one to three years), the OY Collaborative should convene all connected organizations to establish agreement on metrics and measures that can be used to measure progress and success, building on the successful shared indicators work that is already being led by OY Collaborative partners such as Mile High United Way and The Piton Foundation.



## 2. Create an OY provider network

Currently in Denver, many organizations and systems provide services to OY, yet they are not formally connected to each other. The provider surveys demonstrated that despite the fact that many providers do make referrals to others, most make referrals to a fairly limited set of organizations and may be unaware of other organizations offering complementary programs and services. This lack of connection discourages coordination, which results in many OY not having access to available supports and services they might need for success.

To mediate this need, in the short term, JVA recommends that the OY Collaborative further develop the crosswalk initiated through the environmental scan to help existing OY providers understand who else is providing services, what services they are providing and how they can leverage their respective strengths. Convening the groups that responded to the survey could be an important first step. A next step could be conducting a social network analysis of organizations providing services to OY to identify existing connections, relationship strengths, and nodes or hubs of services.

In the longer term, JVA recommends establishment of an OY network, composed of the following elements:

- **Multiple points of entry into a single system** of OY support for education and employment pathways, as well as additional supportive services. This system can be connected virtually to ensure providers understand entry points and can make relevant referrals, and savvy case managers can assist youth with navigation through the system.
- **Formalized linkages through interagency agreements** of organizations, agencies and systems serving OY, paying attention to building the network so a full array of services are available to OY. Network participants would agree to:
  - **Use a common online application and client records system**, with requisite confidentiality built in, so that as youth are entered into the network system, their information and progress can be shared across all providers and systems they interact with.
  - **Adopt best and promising practices**, and participate in network-sponsored training on best practices with OY (such as trauma-informed care).
  - **Hire knowledgeable and experienced youth-friendly staff** that can successfully engage youth into education and workforce pathways and serve as caring role models, mentors and supports. The potential for former OY employment and peer mentorship can be leveraged here.
  - **Track outcomes and evaluate the longitudinal impact of programming** on OY, through common metrics and measurements, and shared data.

## 3. Connect youth to "satellite hubs" via engaged staff and an OY-centered focus

JVA recommends a series of strategies to "bridge the last mile" of OY to the coordinated network system described above. These strategies would include:



- **Linking a series of physical satellite sites to connect to the network hub.** The environmental scan showed that OY are dispersed over vast geographic areas in Denver, and that some communities have significantly higher percentages of OY than others. Satellite sites will address this geographic diversity and the desire of the youth in focus groups to connect to resources through hubs throughout the city where they could access resources, connect to supportive adults and peers, and feel safe. The idea of using the map in Figure 1 (and JVA's map in Figure 2) as a starting place for outreach is aligned with Jobs for the Future's Asset Mapping Memo (The Aspen Institute, 2014).
- **Offering holistic services able to effectively address multiple OY risk factors.** As was discovered in the environmental scan, OY are facing multiple challenges that affect their ability to enter and successfully navigate through education and workforce pathways. As such, it is suggested that the satellite sites recommended above incorporate:
  - **Wraparound resources and services** that focus on housing, job training, education, mentoring and case management. Each satellite site should be able to tap into all of the resources available through the network, and essentially function as a physical place where any OY can obtain assistance with basic support services, educational opportunities and/or career guidance.
  - **Strategic use of organizations already providing services to OY**, placed in communities with high concentrations of OY and with high numbers of risk factors for OY.
  - **Formal linkages to organizations that serve specific OY subgroups** (e.g., teen parents, youth who are homeless) to ensure that OY within these subgroups have a clear path to both the network and hub.
- **Specially train staff that can successfully outreach, engage and link to OY networks.** These staff could be located in the satellite sites, potentially shared among agencies and capable of engaging mobile technology to access network services. Staff, caseworkers, outreach workers and program managers should be trained to understand that OY are vulnerable yet fully aware of their struggles, thus staff cultural competency is key for successful engagement.
- **Focusing outreach on identified areas of high OY prevalence.** The environmental scan identified certain Denver neighborhoods and populations that have more OY prevalence (ages 16 through 19). It is recommended that this information be used to create a system for targeted outreach and to ensure that resources are located where they are needed most.
- **Formulating an OY-appealing brand identity** for the network and satellite sites. Youth expressed a high degree of distrust in traditional programs. A cohesive and identifiable identity that appeals to the target population will be integral in directed outreach in neighborhoods with high prevalence of OY and with high risk factors. To ensure that this identity appeals to OY, it is recommended that the youth are involved in the design process.

#### 4. Strengthen connections for OY to the workforce

There are projected shortages in areas that require less than a four-year degree (e.g., construction and trade professions). While apprenticeships and other programs exist to both train and employ youth in these fields, OY expressed a need to access more clear pathways to utilizing these resources and programs. Jobs for the Future also views this as an important future step, and recommends aligning resources with Skills2Compete Colorado (The Aspen Institute, 2014). Recommended steps to increase the connections into the workforce for OY include:

- **Leverage existing relationships** of the OY Collaborative with key players in the workforce arena (both public and private sector) as an immediate first step. Engage them in a conversation on how relationships can be strengthened and formalized to build pipelines of OY to fill apprenticeship, certificate and other programs leading to middle-skill jobs.
- **Better integrate workforce and career prospects into the education system** at an earlier point in the lives of OY. With more and stronger bridges between K–12 education and the workforce, as well as bridges between K–12 education and postsecondary training that is directly tied to the workforce, OY will likely view potential job prospects as more feasible and attainable.
- **Utilize well-known programs and approaches that are already in place** (e.g., CCD, OED, WIA) and expand innovative workforce-training and workforce-placement programs that are currently serving Denver’s OY. This may include ensuring that stackable credentials and flexible learning plans from high school through postsecondary are utilized.
- **Increase the number of jobs for OY that align with market demand.** To ensure OY have access to economic security and access to jobs focused on skilled trades (e.g., electricians, nursing assistants, vocational nurses), manufacturing and production should be increased. Such accessible career paths should be promoted by all OY-serving organizations and agencies. Through increased relationships with such employers, direct job placement and apprenticeships in these fields can be increased as well.

#### 5. Assemble sustainable financing for the system

To address the needs of OY ages 16 to 24, federal and private funding must be more readily and flexibly available to address the span of this age bracket. Current funding cutoffs that are related to age have the adverse effect of necessitating that youth learn new systems and programs that are geared for adults at a critical time when ongoing support and stability are what is needed most. In order to address these needs, the following are recommended:

- **In the short term, map funding available to those of all ages** for various programmatic activities, and use the OY Collaborative and its partners to direct that funding to promising approaches.
- **In the longer term:**
  - **Propose that funding follow outcomes**, thus adopting principles of social impact bonds

- **Advocate for policy changes that allow for payment by service and desired outcomes, instead of age**

## 6. Build the capacity of OY-serving organizations that wish to participate in the network

To ensure that coordination and collaboration, including data sharing, is feasible for organizations and agencies that wish to participate, the following steps are recommended:

- **Ensure all organizations agree upon a set of consistent indicators/metrics** as well as measures and data collection techniques that are feasible for organizations to use and that are capable of tracking longitudinal progress. These may include goals or measurable indicators created by the Mile High Shared Indicators Project (e.g., rates of high school or GED completion; scores of college and career readiness; rates of postsecondary remediation, persistence and completion; and/or rates of youth employment).
- **Ensure all organizations know how to collect, share and utilize data to track and improve outcomes.** Data can only be effective if the organization staff tasked with data collection and sharing understand how to make it feasible and effective in their own organizations. In addition, organizations must be able to interpret data that are collected in a way that allows them to assess progress and explain and improve outcomes. In essence, a “data sharing culture” should be built. Ideally, this network would leverage and increase data sharing efforts that already exist at city and state levels (e.g., Colorado Department of Education, DPS) and include a plan to account for and collect hard-to-collect data (e.g., internships, employment).
- **Best-practice approaches on outreach and ways to engage and serve OY should be shared.** As in any collaboration, making use of the most effective ways to reach OY will be necessary.

## 7. Establish a mechanism to collect ongoing youth input regarding the network and the services provided, and create processes for incorporating this input into ongoing network and program improvement

Youth need to be engaged at all steps of further OY-service collaboration and need to feel that their perspectives and voices are heard and valued. Including the unique perspectives of OY is extremely useful when creating changes in systems, connecting networks together, and ensuring effective outreach and evaluation. Jobs for the Future, in their 2014 Asset Mapping Memo, also emphasizes the importance of garnering youth voice (The Aspen Institute, 2014). Youth can be involved through the following recommendations:

- **Create opportunities for youth leadership** both on a volunteer basis and for paid work experiences, which will allow OY to gain alternate perspectives of education and employment, give them a chance to become peer leaders, link leadership directly to desired outcomes and increase work experience.
  - **Form a youth council** that can inform the OY Collaborative Steering Committee. Creating such outlets provides opportunities for youth to engage in leadership. Such outlets for youth leadership can help OY reengage in the systems around them, and has the benefit of continuously improving systems using the most direct source of input.

- **Establish youth involvement in program evaluation.** Engaging youth in evaluation will ensure that what is of value to key leaders and the OY Collaborative is of value to the youth as well. Youth should be able to contribute to the following evaluation needs:
  - **Ensuring that programs are effectively engaging OY and meeting their needs.** Programs need to be relevant, compelling, culturally competent, and linked to ongoing and supportive relationships, as a means of garnering the attention of OY and ensuring that they are positively engaged. Youth should have an outlet for evaluating the organizations they work with and determining the outcomes these programs will be measured by.
  - **Communicating the outcomes OY desire to reach** and what their personal measure of success looks like in order to ensure programs are placing OY on the correct “pathway,” and to ensure the most relevant outcomes are being tracked.

### 8. Advocate for policy measures that support the recommendations above

Public policy begins with changing existing policies and creating policies where there are none. It should include not only legislative action, but also target policies enacted by others that impact opportunity youth. We recommend the following regarding public policy action:

- **Convene and inform policy makers regarding the results of the work of the OY Collaborative,** the JVA OY scan and the mapping conducted by Jobs for the Future. This includes a list of policy recommendations and considerations posed by those interviewed through the environmental scan.
- **Identify existing legislative policies that support opportunity youth** and those that pose obstacles to their self-sufficiency (e.g., immigration, funding, program eligibility criteria, etc.).
  - **Policies that focus on expanded funding for OY services** across education, employment and basic needs services that are integral to OY success. These funding streams should not be limited to age brackets (e.g., 16–21); rather, funding should encompass all ages of OY.
  - **Policies that ensure undocumented youth have full access to education, workforce and supportive services organizations.** Working through the limitations that undocumented OY face (whether due to immigration status or other reasons) will greatly address the needs of Denver’s OY.
- **Identify policies of major institutions such as funders, state and city agencies, nonprofit organizations,** etc. whose policies affect OY. For example, discuss with Mile High United Way how its 2-1-1 information and referral system could best pinpoint services for OY.
- **Inform and educate the community about policies that affect OY.** For example, public education funding does not exist for youth older than 20 years; encourage voters to support legislation that changes education funding.

These recommendations should be part of an overall, multi-sector public awareness ‘call to action’ campaign. We recognize that ‘opportunity youth’ is a recent addition to the public

lexicon. It is just now emerging in the health and human services and nonprofit arenas. The OYC and its partners must ensure that opportunity youth and their importance to economic well-being is as recognizable and important to the public as the campaign to eliminate homelessness, the importance of high quality early childhood education, reducing childhood obesity, and other such widely accepted social issues.

In sum, these eight recommendations encourage the development of a shared vision and a coordinated network of providers and services, aim to build the capacity of providers within the system and to stimulate the leadership of OY served, and seek to secure both financing and policy measures to support the system. In making these comprehensive recommendations, JVA seeks to provide a framework that can assist the OY Collaborative in its goal of promoting promising practices, strengthening and sustaining existing systems, and, ultimately, better serve Denver's opportunity youth.

### Closing Remarks

Given their sizeable population in Denver, OY present an enormous opportunity for positive social transformation and economic growth. To fully harness this opportunity, the Denver community must come together to create a system that maximizes OY access to the services that already exist and fills the gaps for services that are still needed. Based on the research herein, there is reason to believe that OY will respond positively to an improved system of coordinated and wraparound services and will use such a system to succeed in life. While the idea of collective impact on OY is relatively new in Denver, there is sufficient momentum both nationally and locally to make it both viable and timely.

In closing, creating partnerships among organizations that work with OY, and adding more connecting opportunities in a Collective Impact approach, may best harness the extraordinary services that already exist and help even more OY reach their potential. As such, it is our hope that this report will serve as a resource for informing future strategic conversations focused on making collaborative decisions on foundational programs, developing pathways for OY, identifying priority OY populations, and accessing and leveraging state and city systems to track OY.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: List of Key Informant Interviewees

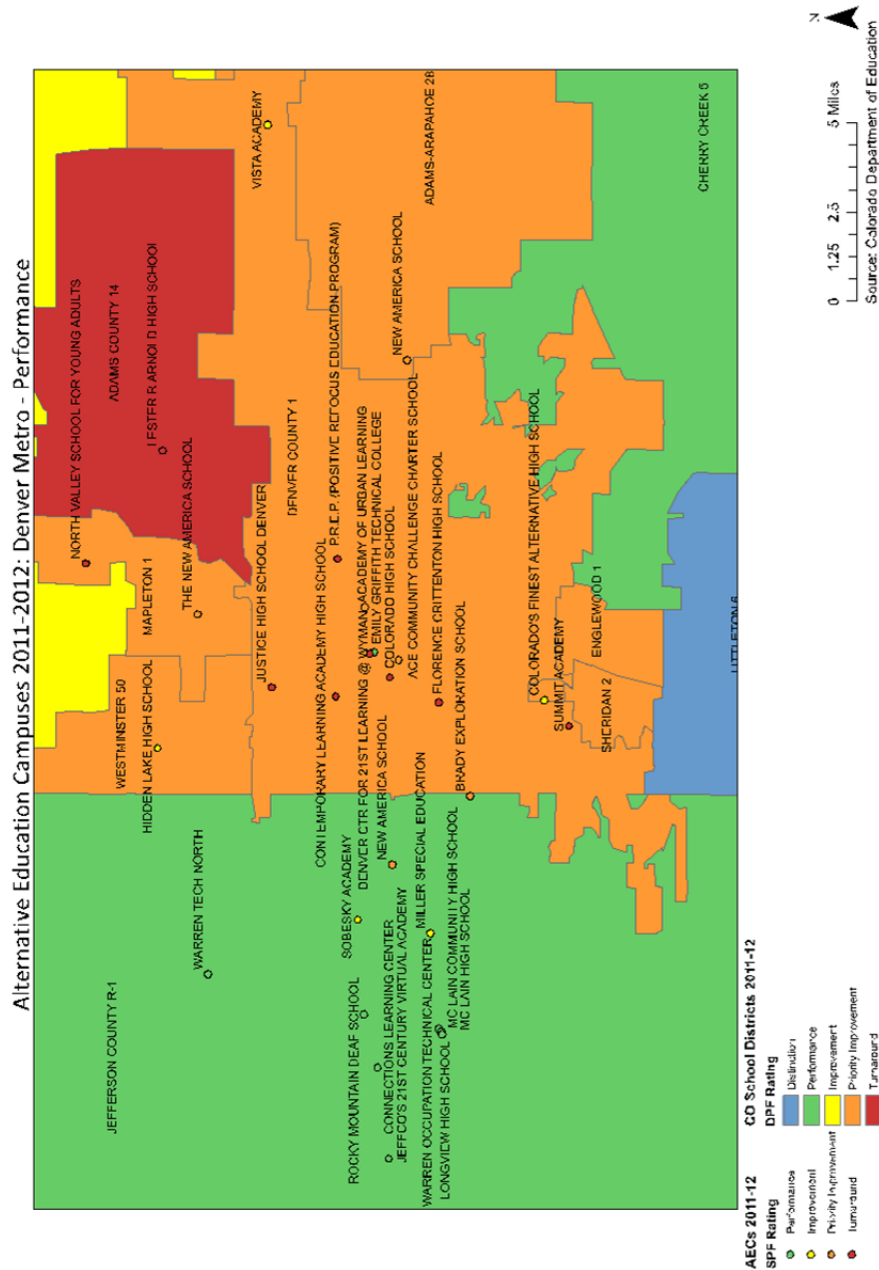
Table 5: List of key informant interviews

<b>Cory Barrett</b>	Program Director, The GLBT Community Center of Colorado
<b>Kathryn Boogaard</b>	Director of Student Engagement, Denver Public Schools
<b>Kelly Causey</b>	Executive Director, Mile High Youth Corps
<b>Eliska Champagne-Veselka</b>	Senior Program Manager of YouthBuild, Mile High Youth Corps
<b>Kippi Clausen</b>	Founder, Unfolding Directions
<b>Sheree Conyers</b>	State Coordination–Foster Care Education, Colorado Department of Education
<b>Kristi Esbenshade</b>	Director of Youth Services, Goodwill Industries
<b>Laurie Harvey</b>	Executive Director, Center for Work Employment and Education
<b>Mary Hendricks</b>	Director of Career Development Services, Goodwill Industries
<b>Anne Kleinkopf</b>	Director of Community Renewal, Denver Inner City Parish
<b>Tom Lepak</b>	Senior Vice President, Casey Industrial
<b>Judith Martinez</b>	Director, Office of Dropout Prevention and Student Engagement, Colorado Department of Education
<b>Brigid McRaith</b>	Regional Director, Mile High Youth Corps
<b>Katie Neal</b>	Director of Programs, Colorado Youth for a Change
<b>Jessica Newman</b>	Principal, West Career Academy, Denver Public Schools
<b>Lynne Picard</b>	Resident & Community Services Program Manager, Denver Housing Authority
<b>Joe Saboe</b>	Post-Secondary Pathways Manager, Denver Public Schools
<b>Joy Smith</b>	Principal, Aurora Futures Academy
<b>Marilyn Smith</b>	Developmental Education Coordinator, Colorado Community College System
<b>Chris Telk</b>	Executive Director, Colorado Youth for a Change
<b>Joseph Troyer</b>	Program Manager of ACE Program, Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver
<b>Mary Zanotti</b>	Associate Director, Colorado Youth for a Change

## Appendix B: Opportunity Youth Service Provider Crosswalk

Provided at the end of this report.

## Appendix C: Alternative Education Campuses (2011–2012)



From The Piton Foundation: [Map of Denver AECs with Performance Ratings](#)

## Appendix D: Organizations Included in Data Collection

There were five organizations that participated in site visits and 53 organizations that participated in the survey. This section gives a brief overview of the organizations that were selected for site visits and describes the OY participants at each organization.

### **Colorado Work Education and Employment (CWEE): Six OY Surveyed**

CWEE's main goal is to enable single parents on TANF to gain confidence, job skills and a career. The program offers a model for wraparound services and alternate pathways to education and the workforce, providing GED training, computer training, workforce development, and on-the-job support. The majority of OY at CWEE during JVA's site visit were parents between the ages of 22 and 24. These OY reported dropping out of school, being homeless, being on probation and formerly being in foster care. One OY asserted that affordable housing for single mothers should be a priority. Many OY shared that they work hard for themselves and their children's futures, and many expressed a strong desire to be at CWEE.

### **Colorado Youth for a Change (CYC): Five OY Surveyed**

CYC is one of the few organizations in Denver whose organizational mission specifically targets OY. CYC organization helps youth stay in school and provides dropout recovery to those who are out of school. Because student outreach occurs in schools and dropout recovery takes place in the community at large, OY do not generally visit the CYC offices in Denver. However, for the purposes of the environmental scan, five students served by CYC described their experiences with JVA researchers. As compared to OY at other organizations visited, CYC's group of OY was younger and closer to a GED or diploma. Similar to OY at other organizations, those interviewed at CYC reported being in the foster care system, having criminal records, and being homeless. All OY interviewed at CYC are now in an alternative high school and receive case management. They identified lack of transportation and financial support for transportation as a large barrier in achieving success.

### **Denver Inner City Parish: Five OY Surveyed**

Denver Inner City Parish provides individuals from every age group with wraparound services to get back on their feet and reach self-sufficiency. With a grant from WAGEES (Work and Gain Education and Employment Skills), Inner City Parish provides services to OY ages 18–24 to assist with GEDs, counseling and employment opportunities. During the site visit to Inner City Parish, JVA researchers met with five OY parents between 18–24 years of age who were taking an intensive parenting class. The OY reported challenges such as having dropped out of school, probation, having criminal records, and/or being homeless. Many of the OY at Inner City Parish expressed a desire for more fun and free things to do with their children around Denver.

### **Mile High Youth Corps (MHYC): Four OY Surveyed**

Mile High Youth Corps (MHYC) is another flagship organization targeting OY in Denver. OY apply to MHYC and are rigorously vetted before being accepted for enrollment in MHYC's intensive nine-month program where they learn job skills in construction and get paid to work toward

their GED or diploma concurrently. Although MHYC is a selective program that only serves a small group of young people, those OY who are enrolled receive extensive resources to promote successful outcomes.

During the site visit, JVA researchers met with four OY who were approximately four months into the MHYC program. These OY reported experiencing massive internal change as a result of MHYC. Indeed, these OY—somewhat older than other OY and with children—showed a determination to change their lives and achieve their goals in employment (e.g., becoming an ultrasound technician), education (e.g., graduate college), and personal lives (e.g., become mature guides for their children). Although many of MHYC’s OY described the inherent challenges of being a teen parent, having criminal records, living in difficult neighborhoods, and being a member of a minority population, those who were interviewed seemed hopeful about their futures.

### **West Career Academy: Eighteen OY Surveyed**

West Career Academy is a DPS Intensive Pathways school, located within the West High School building, which serves students who are under credit and/or at risk to drop out. West Career Academy’s tightly knit staff serves a population of approximately 90 students. The school has strong relationships with Goodwill Industries to provide job-training services and with Youth on Record for creative education. Although the students were in the younger category of OY (ages 16–18), many were working part time in addition to going to school and were receiving a range of supportive service guidance from the staff.

## Appendix E: Survey Respondents

Table 6: List of survey respondents

1. A Promising Future
2. Academy of Urban Learning
3. Asian Pacific Development Center
4. Bayaud Enterprises, Inc.
5. CDHS
6. City and County of Denver, Office of Economic Development Workforce Development Youth Services
7. Colorado Anti-Violence Program (youth project: Branching Seedz of Resistance)
8. Colorado CASA
9. Colorado Department of Education
10. Colorado Department of Human Services
11. Colorado High School Charter
12. Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition
13. Colorado Latino Leadership Advocacy and Research Organization (CLLARO)
14. Colorado UpLift
15. Colorado Youth for a Change
16. Community Building Partnership for Youth in Transition AmeriCorps
17. Community Reentry Project
18. Compassion Road Academy
19. Denver Housing Authority
20. Denver Human Services
21. Denver Indian Family Resource Center
22. Denver Indian Health and Family Services
23. Denver Inner City Parish
24. Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce
25. Denver Office of Economic Development—Youth Services
26. Denver Online High School
27. Denver's Road Home
28. Family Resource Center Association
29. Family Tree, Inc.
30. Goodwill Industries of Denver
31. GRASP
32. Interagency Prevention Systems for Children and Youth, Office of Children, Youth and Families, CDHS
33. Kappa League
34. Lutheran Family Services, Rocky Mountains
35. Mi Casa Resource Center
36. Mile High Behavioral Healthcare
37. Mile High Youth Corps
38. Project VOYCE (Voices of Youth Changing Education)
39. Project WISE
40. Save Our Youth, Inc.
41. Servicios de la Raza
42. The Gathering Place
43. The GLBT Community Center of Colorado—Rainbow Alley
44. The Legal Center for People with Disabilities and Older People
45. University of Colorado
46. Volunteers of America

- |                                 |
|---------------------------------|
| 47. VSA Colorado/Access Gallery |
| 48. Warren Village              |
| 49. YESS Institute              |

## Appendix F: More Frequently Mentioned Organizations in Provider Survey

Table 7: More frequently mentioned organizations by survey respondents (ranked from highest to lowest)<sup>9</sup>

Organization Name
1. Urban Peak
2. Denver Public Schools
3. Colorado Youth for Change
4. Mile High United Way
5. Community College of Denver
6. Emily Griffith Technical College
7. Bayaud Enterprises
8. Goodwill Industries
9. Colorado Workforce Centers
10. Denver Housing Authority
11. Servicios de la Raza
12. Colorado Community College System
13. Metro State University
14. NULITES (Urban League of Metro Denver) In-House School Partner
15. Mile High Youth Corps
16. YESS Institute
17. Northwest Coalition
18. Chafee Program
19. Volunteers of America
20. Children's Hospital Colorado
21. Denver Indian Center
22. Mi Casa Resource Center
23. Vocational Rehabilitation
24. Denver Rescue Mission
25. AJUA (Asociación de Jovenes Unidos en Acción)
26. Comitis Crisis Center
27. GRASP (Gang Rescue and Support Project)
28. MCPN (Metro Community Provider Network)
29. Office of Economic Development Workforce
30. Kappa Alpha Psi

<sup>9</sup> Only organizations that were mentioned at least twice were included in this list.



31. Colorado Department of Education
32. Colorado Department of Human Services
33. Colorado Uplift
34. Denver Parks and Recreation
35. Florence Crittenton High School
36. Rocky Mountain Youth Housing
37. Warren Village
38. Community College of Aurora
39. Mental Health Center of Denver
40. Third Way Center

### Appendix G: Other Organizations that Serve Opportunity Youth Named in the Survey<sup>10</sup>

Organization Name
1. A La Source Refuge Services
2. A+ Denver
3. Access Housing
4. Adams County Youth Initiative
5. Adult Learning Source
6. Art from Ashes
7. ArtReach
8. Arts Street
9. Arrupe Jesuit High School
10. Aspen Challenge
11. Attention Homes
12. Aurora Community Connections
13. Aurora Mentoring Collaborative
14. Aurora Police Department
15. Aurora Public Schools
16. Aurora SANTOS Manzanola
17. Aurora Youth Options
18. Bessie's Hope
19. Big City Mountaineers
20. Boys and Girls Clubs of Metro Denver

<sup>10</sup> These organizations were only mentioned once when providers were asked about the most promising organizations that serve OY, most frequently utilized services, or organizations to which providers refer OY. The other organizations that were mentioned more than once are in Appendix H.

21. Bridging the Gap
22. Carbondale Compañeros Durango
23. CCN
24. ChalkBeat
25. Cherry Creek Presbyterian Church
26. City and County of Denver—Youth Opportunity Department
27. City of Denver Flagship Center College Summit
28. Colorado Building and Construction Trades Council
29. Colorado Children's Campaign
30. Colorado Coalition for the Homeless
31. Colorado Commits to Kids
32. Colorado County Departments of Human Services
33. Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition
34. Colorado Cross Disability Coalition
35. Colorado Department of Corrections
36. Colorado Health Foundation
37. Colorado High School Charter
38. Colorado Legacy Foundation
39. Colorado Legal
40. Colorado Mentoring Collaborative
41. Colorado State University-Pueblo
42. Colorado WIN Partners
43. Colorado Youth At Risk
44. Colorado Youth Matter
45. Comcast
46. Community College of Denver
47. Community Reach Center
48. Creative Strategies for Change
49. Denver County Child Welfare
50. Denver County Jail
51. Denver Crisis Center
52. Denver Downtown Detention Center
53. Denver Estrellas supported by the Rural Community Resource Center
54. Denver Indian Center Jobs
55. Denver Inner City Parish
56. Denver Kids
57. Denver Parks and Recreation
58. Denver Probation Office
59. Denver Street School
60. Denver Workforce Centers
61. Denver's Road Home
62. Division of Housing
63. Donnell Kay Foundation

64. Dress for Success
65. East Side Clinic Refugee Health Services
66. Emily Griffith Opportunity School (EGOS)
67. Escuela Tlatelolco
68. Estrellas Yuma
69. Family Crisis Center
70. First Bank
71. Flagship Help Center
72. Forward Steps
73. Foster Care Alumni
74. Friends of Man
75. Front Range School Districts
76. George Washington High School
77. Girl Scouts
78. Governors Summer Job Hunt
79. GrowHaus
80. HAP Montrose
81. Hispanic Affairs Project Montrose
82. Hunger Free CO
83. I Have a DREAM® Foundation Boulder
84. Impact Empowerment Group
85. International Peace Initiatives
86. Jack and Jill
87. Jobs for the Future
88. Juvenile Assessment Center
89. Juvenile courts
90. Latino Coalition/WAGEES
91. Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains
92. Maternal Health Center of Denver
93. Metro CareRing
94. Mrachek Middle school
95. National CASA Association
96. New America School (Lowry Lakewood and Denver Campuses)
97. New Genesis
98. North Littleton Promise
99. One Sight Program
100. P.U.S.H. Academy
101. PACE
102. Prax(us)
103. Project Uplift
104. Project Voice
105. Project WISE
106. Rainbow Alley

107. Regional Transportation District (RTD)
108. Resource Center Boulder
109. Rocky Mountain Children's Law Center
110. Senator Mike Johnston's Office
111. Stand for Children
112. Teach for America
113. TEENS Inc.
114. Tennyson Center
115. The Blue Bench (Formerly RAAP)
116. The Bridge Project
117. The Gathering Place
118. True Light Baptist
119. University Hospital for Medical Care
120. University of Northern Colorado
121. U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement
122. Voices of Immigrant Children for Education Equality (VOICE) Boulder
123. Warriors Organizing and Rising in Denver (WORD)
124. WestEd American Institutes of Research
125. Women's Bean Project
126. Women's Forum Foundation Educational Opportunity Center
127. Women's Independence Scholarship Program
128. Work Options for Women
129. Youth Biz
130. Youth on Record

## Appendix H: Outcome and Data-Tracking Charts from Provider Survey

Figure 16: Primary ways surveyed organizations track outcomes (N=42)

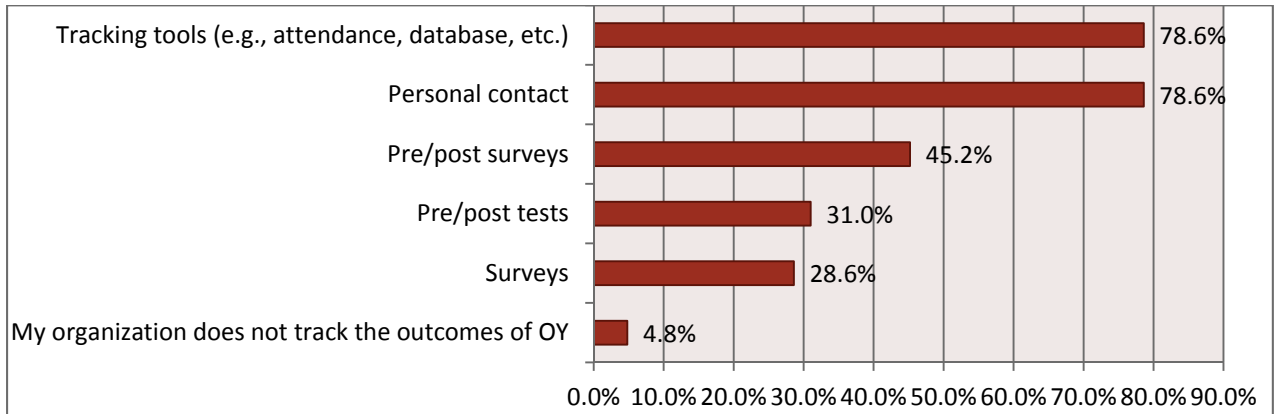


Figure 17: Outcomes tracked for OY by survey respondents (N=41)

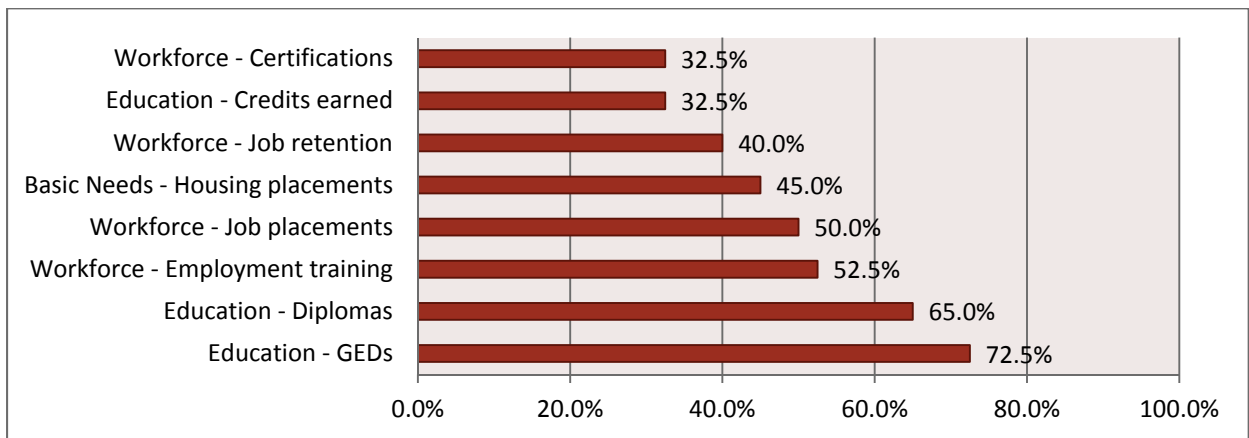
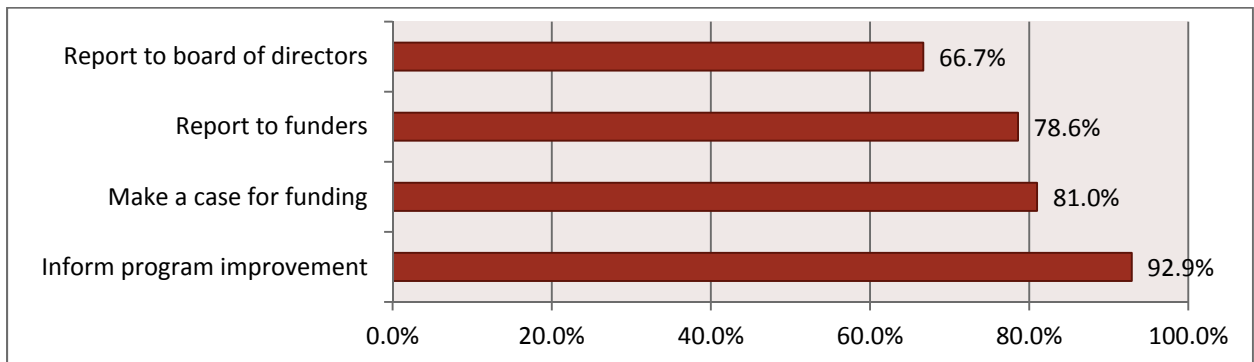


Figure 18: Primary ways surveyed organizations use their data (overall) (N=43)



## **Appendix B: Opportunity Youth Service Provider Crosswalk**

	Academy of Urban Learning	Asian Pacific Development Center	Bayaud Enterprises	City & County of Denver, Office of Economic Development/ Workforce/ Youth Services	CLLARO	Colorado Anti-Violence Program	Colorado CASA	Colorado Department of Education	Colorado Department of Human Services
<b>Ages of OY Served</b>	16-18	16-18	19-24	16-21	19-21 primarily	16-24	16-21	16-18	16-24
<b>Number of OY Served/Month</b>	101-150	51-100	51-100	101-150	0-50	0-50	Greater than 300	Greater than 300 (50k annually)	Greater than 300
<b>Geographic Location</b>	2417 West 29th Ave., Denver, Colorado 80211	1537 Alton Street, Aurora, CO 80010	333 West Bayaud Avenue, Denver, CO 80223	201 West Colfax Ave., #907, Denver, CO 80202	309 West 1st Ave., Denver, CO 80223	04 Elati Street, Denver, CO 80223	1660 South Albion Street, Suite 309, Denver, CO 80222	201 East Colfax Ave., Denver, CO 80203	4055 South Lowell Blvd., Denver, CO 80236
<b>Major Funding Sources</b>	State per pupil funding grants, contributions	No response	Community Development Block Grant, Community Development Service Grant, private donors	Federal, state and local general funds		Liberty Hill Queer Youth Fund, CDPHE, Sexual Violence Prevention, Astraea, Third Wave Foundation, individual donors	State funding, local foundations, national CASA association.	State and federal funding through Health and Human Services and Education. Funds also received through MHUW and the Morgridge Foundation.	State and federal governments
<b>Population of OY Served (Characteristics):</b>									
<b>Race:</b>									
African American	x		x	x		x	x		x
Asian American		x	x	x		x	x		x
Caucasian	x		x	x		x	x		x
Latino/a	x		x	x	x	x	x		x
Indian	x		x	x		x	x		x
Other						x	x		x
Pacific Islander		x	x			x	x	x	x
Health Status:									
Behavioral Health		x	x	x					x
Learning Disabled			x	x			x	x	x
Mental Health									
Physically Disabled			x				x		x
Substance Use/Abuse			x	x			x		x
<b>Gender:</b>									
A-Gender									
Female	x	x	x	x		x	x		x
Male	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
Other						x	x		
Transgender						x			
<b>Sexual Orientation:</b>									
LGBQ	x			x		x	x		x
Straight	x			x		x			x
<b>Justice System:</b>									
Adjudicated Youth	x		x	x			x		x
Foster Youth	x		x	x				x	x
Gang Activity	x						x		x
Incarcerated	x						x		x
<b>Institutional Residence Record</b>									
Record	x		x	x			x	x	x
<b>Parenting:</b>									
Father	x						x		x
Mother	x			x			x		x
Pregnant	x			x			x		x
<b>Immigration Status:</b>									
First Generation		x	x	x	x		x		x
Immigrant		x	x		x				x
Refugee		x	x						x
Undocumented		x				x			x
<b>Miscellaneous:</b>									
Family Caregiver Responsibilities		x					x		x
<b>Service Provided:</b>									
Mentoring		x	x	x			x		
Drop-In Center									
Training					x				
Social Training	x	x	x	x			x		x
Literacy Training	x	x	x	x			x		
Job Placement	x			x					x
Partnerships with Employers				x					
Job Training									
Workforce Training			x	x					x
Workforce Retention			x	x					x
Education									
Alternative Education Center	x							x	x
Remediation								x	
Enrollment Assistance				x					
Tutoring		x						x	
Health									
Behavioral Health		x	x						x
Medical Care		x	x						
Mental Health									
Substance Abuse	x								x
Government Housing	x								
Non-Government Housing									
Department of Corrections							x		
Legal		x					x		
Jail							x		
Financial Assistance									
Food Assistance	x	x	x						x
Physical Activity									
Other									
Advocacy		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Governance							x	x	x
<b>How OY most often find the organization</b>	Outreach, Referrals, Drop-in	Outreach, Referrals, Drop-in	Outreach, Referrals, Drop-in	Outreach, Referrals	Outreach			Outreach, Referrals, Schools and districts	Referrals

	Colorado Latino Leadership Advocacy and Research Organization (CLARO)	Colorado Uplift	Colorado Youth for a Change	Community Building Partnership for Youth in Transition AmeriCorps	Community Re-Entry Project (City of Denver)	Denver Charter School: Colorado High School Charter	Denver Human Services	Denver Housing Authority	Denver Indian Family Resource Center
<b>Ages of OY Served</b>	19-21		16-21	16-18	22-24	16-18	19-21	19-21	16-18
<b>Number of OY Served/Month</b>	0-50		Greater than 300	101-150	0-50	101-150	0-50	51-100	No Response
<b>Geographic Location</b>	309 West 1st Avenue, Denver, CO 80223	3914 King St, Denver, CO 80211	2931 West 25th Avenue #201, Denver, CO 80211	1200 Federal Boulevard, Denver, CO 80204	655 Broadway, Denver, CO, 80203	1175 Osage Street, Suite 100, Denver, CO 80204	1200 Federal Blvd, Denver, CO 80204 (1 of 3)	777 Grant St #4 Denver, CO	1633 Fillmore Street, GL1, Denver, CO 80206
<b>Major Funding Sources</b>	Leadership program primarily funded by NCLR leadership grants/corporate sponsorship	Privately funded by individuals, foundations and corporations	School districts, foundations	Serve Colorado—Governor's Commission on Community Service, Community Services Block Grant, Department of Human Services	Crime Prevention and Control Commission of the City and County of Denver	State of Colorado	State and federal	Youth WIA funds, fee for service, academies, variety of grant funding	None
<b>Population of OY Served (Characteristics):</b>									
<b>Race:</b>									
African American			x	x	x	x		x	
Asian American			x					x	
Caucasian			x		x			x	
Latino/a	x		x	x	x	x		x	
Indian			x					x	
Other			x						x
Pacific Islander									
<b>Health Status:</b>									
Behavioral Health				x			x		
Learning Disabled						x		x	
Mental Health									
Physically Disabled									
Substance Use/Abuse					x	x	x	x	
<b>Gender:</b>									
A-Gender									
Female			x			x	x	x	
Male			x		x	x	x	x	
Other			x						
Transgender									
<b>Sexual Orientation:</b>									
LGBQ			x	x		x		x	
Straight				x		x		x	
<b>Justice System:</b>									
Adjudicated Youth				x		x		x	
Foster Youth			x	x		x	x		
Gang Activity						x	x	x	
Incarcerated					x				
<b>Institutional Residence Record</b>				x		x	x		
<b>Parenting:</b>									
Father			x		x	x		x	
Mother			x	x		x		x	
Pregnant			x			x		x	
<b>Immigration Status:</b>									
First Generation	x		x	x		x		x	
Immigrant	x			x					
Refugee				x			x		
Undocumented	x		x	x					
<b>Miscellaneous:</b>									
Family Caregiver Responsibilities			x						
<b>Service Provided:</b>									
Mentoring				x		x	x	x	
Drop-In Center				x	x			x	
Training									
Social Training				x	x	x	x	x	
Literacy Training				x	x	x		x	
Job Placement					x		x	x	
Partnerships with Employers				x				x	
Job Training									
Workforce Training				x	x		x	x	
Workforce Retention									
Education									
Alternative Education Center			x	x		x	x	x	
Remediation				x		x		x	
Enrollment Assistance			x	x	x	x	x	x	
Tutoring				x		x		x	
Health									
Behavioral Health						x	x		x
Medical Care									
Mental Health									
Substance Abuse									
Government Housing							x		x
Non-Government Housing							x		
Department of Corrections									
Legal					x				
Jail					x				
Financial Assistance									
Food Assistance					x	x	x	x	
Physical Activity				x					
Other	x								
Advocacy					x	x			
Governance									
<b>How OY most often find the organization</b>	Outreach		Outreach, Referrals	Outreach, Referrals, Drop-in	Referrals, Drop-in	Outreach, Referrals, Drop-in	Referrals, Drop-in	Outreach, Referrals, Drop-in	Drop-in



	Denver Inner City Parish	Denver Online School (@CEC, Mitchell, and Statewide)	Denver Public School Intensive Pathways: Compassion Road	Denver's Road Home	DenverWorks	Family Resource Center	Family Tree	Focus Points Family Resource Center	Goodwill Industries of Denver
<b>Ages of OY Served</b>	16-24	16-18	16-18	16-24	19-24	22-24	16-18	19-24	16-18
<b>Number of OY Served/Month</b>	51-100	0-50	51-100		0-50	0-50	0-50	0-50	Greater than 300
<b>Geographic Location</b>	1212 Mariposa Street, Denver, CO 80204	1350 East 33rd Ave., Denver, CO 80205	1000 Cherokee Street, Denver, CO 80204	1200 Federal Boulevard, Denver, CO 80204	2828 North Speer Blvd., Denver, CO 80211	1750 Humboldt Street, Suite 200, Denver, CO 80220	3805 Marshall Street, Wheat Ridge, CO 80033	2501 East 48th Ave., Denver CO 80216	6850 Federal Blvd., Denver, CO 80221
<b>Major Funding Sources</b>	U.S. Department of Labor, via Latino Coalition; private foundations; individual donors	Colorado Department of Education, Denver Public Schools	Denver Public Schools	Denver Human Services mill levy, fundraising	Latino Coalition—a grant issued to DenverWorks in 2013-2015 specific to 18-24 year olds. Has always served those 18 and older	Colorado Health Foundation CBCAP	Major sources of funding historically WERE: U.S. Health & Human Services Basic Center grant program	Federal grants through the Colorado Department of Education	Grants and self-funding
<b>Population of OY Served (Characteristics):</b>									
<b>Race:</b>									
African American	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Asian American									
Caucasian	x	x		x			x	x	
Latino/a	x	x	x		x	x		x	x
Indian	x					x			
Other	x	x							
Pacific Islander									
<b>Health Status:</b>									
Behavioral Health	x	x	x				x		
Learning Disabled	x		x				x		
Mental Health									
Physically Disabled									
Substance Use/Abuse	x	x	x		x				
<b>Gender:</b>									
A-Gender									
Female	x	x		x	x	x	x		
Male	x	x		x	x		x		
Other	x	x		x					
Transgender									
<b>Sexual Orientation:</b>									
LGBQ		x	x	x			x		
Straight			x	x			x		
<b>Justice System:</b>									
Adjudicated Youth	x		x		x		x		
Foster Youth			x						
Gang Activity	x		x		x				
Incarcerated	x				x				
Institutional Residence Record	x		x		x			x	
<b>Parenting:</b>									
Father	x	x	x		x	x			
Mother	x	x	x		x	x			x
Pregnant	x	x	x			x			
<b>Immigration Status:</b>									
First Generation	x	x	x			x			x
Immigrant	x	x				x			
Refugee			x						x
Undocumented	x	x	x						
<b>Miscellaneous:</b>									
Family Caregiver Responsibilities	x				x	x			
<b>Service Provided:</b>									
Mentoring	x		x		x	x			
Drop-In Center				x	x				
Training									
Social Training	x		x		x	x	x		x
Literacy Training	x		x		x	x	x		x
Job Placement	x			x			x		
Partnerships with Employers					x			x	
Job Training					x				
Workforce Training	x		x		x	x			
Workforce Retention	x				x				
Education									
Alternative Education Center	x		x				x	x	x
Remediation	x				x				
Enrollment Assistance	x		x		x	x			
Tutoring	x		x					x	
Health									
Behavioral Health	x		x		x		x		
Medical Care						x	x		
Mental Health									
Substance Abuse	x		x		x				
Government Housing									
Non-Government Housing	x				x				
Department of Corrections			x		x				
Legal									
Jail					x				
Financial Assistance									
Food Assistance	x		x	x	x	x	x		
Physical Activity			x		x	x			
Other	Department of corrections	x							
Advocacy			x		x				
Governance				x					
<b>How OY most often find the organization</b>	Outreach, Referrals, Drop-in	Referrals, Drop-in, Self advocacy	Outreach, Referrals, Drop-in	Outreach, Referrals	Outreach, Referrals, Drop-in	Referrals, Drop-in	Outreach, Drop-in	Outreach, Referrals, Drop-in	Referrals

	Kappa League	Legal Center for Persons with Disabilities	Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains	Mi Casa Resource Center	Mile High Behavioral Healthcare	Mile High Youth Corps/Youth Build	Office of Children, Youth, and Family Services (CDHS)	Project Voyce	Project WISE
<b>Ages of OY Served</b>	16-18	16-18	16-24	16-18	All	16-24	16-18	16-24	19-24
<b>Number of OY Served/Month</b>	101-150	0-50	0-50	0-50	51-100	51-100	Greater than 300	151-200	0-50
<b>Geographic Location</b>	2160 Downing Street, Denver, CO 80205	455 Sherman Street, Suite 130, Denver, CO 80203	363 South Harlan Street, Suite 200, Denver, CO 80226	360 Acoma Street, Denver, CO 80223	655 Broadway, #200, Denver, CO 80203	1801 Federal Blvd., Denver, CO 80204	1575 Sherman Street, Denver, CO	2900 Downing Street, Denver, CO 80205	1301 Kalamath Street, Denver CO 80204
<b>Major Funding Sources</b>	The members of the Alumni Fraternity Chapter and Kappa League's nonprofit foundation	U.S. Department of Education and U. S. Department of Health and Human Services	Mile High United Way; state and federal contracts	21st Century Learning Centers, Community Development Block Grant, foundations	SAMSHA, CDC, U.S. Administration on Families and Children, City and County of Denver, SIGNAL	Government entities provide the most significant support— foundations, corporations, private individuals at a smaller fraction		Foundations, social enterprise, individual and corporate donations, and state grants.	None
<b>Population of OY Served (Characteristics):</b>									
<b>Race:</b>									
African American	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
Asian American					x	x	x		
Caucasian		x	x		x	x	x		
Latino/a		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Indian			x		x	x	x		
Other					x	x	x		
Pacific Islander					x	x	x	x	x
<b>Health Status:</b>									
Behavioral Health		x	x		x	x	x		x
Learning Disabled		x			x	x	x		
Mental Health									
Physically Disabled		x			x		x		
Substance Use/Abuse			x		x	x	x		
<b>Gender:</b>									
A-Gender									
Female			x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Male		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Other					x			x	
Transgender									
<b>Sexual Orientation:</b>									
LGBQ			x		x	x	x		
Straight			x			x	x		
<b>Justice System:</b>									
Adjudicated Youth					x	x	x		
Foster Youth						x	x		
Gang Activity					x	x	x	x	
Incarcerated						x	x		
Institutional Residence Record					x	x	x	x	x
<b>Parenting:</b>									
Father					x	x	x		
Mother					x	x	x		x
Pregnant					x		x		x
<b>Immigration Status:</b>									
First Generation			x	x	x	x	x	x	
Immigrant			x	x	x		x	x	
Refugee					x		x	x	
Undocumented			x		x		x	x	
<b>Miscellaneous:</b>									
Family Caregiver Responsibilities			x				x		
<b>Service Provided:</b>									
Mentoring	x				x		x	x	x
Drop-In Center					x		x		
Training									
Social Training	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Literacy Training	x		x		x	x	x	x	
Job Placement			x	x		x	x	x	
Partnerships with Employers						x			
Job Training									
Workforce Training			x	x	x			x	
Workforce Retention				x		x			x
Education									
Alternative Education Center	x					x	x		
Remediation							x		
Enrollment Assistance	x		x				x		
Tutoring				x		x	x	x	
Health									
Behavioral Health			x		x		x		x
Medical Care					x		x		
Mental Health									
Substance Abuse					x		x		
Government Housing							x		
Non-Government Housing					x				
Department of Corrections					x				
Legal		x					x		
Jail					x		x		
Financial Assistance									
Food Assistance					x	x	x		
Physical Activity					x		x		
Other	x					x			
Advocacy		x	x		x		x	x	
Governance							x		
<b>How OY most often find the organization</b>	Outreach, Referrals, Apply	Outreach, Referrals, Parent Contacts the Organization	Referrals	Outreach, Referrals, Drop-in	Outreach, Referrals, Drop-in, All 3; We administer the ACF's Street Outreach Program for Colorado	Outreach, Referrals, Drop-in. We hire them so they submit employment applications.	Child welfare, DYC, or DVP referrals	Outreach, Referrals	Outreach, Referrals

	P.U.S.H Academy	Rainbow Alley (The Center)	Save Our Youth	The Gathering Place	Volunteers of America (VOA)	VSA Colorado	YESS Institute
<b>Ages of OY Served</b>	All	12 – 21	16–24	19–24	16–24	16–24	16–18
<b>Number of OY Served/Month</b>	151–200		Greater than 300	0–50	0–50	0–50	0–50
<b>Geographic Location</b>	4501 Airport Way, Denver CO 80239	1301 East Colfax, Denver, CO	3443 West 23rd Ave., Denver, CO, 80211	1535 High Street, Denver, CO 80218	2660 Larimer Street, Denver, CO 80205	909 Santa Fe Drive, Denver, CO 80204	1029 Santa Fe Drive, Denver, CO 80204
<b>Major Funding Sources</b>	Denver Public School, Colorado Department of Education	Donors Foundation grant funding, earned income	Public and family foundations and individuals	Private donations	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Mile High United Way	SCFD DOE CCI and various foundations	Foundations
<b>Population of OY Served (Characteristics):</b>							
<b>Race:</b>							
African American	x		x	x	x	x	x
Asian American		x				x	x
Caucasian		x	x	x	x	x	x
Latino/a	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Indian		x				x	
Other		x					
Pacific Islander		x					
<b>Health Status:</b>							
Behavioral Health		x	x			x	
Learning Disabled			x			x	x
Mental Health							
Physically Disabled						x	
Substance Use/Abuse	x	x					x
<b>Gender:</b>							
A-Gender		x					
Female	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Male	x	x	x				x
Other		x		x			
Transgender		x					
<b>Sexual Orientation:</b>							
LGBQ	x	x	x	x		x	
Straight		x	x				
<b>Justice System:</b>							
Adjudicated Youth	x		x				x
Foster Youth	x					x	x
Gang Activity	x		x				x
Incarcerated							
Institutional Residence Record	x		x			x	x
<b>Parenting:</b>							
Father	x		x				x
Mother	x		x	x	x		x
Pregnant	x		x	x	x		
<b>Immigration Status:</b>							
First Generation	x		x				x
Immigrant	x		x				x
Refugee			x				
Undocumented	x		x	x		x	x
<b>Miscellaneous:</b>							
Family Caregiver Responsibilities	x		x			x	
<b>Service Provided:</b>							
Mentoring	x		x		x		x
Drop-in Center	x	x		x	x		
Training							
Social Training	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Literacy Training	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Job Placement	x		x	x		x	
Partnerships with Employers			x				
Job Training							
Workforce Training	x		x			x	
Workforce Retention							
<b>Education:</b>							
Alternative Education Center	x			x			x
Remediation	x		x	x			
Enrollment Assistance			x	x	x		
Tutoring	x		x	x			x
<b>Health:</b>							
Behavioral Health		x	x				x
Medical Care							
Mental Health		x					
Substance Abuse		x					
Government Housing					x		
Non-Government Housing					x		
Department of Corrections							
Legal							
Jail							
Financial Assistance							
Food Assistance			x	x	x		
Physical Activity	x						
Other							
Advocacy					x		
Governance							
<b>How OY most often find the organization</b>	Outreach, Referrals, Drop-in		Outreach, Referrals	Drop-in	No Response	Referrals	Referrals



# Reducing Food Waste In Denver Final Report and Recommendations



Report for Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)

Prepared by Joining Vision and Action (JVA)

July 1st, 2016

## FOOD WASTE IN DENVER: THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE

### BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

In order to inform recommendations for an integrated approach toward food waste reduction, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) contracted with Joining Vision and Action (JVA) to conduct a review of the local landscape of Denver-area organizations that prevent food waste, including the rescue and redirection of unused food and recycling food scraps.

The process for developing a summary list of partner organizations, which includes their scope and scale of work and their efforts that address community food waste and support its reduction and repurposing, involved the following efforts:

- **Individual interviews.** Key stakeholders across multiple disciplines (government, nonprofit, for-profit, consultants and collaborative groups) were identified and interviewed in order to achieve a broad view of the issue.
- **Connect with coalitions.** Many of the partner organizations and staff were identified as being a part of established or burgeoning collaborative groups sharing NRDC's focus of food waste reduction efforts. JVA staff initiated an ongoing dialogue with these coalitions on behalf of NRDC to explore current and potential partnerships.

As JVA and NRDC prepared to host a stakeholder convening June 16, the information gathered from these conversations guided the process of identifying future partners and the roles that each may play moving forward.

### INTRODUCTION

For the past decade, Denver has nurtured a growing ecosystem of organizations dedicated to local food and sustainability. Consisting of dozens of institutions across the private, public and nonprofit sectors, this ecosystem addresses issues as diverse as food access, energy conservation, grassroots education and economic development. Somewhat surprisingly, however, the topic of food waste has largely been left off Denver's local food and sustainability agenda.

Slowly, this is starting to change. The City and County of Denver has run a pilot-scale residential composting program for several years, and there are a handful of small and relatively young nonprofits that deal directly with food redistribution. In the past year, several coalitions and collaborations have emerged that have begun to address food waste in a systematic way. While most of these initiatives are in their infancy, they collectively represent promising first steps toward addressing food waste at each level of the reduction pyramid.

Nevertheless, there remain several significant barriers in place that may prevent these early efforts from scaling up enough to address food waste citywide. Foremost among these barriers are poor communication between stakeholders, a lack of baseline data, and a lack of the expertise and funding necessary to develop key infrastructure. With these barriers in mind, there appear to be several promising opportunities for NRDC to join the emerging food waste landscape in and around Denver.

The following **organizational profiles** cover most of the prominent collaborative groups, government, nonprofits, for-profits and consultants addressing food waste issues in the Denver area. These summaries include scope of work and connection to the broader food waste reduction efforts.

## FOOD WASTE-RELATED COALITIONS AND COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

### Food-1-1

Initiated in late 2015 by the Region 8 Office of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Food-1-1 is an emerging statewide coalition interested in food waste reduction. Its stated vision is to use a collaborative, multi-sector approach to reduce wasted food in Colorado 25 percent by 2023.

Initial meetings of the coalition identified common barriers to food waste reduction, as well as potentially shared focus areas. Meanwhile, coalition members identified priority areas and created subgroups around each one to develop action plans in more detail. To date, most of the subgroups have met one to three times and are largely still in the action planning process.

### Eat Denver

Eat Denver is a small nonprofit network of over 120 independent restaurateurs in Denver that share expertise and support. Sustainability is one of several topic issues that Eat Denver focuses on with its members. As part of these efforts, Eat Denver has begun to examine opportunities for food waste reduction. In early 2016, the group sought a \$100,000 grant from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment to pilot a composting program for member restaurants. While Eat Denver did not receive the grant, the organization remains eager to engage in food waste issues, and it continues to seek opportunities to reduce food waste among its member restaurants.

### Food Rescue Alliance

The Food Rescue Alliance is a coalition of allied organizations led by Boulder Food Rescue, aimed at facilitating grassroots food recovery efforts in the Rocky Mountain region and around the country. Founded in 2013, the alliance currently has nine chapters, including three in Colorado. Chapter members routinely make use of the alliance to share information, ideas, projects and values, and to create collaboration between participants.

## LiveWell Colorado

LiveWell Colorado is a statewide organization dedicated to reducing hunger and obesity. LiveWell provides long-term funding for over 20 healthy eating and active living (HEAL) communities across Colorado. Of the six LiveWell communities located within the City and County of Denver,<sup>1</sup> none has explicitly addressed food waste issues as a primary focus area. However, many of them have food access initiatives that may benefit from improved food recovery efforts.

In addition to funding HEAL communities, LiveWell Colorado focuses on policy and environmental changes that remove barriers to health living opportunities. For instance, LiveWell is currently working in partnership with obesity prevention initiatives across the state to provide every Coloradan with access to healthy food and opportunities for physical activity.

## GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

### Office of Sustainability

The Office of Sustainability was established by Denver Mayor Michael Hancock. In 2014, the Office of Sustainability released the city's 2020 Sustainability Plan, which focuses on key resource areas of air quality, climate change, energy, food, health, housing, land use, materials, mobility, water quantity and quality, and workforce.

Although the sustainability plan makes no explicit mention of food waste, a reduction in wasted food would result in substantial improvement in several of the resource areas. In a phone interview for this survey, Tinianow expressed interest in engaging more deeply around food waste issues, and suggested a “pay-as-you-throw” trash policy and offering tax incentives to food retailers that donate food as potentially transformative policies for reducing food waste.

### Sustainable Food Policy Council

The Sustainable Food Policy Council (SFPC) is a group of 25 members that acts as an advisory body to the mayor on sustainable food issues. Its membership includes nonprofit leaders and community members as well as an ex-officio team of city staff. The SFPC is comprised of several subcommittees, each focused on addressing a specific food-related issue in the city. Each subcommittee submits a formal policy brief to the mayor, and they often engage the relevant stakeholders to achieve policy change. Past SFPC initiatives include:

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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from <https://livewellcolorado.org/healthy-communities/partnerships/>. May 16, 2016.

- Drafting a city ordinance to allow backyard chickens and goats as a use-by-right and ensuring the ordinance's passage through City Council
- Developing and passing a city ordinance to allow food sales from front yards
- Developing and piloting a comprehensive approach to convert underutilized public land to food production in collaboration with nonprofit farms

SPFC's primary focus in 2016 is soliciting community feedback for the city's first food systems vision and action plan.

### Office of Economic Development

Acting on a directive from Mayor Hancock, the city's Office of Economic Development hired Blake Angelo as Denver's first Manager of Food Systems Development in spring 2015. A large part of Angelo's mandate is the development of a citywide strategic vision for sustainable food systems; to that end, he has assembled an extensive public outreach process involving over 25 public meetings and industry-specific focus groups over the first half of 2016.

While food waste reduction has not emerged as an explicit priority during the feedback sessions held thus far, Angelo concurs that it has a key role to play in meeting several of the city's goals around sustainability and local food. In an interview for this report, he highlighted several specific opportunities for food waste reduction.

In Angelo's focus group with hunger relief organizations, for instance, the 23 participants acknowledged the need for more coordination of supply and distribution throughout the food pantry network. Necessary improvements include new infrastructure, distribution mechanisms, inventory management/sharing tools and a different geographic distribution of pantries.

Angelo also highlighted the opportunity for the redirection of unused produce to added-value processors, similar to what the business MMLocal is currently providing (see organizational profile below).

Finally, Angelo believes that the expansion of Denver Composts (see below) to include commercial and more residential clients is a critical component of addressing Denver's food waste stream. While composting recommendations are not included in the scope of the City Food Vision, Angelo suggested that a white paper highlighting the economic and sustainability opportunities from expanding composting would be well-received by the city.



## Certiably Green Denver

This program, based out of the Environmental Quality Division of the Department of Environmental Health, provides free, confidential, non-regulatory environmental assistance to Denver's business community.<sup>2</sup>

Since its inception in 2009, a total of 1,717 businesses have enrolled in the program, 238 of which are restaurants. Although composting is not required for certification, according to program manager Janet Burgess, a "grand majority" of participating restaurants and other food services establishments do compost and donate leftover food.

## Denver Composts

A composting program under the Denver Recycles umbrella, Denver Composts was established in select neighborhoods on a pilot scale in 2011. According to program materials, more than 50 percent of what all Denver residents throw in the trash is compostable organic material.<sup>3</sup> The program is run for residences only (single family homes and multi-family homes with seven or fewer units) on an opt-in basis, and it charges participant residences a \$29.25 monthly fee to participate. The service area for the program was expanded in early 2016, and it will expand again in mid-summer.<sup>4</sup>

Participants in the program toss food, non-recyclable paper and yard debris into their city-provided cart for collection by Denver Recycles, the city's recycling program. The organic material is then delivered to A-1 Organics, a commercial composting facility (see organizational profile below). The resulting compost is then sold to local farmers, landscapers and individuals.

## NONPROFITS

### Denver Food Rescue

Denver Food Rescue is a 3-year-old nonprofit with the mission of increasing health equity by reducing barriers to fresh, healthy food in low-income and food desert communities. It delivers on this mission by partnering with grocery stores and farmer's

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<sup>2</sup> Retrieved at [https://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/environmental-health/environmental-quality/certiably-green-denver.html](https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/709/documents/Compost%20Collection%20Guide%202015%20single%20pages.pdf). April 15, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved at <https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/709/documents/Compost%20Collection%20Guide%202015%20single%20pages.pdf>. April 15, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Service area map may also be viewed at: <https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/709/documents/compost%20map%20update%202-9-15.pdf>

markets to redistribute food to local community centers. Complementing its emphasis on health and community, food delivery is completed via bicycle by volunteers. Denver Food Rescue will provide 200,000 pounds of fresh produce to underserved neighborhoods this year.<sup>5</sup> Denver Food Rescue is also part of the Food Rescue Alliance.

## We Don't Waste

Collecting unused food from venues, caterers, restaurants and other food purveyors, We Don't Waste distributes the food to underserved populations within the Denver metropolitan area. We Don't Waste provides these "restaurant-grade" meals to community-based agencies, which in turn provide donated items to individuals as they deem appropriate.<sup>6</sup> In recent years, the organization has scaled its impact rapidly. In 2014, We Don't Waste served 678,627 meals and rescued 508,970 pounds of would-be food waste. In 2015, those numbers jump dramatically to 2,286,208 meals and 1,714,656 pounds.<sup>7</sup>

## Re:Vision

Re:Vision is a nonprofit food justice organization located in southwest Denver's Westwood neighborhood, a largely Latino community that lacks access to healthy food. Since 2009, Re:Vision has been growing a backyard gardening program in the neighborhood using a peer-to-peer educational model. Today, the program involves over 300 families that collectively grow hundreds of thousands of pounds of produce annually.

In 2014, Re:Vision purchased a parcel of land in the heart of Westwood's commercial corridor to develop a community center, commercial farm and cooperative grocery store. It is currently in the process of renovating the site's existing buildings and raising funds to build out the remainder of the center.

## FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

### MM Local Foods

Since 2009, MM Local Foods has partnered with local family farmers to preserve ripe, surplus produce at the height of the harvest. This surplus, which would otherwise become food waste, is processed into canned fruits and vegetables for sale, promoting the access to, and consumption, of local, organic produce all year. Exact figures for the

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<sup>5</sup> Retrieved at <http://denver.cbslocal.com/2015/12/21/cyclists-rescue-produce-for-those-in-need/>. April 15, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Retrieved at <https://www.wedontwaste.org/learn-more/faq/>. April 15, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Retrieved from <https://infograph.venngage.com/p/67181/we-dont-waste-2015-update>. May 12, 2016.

quantity of food processed were unavailable at the time of this writing, but MMLocal has been expanding its operations rapidly.

## WasteFarmers

WasteFarmers is a self-described “next-generation sustainable agricultural company” focused on supporting local food systems through creating closed-loop waste streams. Founded by former financier John-Paul Maxfield in 2008, Waste Farmers was initially a small-scale composting hauler serving sustainability minded Denver restaurants. After successfully processing 9,000 tons of waste food into compost, WasteFarmers deemed waste hauling financially unviable at a small scale and began to pivot to selling organic soil mixes incorporating compost from A1 Organics and a number of other additives. This proved to be a commercially successful market niche, particularly given Colorado’s rapidly growing marijuana industry.

While WasteFarmers’ core business model has evolved past the direct redistribution of food waste, Maxfield and his team remain passionate about food waste reduction and its importance to sustainable food systems. Maxfield is a frequent public spokesperson for closed-loop agriculture and has expressed interest in collaborating with NRDC on its food waste reduction efforts.

## A1 Organics

Established in 1974, A1 Organics is Colorado’s leader in organic recycling, reporting the diversion of over 1.2 million cubic yards of waste from Colorado landfills. Its efforts result in composts, mulches and other products that are available to Colorado citizens for landscaping and soil amendment purposes.<sup>8</sup>

Utilizing its expertise and experience with organic recycling, A1 Organics is also working to expand its food waste recycling program. Restaurants that participate with the program place food and other organic waste into specially marked bins at their location, to then be picked up by A1 Organics for delivery to one of its sites for recycling and composting.

## Heartland Biogas Project

The Heartland Biogas plant, opened just outside Denver in early 2016 and currently ramping up to full capacity, is one of the largest biogas digesters in the country.<sup>9</sup> The process uses an anaerobic digestion system that converts organic feedstock and dairy cow manure into raw biogas. This raw biogas is then processed into pipeline quality renewable natural gas (RNG).

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<sup>8</sup> Retrieved at <http://www.a1organics.com/>. April 15, 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Retrieved from [http://www.edf-re.com/projects/detail/heartland\\_biogas\\_project/](http://www.edf-re.com/projects/detail/heartland_biogas_project/). May 6, 2016.

With Heartland still in the process of sourcing feedstocks, it remains unclear how much diversion potential the project represents for the City and County of Denver. Mathews has noted that Heartland is “always looking for materials” and “new opportunities,” specifically noting those that involve packaging given their expertise and available machinery.

## Restaurants

With food waste reduction efforts and initiatives picking up steam across the country, more and more restaurants are also starting to join the cause. As mentioned above, this movement is also supported by the Certifiably Green Denver program, through which residents are able to identify and patronize food waste reduction focused establishments.

Additionally, Denver and the surrounding areas serve as a corporate hub for multiple national chain restaurants, including: Red Robin, Smashburger, Noodles and Company, Boston Market Corporation, Chipotle Mexican Grill, Garbanzo Mediterranean Grill, Qdoba, Quizno’s, CraftWorks Restaurants and Breweries, Inc., and American Blue Ribbon Holdings, Inc.

Chipotle, in particular, has established itself as an industry leader in the fight against food waste. Since its founding, Chipotle has stressed waste reduction as part of its corporate philosophy of “food with integrity,” and it continues to educate every new employee on best practices for reducing waste from farm to fork. In an interview for this survey, Caitlin Leibert, Chipotle’s Environmental Impact Manager, expressed enthusiasm at NRDC’s efforts and a willingness to educate other restaurants about how to mitigate food waste.

## CONSULTANTS

### FuturePointe

FuturePointe is an LLC run by Brendan McCrann, a food systems consultant specializing in multi-stakeholder collaboration around food waste reduction. For several years, McCrann managed the development of a for-profit farm in the Colorado Springs area that redirected food waste to livestock feed. Now based at the other end of the Front Range in Loveland, FuturePointe remains committed to addressing food waste from a systems-level perspective, and it is eager to bring McCrann’s years of experience to bear on food waste issues in the City and County of Denver.

## DENVER FOOD WASTE CONVENING SUMMARY

### Introduction

The Denver Food Waste Convening was put together by NRDC and JVA to gather feedback about NRDC's proposed plans to engage in food waste reduction in Denver. The Convening attracted over thirty participants, representing a wide range of nonprofit, business, government and collaborative entities. The following individuals participated in the conversation:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Blake Angelo</b> , City and County of Denver                     | <b>Caleb Phillips</b> , University of Colorado at Boulder                                 |
| <b>Lynn Butler</b> , Metro Caring                                   | <b>Charlotte Pitt</b> , City and County of Denver, Composting Program and Denver Recycles |
| <b>Blythe Chorn</b> , Deloitte Consulting                           | <b>Arlan Preblud</b> , We Don't Waste   |
| <b>Courtney Cotton</b> , City and County of Denver, Denver Recycles | <b>Victor Restrepo</b> , Innovative Organics  |
| <b>Brian Freeman</b> , Grower's Organic                             | <b>Krista Roberts</b> , Slow Food Denver  |
| <b>Reuben Gregory</b> , Metro Caring                                | <b>Tim Sanford</b> , We Don't Waste   |
| <b>Lauren Howe</b> , Slow Food USA                                  | <b>Adam Schlegel</b> , Eat Denver   |
| <b>Hallie Jaeger</b> , University of Denver                         | <b>Jospeh Teipel</b> , ReVision   |
| <b>Leif Kerr</b> , Innovative Organics                              | <b>Virginia Till</b> , Environmental Protection Agency Region 8                           |
| <b>Emily Kutosky</b> , Grower's Organic                             | <b>Rachel Wilson-Roussel</b> , Colorado Department of Health and Public Environment       |
| <b>Kaela Martins</b> , University of Denver                         | <b>Tracy Williams</b> , Sodexo  |
| <b>Brendan McCrann</b> , FuturePointe                               | <b>Turner Wyatt</b> , Denver Food Rescue  |
| <b>Kristin Monier</b> , Sodexo                                      |   |
| <b>Amy Moore-Shipley</b> , Denver Food Rescue                       |   |
| <b>Monica Munn</b> , The Rockefeller Foundation                     |   |
| <b>Scott Pexton</b> , A1 Organics                                   |   |

NRDC representatives included **Jason Babbie** (Deputy Director, Urban Solutions and Strategic Program Development), **JoAnne Berkenkamp** (Senior Advocate, Food and Agriculture Program), **Catherine Cox Blair** (Senior Advisor, Urban Solutions), **Dana Gunders** (Senior Scientist, Food and Agriculture Program), and **Darby Hoover** (Senior Resource Specialist, Food and Agriculture Program).

JVA staff included **Adam Brock** (lead facilitator), **Collin Lessing**, **Gabriela Perez**, and **Nora Welch** (facilitation support).

## Event Summary

After a brief welcome and round of introductions, NRDC began the event with a presentation of its current work around food waste, including the Ad Council campaign, federal legislation, and efforts to pilot city-focused models of food waste reduction that could be used in cities nationwide. NRDC explained that it is currently working with Nashville and New York City, and Denver is being considered as an added pilot city for this work.

After the presentation, Convening participants had a number of comments and questions. These comments and questions centered around the following subjects:

- Methodology for picking families in the Nashville baseline assessment
- The food being received by A1 Organics could potentially be a resource in the baseline assessment
- Early response to the Ad Council campaign
- The anticipated timeframe for NRDC's work in Denver
- The extent of bipartisan support for the current food waste legislation
- Linkages between food waste and local food preferences
- Correlations between the amount of consumer food waste and the proportion of organic vs. conventional produce purchased

After the Q+A session, Adam Brock summarized the existing food waste landscape in Denver through the framework of EPA's hierarchy. Participants took a short break following Adam's presentation and reconvened for a series of small-group breakout sessions. The groups were organized into four subjects of NRDC interest: baseline food waste assessment, food rescue capacity gap analysis, policy advocacy, and technical assistance.

The following sections share a summarized description of each group's feedback about their assigned topic.

### *Baseline food waste assessment*

This group projected a resounding confirmation that **data is needed**. Examples of potential data points include:

- stage(s) in the food system where waste occurring (production, processing, distribution, retail or consumption)

- consistent definition of food waste across processes and systems
- analysis of food waste by sector (including schools and resorts)
- various levels of food waste by demographic
- geographic mapping (GIS)
- relation to the carbon continuum (how is food waste related to climate change and other energy and health factors)

Some of the **inhibitors** to collecting this data and impacting food waste overall include availability of funding, community-wide **education** and access, as well how cultural and social backgrounds impact views of and participation with food waste related efforts.

Opportunities for focus include **increasing involvement of community leadership and integration into business planning**. For example, how can sample data be collected from partnerships between food distributor (Sodexo) and food distribution sites (like a hospital) to better inform business planning to positively impact both their bottom line and overall food waste reduction.

#### *Food rescue capacity gap analysis*

Participants noted that, although there are many great local organizations contributing to food waste-related efforts, there are still needs and gaps that, if addressed, would strengthen and advance the local movement.

Some suggested focus areas for gap analysis included:

- Equitable distribution, increased communication systems for food pantries
- Centralized system/infrastructure for food redistribution, including education on safety, client needs, and efficiency practices
- Perceptions about or judgments of food donors (and thus often their desire to be anonymous)
- Addressing the competitive mentality food pantries have in accessing donors and funders
- Supporting businesses for mid-market foods (how can excess or “ugly” food be redirected and used more quickly?)
- Overall funding and support for food waste-related efforts
- The need to solicit buy-in from businesses and corporations
- Integrating anchor institutions (hospitals, schools) into the food waste systems education and implementation processes

#### *Policy advocacy*

Participants of this group noted that there are two primary perspectives for focus: political advocacy and advocacy with consumers.

The following opportunities for policy change and advocacy initiatives were discussed:

- Updating Denver’s zoning code to accommodate neighborhood-scale composting
- Exploring the political feasibility of a “pay-to-throw” trash collection model
- Integrating food waste training and support through the existing health inspection process
- Providing more structured community education (including focus on health inspectors, K-12 students and staff, and other food-related employees)
- Educating businesses around liability issues

Participants noted that a number of factors have made progressive waste policies particularly difficult to implement in Denver, including the relatively cheap costs of landfilling, special interest groups, and the fact that Denver’s landfill is a revenue source for the City. However, participants wondered if the current City Council may offer more of a window for action than previous political climates. They suggested an education session for Council members to help them get briefed on food waste issues.

On the advocacy side, Denver Water’s “Use Only What You Need” campaign was brought up as a best practice for its successful multi-stakeholder collaboration to educate consumers around resource use.

### *Technical assistance*

When discussing the various needs for a food waste reduction system, two broad systems were repeatedly referenced as being opportunities ripe for technical assistance.

- **Education.** Across the continuum, increasing the community-wide food waste literacy level was noted as a top focus. Examples include with businesses about current law and policy information (e.g. the “Good Samaritan” law) with regard to donating food to other organizations, as well as consumer education about food waste. Integration of food waste concepts into local culinary schools was also noted as a sustainable way to impact the restaurant industry’s knowledge through their chefs and cooks becoming more aware of and committed to food waste reduction practices.
- **Communication.** Food-1-1 was called out as a great start for coordinating and informing collaborative efforts, although it was noted that its scope may not be the most appropriate for every level along the food waste continuum. Group members noted that it would be helpful to have scaled systems of organization and communication for various levels of participation. Also, haulers and volunteers were noted as groups would be beneficial to include in the conversation.

Additionally, it was noted that having **supports in place for the smaller scale businesses or participants** within the food waste reduction efforts would be of benefit. For example, some businesses do not have enough food waste to warrant their own



container or pick-up. An organized system or process of sharing services or information would be helpful for them to contribute without negatively impacting their resources of time or money.

### **Next steps**

With the question of interest in Denver participating as one of the NRDC model cities, the group noted support, including several strong voices of “Yes!” and “Go for it!”. When prompted for concerns about this effort moving forward, the group did not share anything other than interest in knowing whether or not the city was competing with others to be selected as the next pilot site.

## MOVING FORWARD: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NRDC

### Introduction

After conducting the landscape assessment and running the convening, there appears to be a clear role for NRDC as a key player in reducing food waste in the Denver area. In every sector, stakeholders appear passionate about reducing food waste and eager to collaborate, yet there is as of yet no central organization or initiative that has managed to consistently capitalize on that enthusiasm.

In this context, NRDC is ideally positioned to act as a catalyst for long-term action, bringing the relevant groups and resources to the table to create the conditions for successful cross-sector collaborations. NRDC's current scope of work, funded by the Rockefeller foundation, will cover a food waste baseline assessment and food rescue capacity gap analysis. Beyond these initial steps, JVA recommends that NRDC consider opportunities in the following three areas:

- Technical assistance for retailers and food service providers
- Government Linkages
- Public Awareness

Recommendations for each of these five initiatives are outlined in more detail below.

### Food waste baseline assessment

With an existing precedent from NRDC's work in Nashville, this initiative appears to be the most well-positioned for immediate action. Convening participants had several useful recommendations for how the baseline could be put to use, and their input should be sought again as the process moves forward.

### Food rescue capacity gap analysis

Food redistribution organizations have consistently stressed the need for greater coordination and improved infrastructure to deepen their impact. NRDC can accelerate this process by continuing to engage these organizations in a dialogue about their collective impact and providing written recommendations that can be used to leverage more resources.

### Technical assistance for retailers and food service providers

At some point, the majority of Denver's food ends up in the hands of a restaurant, grocery store or food service provider. As a result, strategic interventions to reduce food waste at these institutions have the potential to have a high impact. Based on information from the landscape analysis and convening - as well as solutions in other communities - it appears that the following solutions would greatly expand the efficacy of food waste reduction efforts at these organizations:

- Education around existing liability laws
- Technical assistance with setting up systems to track and disincentivize food waste
- Connection to appropriate food recovery organizations

## Government Linkages

Several interviewees pointed to the lack of a dedicated policy champion around food waste issues in Denver. In the short term, NRDC has an immediate opportunity to impact the city's emerging Food Vision as well as advise the implementation of the city's 2020 Sustainability Goals. Meanwhile, NRDC may want to consider partnering with industry groups, the SPFC and other stakeholders to conduct research and report on key policies that would reduce food waste. Potential policies or programs discussed by stakeholders during the interviews and convening include:

- Pay-as-you-throw trash policy in Denver
- Further expanding the City's composting program to cover more neighborhoods and commercial institutions
- Disincentivizing food scraps ending up in the landfill
- Offering tax breaks to supermarkets that donate food to charities

NRDC may choose to engage government agencies, elected officials and other policy-oriented stakeholders in a number of ways, including via in-person education sessions, white papers, and webinars.

## Public awareness

Many convening participants expressed enthusiasm in the Ad Council campaign and its potential to raise awareness about food waste issues within their networks. NRDC may want to gather a group of key stakeholders to continue discussions about how to incorporate campaign messaging into their organizational networks. In addition to assisting with implementation of the Save the Food campaign, a Public Awareness working group may also want to consider the following opportunities:

- Coordinating with Feeding the 5,000 organizers to cross-promote and launch an initiative, report or goal at the event
- Hosting public film screenings, panel discussions or other events

# The Aspen to Parachute *Cradle to Career Initiative*

## **ACTION PLAN**

May 1, 2014



*Increasing Youth Success from Aspen to Parachute, Colorado*

## Special Thanks

This action plan was created by a hundred or so leaders from Parachute to Aspen who worked tirelessly through long meetings for over 18 months. While their backgrounds and perspectives varied, they were united by a common drive to help all our youth achieve greater success and thrive. Our regional community owes a special debt of thanks to all who participated:

9th Judicial District Magistrate	The Cottage	Mt. Sopris Montessori School
A Child's Garden of Peace	Early Childhood Network	OUR School
Access Roaring Fork	Early Learning Center	Planned Parenthood
Alpine Bank - Aspen	Executive Service Corps	Pre-Collegiate Program
Andy Zanca Youth Empowerment	Extreme Sports Camp	Project 18
Aspen Center for	Family Visitor Programs	Raising A Reader
Environmental Studies	Family Resource Centers of	Reach Out and Read
City of Aspen	Roaring Fork School District	River Center of New Castle
Aspen Community Church	Focused Kids	Roaring Fork Outdoor
Aspen Film	Garfield County Childcare	Volunteers
Aspen Global Change Institute	Program	Roaring Fork School District
Aspen Historical Society	Garfield County Human	Roaring Fork School
Aspen Music Festival	Services	Health Centers
and School	Garfield County PREP	Rocky Mountain SER
Aspen Santa Fe Ballet	Garfield County Public Health	Head Start
Aspen School District	Garfield County Public	Seltzer Consulting Group
Aspen Skiing Company	Library District	Snowmass Chapel
Aspen Valley Ski and	Garfield County School	Spellbinders
Snowboard Club	District 16	Spring Board
Aspen Writers' Foundation	Garfield School District Re-2	Summit 54
Aspen Youth Center	Glenwood Springs	Tai Chi for Kids
Blue Lake Preschool	Chamber of Commerce	Teen Gems Coaching
The Buddy Program	Glenwood Springs Recreation	Theatre Aspen
Carbondale Council for the	Center	Thunder River Theatre
Arts & Humanities	Glenwood Springs Workforce	Company
Children's Hospital Advocacy	Center	Valley Life for All
Initiative	Growing Years	Valley Partnership for
Children's Mini College	Hispanic Alliance	Drug Prevention
Children's Rocky	Houses for Higher Education	Wildwood School
Mountain School	Kids First	Windwalkers
College Trek	Little Red School House	Wyly Community Art Center
Colorado Department of	The Manus Fund	Yampah Mountain Schools
Human Services	Mind Springs Health	YouthEntity
Colorado Mountain College	Mountain Valley	YouthZone
Community Health Services	Developmental Services	
Constant Learning Organization	Mpower	



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**Aspen Community Foundation** (ACF) was founded in 1980 to build philanthropy and support nonprofit organizations by connecting donors to community needs, building permanent charitable funds and bringing people together to solve community problems. In the more than 30 years since its founding, ACF has convened local organizations and leading stakeholders to identify regional needs and implement effective solutions through its relationships, institutional knowledge and grantmaking. The Aspen to Parachute *Cradle to Career Initiative* (CCI) originated in the Foundation’s recognition of the serious disparity in youth development and educational outcomes between low-income and more affluent youth in our region.

### **Vision of Change**

Through a Collective Impact strategy of convening and uniting the entire community of nonprofits, schools, agencies, governments, civic groups, businesses and philanthropy around a shared vision and evidence-based strategies, programs and actions, the Aspen to Parachute *Cradle to Career Initiative* will ensure that all our region’s 22,000 children ages 0-18 are ready for kindergarten and that they graduate from high school ready for college and career.



## Introduction

In rural Colorado, the Aspen to Parachute region<sup>1</sup> (the region) encompasses nearly 4,000 square miles of ranch land and mountains on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains. The area is noted not only for its stunning wilderness and popular resort towns, but also for its substantial disparities in wealth and stark variations in youth development and education outcomes.

Improving the outcomes for youth—from birth through career readiness—will have significant and measurable impacts on the region’s quality of life and economy. The Aspen to Parachute *Cradle to Career Initiative* (CCI) recognizes that a broad community-based “Collective Impact” effort is required to both respond to the diversity of the region and truly move the needle on youth development and educational success.



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<sup>1</sup> This region encompasses Pitkin, Garfield and western Eagle counties, including four school districts.



## The Region's Need

A quiet crisis faces many of our region's 22,000 children. The 80-mile corridor from Aspen to Parachute is home to many working class families struggling to survive. Most commute to work (40% for over two hours each day), and many parents are forced to leave children behind with limited supervision during non-school hours. Our valley is diverse: 70% of Rifle's elementary school children qualify for a free or subsidized lunch; 69% of Carbondale's middle school students are Latino.

A profound educational achievement gap opens in kindergarten when many low-income students arrive with no early education and poor language skills; and, too often, this gap is never closed. For low-income children who cannot read at grade level by the 3rd grade, the odds of failing to finish high school increase by 1,300%<sup>1</sup>. The preschools, afterschool enrichment programs, academic tutoring, college counseling, and summer camps that many affluent families take for granted are largely unavailable to low-income parents. Our region's children and our valley's future are at risk.

- An estimated 55% of the region's children are not ready for kindergarten.
- Preschool enrollment rates are low—only 44% overall. The rate drops to 7% for low-income children and only 1% for Latino youth.
- Reading and math scores are low, especially for the region's low-income youth: 40% of 3rd grade children are not proficient in reading and 75% of 8th graders are not proficient in math.
- Only 73% of low-income students in the region graduate from high school. The rate is lower in some high schools and among some populations.
- Many high school graduates are unprepared for college and career: Colorado Mountain College reports that upwards of 60% of its local incoming freshmen require remediation, mostly in reading and math.
- The rapidly growing number of English Language Learners (ELL) in the region and the lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate programs provide additional academic roadblocks for many local children
- The region's teen birth rate is high: Garfield County's rate of 42.1 per 1,000 births is twice as high as the statewide rate, and is the third highest among the 25 largest counties in the state<sup>2</sup>.
- Regional children are not adequately insured: Garfield County has Colorado's highest percentage of uninsured children at 19.4%<sup>3</sup>.



## Real and Lasting Change

*Collective Impact represents the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem.*

John Kania and Mark Kramer, *Collective Impact*, Stanford Social Innovation Review (2011)

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To address our region’s complex challenges, many efforts have been made over the years by nonprofits, educators, philanthropists, governments and businesses to improve youth outcomes—and some have achieved outstanding success with targeted youth populations—but rarely can any organization working on its own succeed with sufficient speed or at sufficient scale to truly move the needle at the community-wide level.

The Aspen to Parachute *Cradle to Career Initiative* (CCI) is a long-term, collaborative effort involving around 100 leaders representing diverse local nonprofits, school districts, civic organizations, government agencies, businesses and community groups. These partners met monthly for over 18 months to create a shared community vision and develop this detailed collaborative action plan.

This innovative *Collective Impact* strategy is mobilizing the entire regional community to focus its combined efforts and resources on the target issue of building youth success from Parachute to Aspen. Collective Impact creates opportunities for a community to tackle large social issues through a shared vision and strategy, while still recognizing individual and organizational contributions to achieving sustainable change.

### Knowledge Resources and an “Ecosystem of Innovation”

CCI is creating a problem solving framework that is inherently collaborative, knowledge-based, and grounded in community context. To support this *ecosystem of innovation*, CCI and Aspen Community Foundation have benefited from the extensive knowledge resources of national organizations, including the Strive Together Network, FSG, Aspen Institute, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Harvard Business School, the Stanford Social Innovation Review, Communities in Schools, the Forum for Youth Investment and the Bridgespan Group. Locally, CCI has convened a wide variety of youth development leaders, families and students to seek effective and culturally relevant ways to reduce the region’s educational disparities.



## Five Conditions of Collective Impact



Source: Hanleybrown, F., Kania, J., & Kramer, J. (2012). Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*.

## Continuous Communication and Improvement

- **Engaging the community** – CCI will continue to engage with the community-at-large to broaden involvement in the collective impact process. The buy-in and engagement of the entire community will only strengthen CCI’s overall effectiveness at achieving its youth success goals.
- **Sharing successes and challenges** – Through a process of continuous communication, CCI partners will be able to monitor their collective progress, share their successes and challenges, make course corrections as needed and continually improve their success as the Initiative progresses.
- **Ongoing Evaluation** – To ensure future success, CCI will use data-driven evaluation and outcome measurement to assess and evaluate the efficacy of the various strategies, programs and actions implemented through this plan and to monitor their longitudinal impact. When helpful, Aspen Community Foundation may provide technical assistance to build the evaluation capacity of CCI’s partners.



## Shared Measurement and Data-Informed Actions

- Collective impact theory and practice require a strong system of data collection, review and accountability, otherwise referred to as a *shared measurement system*. Building a shared measurement system provides a means for many organizations to track the community’s progress toward shared goals. CCI has met critical milestones in establishing this system and has also identified key next steps.
- A data working group comprised of several CCI participants gathered baseline data to guide the creation of the CCI Action Plan. As a result, CCI action team members have made two major accomplishments. First, through readily available data, action team members were able to identify specific gaps in youth success and develop actionable ideas and strategies to address them. These actions and strategies are provided in further detail later in this document. Second, team members were able to identify gaps in data availability and evaluation for CCI’s indicators throughout the region, thus prompting a number of *data-focused* action items in the plan.
- These data-focused action items will improve CCI’s ability to gather specific information needed to guide decisions that will increase youth success in our region. *Example:* the Action Plan identifies adopting Teaching Strategies Gold as a kindergarten readiness assessment. *Why:* No widely used kindergarten readiness assessment currently exists. By adopting a universal assessment, our region will gain a common understanding of our youngest students’ school readiness, as well as a way to gauge the effectiveness of CCI’s future *Ready for Kindergarten* strategies, programs and actions.

## Aspen Community Foundation and its Role in the Aspen to Parachute *Cradle to Career Initiative*

Aspen Community Foundation acts as the collective impact “backbone organization” for CCI. In a collective impact strategy, the backbone organization convenes sector leaders, guides the vision and strategy, establishes and maintains a shared measurement system, supports aligned activities within the collaborative action plan, builds public will and advances policy, and mobilizes funding. In addition to providing initial funding for staffing, operations and programming, ACF also set in motion three initial CCI projects: Gus the Bus and the Sunshine Bus, a preschool on wheels program; Boost Camp, an educational summer camp; and Basalt College Counseling, a dedicated college counseling program at Basalt High School.

ACF is dedicated to holding the long-term vision and goals set forth in this document for the *Cradle to Career Initiative*.



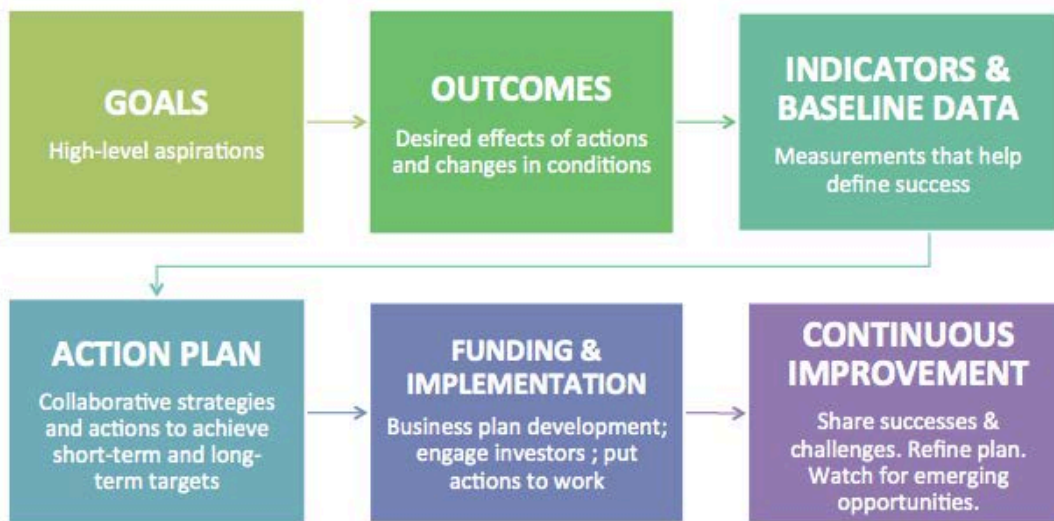
## Goals, Indicators and Rationale

The initial work of the *Cradle to Career Initiative* focused on developing high-level goals, outcomes and measurable indicators to improving youth outcomes (see Appendix A). Roundtable meetings of nonprofits directors, educators, philanthropists, government representatives, and business and community leaders spent several months coming to consensus on these. Then, baseline data related to the indicators was gathered and shared with the CCI partners. This set the stage for the next phase of the Initiative: action planning.

The roundtable groups reformed themselves into four “action teams,” one for each goal of CCI. These teams, each led by three co-chairs with input and support from ACF, worked on short- and long-term collaborative action plans that will move the needle on youth success.

Through a series of action planning sessions that occurred over several months, the CCI action teams identified certain key indicators to be targeted first based on their ability to make the largest positive impact on youth success in our region. The *Strategies, Programs and Actions for Youth Success* document (following this section) lists these key indicators and their actions in greater detail.

### Cradle to Career Initiative Planning Process Roadmap



## Goal 1: All Children Should be Ready for Kindergarten

*If we invest early, the dividends for society are tremendous...less dropouts, less teenage pregnancy, less crime, more high school graduates, more people working, more people becoming productive members of society.*

—Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education (2013)

Ensuring that all children in the region are ready for kindergarten is the foundation of youth success.

### Desired Outcomes

- Healthy, well-timed births
- Supported and supportive families
- Visible system of early education and family support
- Community commitment to school readiness
- Children prepared for school

### General Indicators

- Access to and participation in: quality early education, childcare and preschool; and early intervention services
- Percent of mothers with one or more risk factors receiving family visits
- Meeting developmental milestones as defined by assessment tools
- Instances of child abuse

Additional contributing indicators include: prenatal care; positive birth outcomes (birth weight, mother's education level, teen birthrate); increased implementation of developmental surveys; child overweight/obesity rates; and reliance on low-cost food.

### Rationale

Because 90% of brain development occurs before age five, educating and caring for young children to set them up for success in kindergarten and later life is critically important (Lenroot & Giedd, 2006<sup>4</sup>). When young children are exposed to educational programming, they learn social and emotional skills at the time that their brains are the most malleable. This opens an opportunity for decades of success. Ensuring broad access to quality early education helps children to gain equal footing when they begin school.

Family engagement is a critical element in children's healthy development, early development and school readiness. Research demonstrates that home visitation programs are an effective way to boost parent knowledge and engagement (see e.g., Brooks-Gunn, Berlin & Fuligni, 2000<sup>5</sup>; Kitzman et al., 2010<sup>6</sup>; Olds et al., 1998<sup>7</sup>; Ounce of Prevention, 2013<sup>8</sup>). Home visitation programs typically involve an



educator who teaches parents about a wide variety of topics, such as forming healthy bonds with children, talking to them, teaching school readiness skills, and providing nutritious meals.

As an example, the Nurse Family Partnership approach, which is utilized by Family Visitor Programs (FVP), a local home-visit provider, is supported by 35 years of research from randomized controlled trials that suggest a \$2.88 to \$5.70 return on investment for every dollar invested in the program<sup>6</sup>. Through CCI, local home visit providers and hospitals are now working together to dramatically increase the number of young mothers receiving home visits. This collaboration has resulted in Valley View Hospital initiating a new policy of automatically referring all new mothers for home visits.

The number of spoken words heard by a young child has a dramatic effect on the child's cognitive development. "Language exposure not only bears an obvious relationship to a child's linguistic development but also significantly influences a child's overall cognitive and educational achievement" (Hart & Risley, 1992, 1995; Huttenlocher, Vasilyeva, Cymerman, & Levine, 2002; Kashinath, Woods, & Goldstein, 2006). The number of words a child hears by age three is correlated with the child's later IQ and academic success. Typically, children of professional parents will hear three times as many spoken words by age three as children in welfare-recipient families, and the three year-old child of professional parents will have a vocabulary over twice as large (Hart & Risley, *op. cit.*).

Likewise, studies demonstrate that quality preschool can have strong, positive effects on the success of low-income children. These effects include higher scores on achievement tests at age 14, higher high school graduation levels, less special education required, higher wages, lower welfare rates, lower incarceration rates and higher homeownership (Heckman, 2013<sup>9</sup>).

Early education is one of the best investments a society can make. "The Institute for a Competitive Workforce, an affiliate of the United States Chamber of Commerce, found in a 2010 report that 'for every dollar invested today, savings range from \$2.50 to as much as \$17 in the years ahead.'" (Pepper & Zimmerman, 2013<sup>10</sup>).



## Goal 2: All Children Should Develop Social and Life Assets for Success and Happiness

*Social and personality skills are malleable into the early twenties, although early formation of these skills is still the best policy because they boost learning. Adolescent strategies should boost motivation, personality, and social skills through mentoring and workplace-based education.*

—James Heckman, Nobel Laureate, *Giving Kids a Fair Chance* (2013)

Developing social and life assets of all children in the region will help set them on a path to success early in life.

### Desired Outcomes

- Sense of hope, purpose and optimism for future
- Growth Mindset
- Grit and resiliency
- Civic engagement and community service
- Creativity and innovation
- Self-regulation, social competence
- Problem solving, goal setting and completion skills

### General Indicators

- Establish social emotional baseline data of local children and youth by year-end 2013
- Engagement in extracurricular and community activities
- Social emotional competence such as wellbeing, hope, optimism, grit

Additional contributing indicators include: students in juvenile justice system; disciplinary referrals; mobility rates; and attendance rates.

### Rationale

Developing strong life skills and character assets will help our region's youth achieve success in and out of school. Research demonstrates that social-emotional development is a core competency that helps youth handle the many challenges of school (Hair, Halle, Terry, Lavelle, & Calkins, 2006<sup>11</sup>; Li-Grining, Votruba-Drzal, Maldonado-Carreno, & Haas, 2010<sup>12</sup>); and Social and emotional wellbeing is also a key predictor of current and future school readiness (Hair et al., 2006<sup>13</sup>).

Teaching children social-emotional skills (Denham & Brown, 2010<sup>14</sup>) early on is linked to a child's increased participation in childcare and early education activities (Magnuson, Meyers, Rhum, & Waldfogel, 2004<sup>15</sup>). In the early school years, research illustrates that school success—measured by meeting benchmark math and reading scores in 3rd grade and progression to 4th grade—is



linked to social and emotional predictors, including persistence, ability to regulate emotions, and attentiveness (Hair et al., 2006<sup>16</sup>).

Middle school children who show strong social-emotional development by pursuing academic goals that may prove difficult or frustrating is another strong indicator of future success. The Grit Scale, a test analyzing a student’s focus, follow-through and commitment—all characteristics of grit, resiliency and self-regulation—is another way to measure these indicators. Students who score higher on the Grit Scale also have higher academic grade point averages and fewer career changes over their lifetime (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009<sup>17</sup>).

Engagement in extracurricular activities and community engagement provides children an increased opportunity to improve social-emotional wellness, especially characteristics such as grit and resiliency. Research shows that activities such as sports can provide an optimal learning environment for developing such skills. In community and extracurricular engagements, children are pushed to do better; performances—including wins and failures—are publicly showcased; and effort, improvement and collaboration are essential to success in these activities (Hoerr, 2013<sup>18</sup>).

In the fall of 2013, as an early CCI action, all four regional school districts agreed to implement the Gallup Student Poll. Early results from the 2013 survey indicated that schools implementing a student “advisory” or “crew” model (a strategy for building relationships and accountability between students, teachers and peer groups) showed promising results in student levels of wellbeing, hope, and engagement. The Action Plan reflects this data-driven strategy.

Adding to these regional data, national research supports the positive impact of school-based social-emotional learning (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011<sup>19</sup>). In addition, schools that pursue social-emotional learning (SEL) in partnership with community organizations can increase their likelihood of success (Greenberg et al. 2003<sup>20</sup>). By supporting focused SEL through the collaborative efforts of many youth service providers, CCI can be more effective in helping our region’s youth cultivate the essential life skills and character assets essential to both academic and non-academic success. Overall, the promotion of social-emotional curricula that encourage the development of grit, hope, innovation, self-regulation and problem solving will help our region’s youth to achieve their goals in and out of school.



## Goal 3: All Children Should Succeed Academically

*Academic grades and achievement-test results are very good predictors of all kinds of outcomes in life: not just how far you'll go in school and how much you'll earn when you get out, but also whether you'll commit crimes, whether you'll take drugs, whether you'll get married, and whether you'll get divorced.*

–Paul Tough, *How Children Succeed* (2012)

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Academic success is a universally recognized strategy to improve lifelong outcomes.

### Desired Outcomes

- Demonstration of 21st century skills
- Academic achievement and growth
- Proficiency in reading, writing and speaking
- Proficiency in grade-level math

### General Indicators

- Adequate academic growth
- 3rd grade reading
- 8th grade math
- Full day kindergarten

Additional contributing indicators include: access to and participation in tutoring, afterschool programs and summer education opportunities; 8th grade design and use of Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP); percent of children qualified for special education services; 3rd grade writing; and 5th grade writing.

### Rationale

To improve the academic success of all school-aged children in the region, CCI focuses on the indicators of 3rd grade reading and 8th grade math as primary target goals. Studies show that children who master 3rd grade reading on time are usually proficient later in middle school reading and language arts, illustrating the importance of building a solid foundation early on. Similarly, scores on 8th grade math assessments are correlated with future academic success in high school, including an increased likelihood that students will enroll in accelerated and honors-level classes (ACT, 2008<sup>21</sup>; Silver & Saunders, 2008<sup>22</sup>).

A CCI analysis of the root causes of barriers to local students' success revealed that, because learning builds upon itself, students' academic proficiencies (or lack thereof) can be traced back to their "best first instruction." A key CCI strategy is therefore to ensure that teachers have the



adequate tools not only to provide “best first instruction” but also to provide appropriate and effective interventions to help students who are behind to catch up.

The CCI *Succeed Academically* Action team is also committed to adequate academic growth beyond 3rd grade reading and 8th grade math. For instance, research shows that on-time/on-target completion of Algebra as a high school freshman decreases the need for remediation classes at the college level (CRIS Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2010<sup>23</sup>; Klepfer & Hull, 2012<sup>24</sup>; Lee, 2012<sup>25</sup>; Lee 2013<sup>26</sup>). Further, high school students who enroll in honors classes and receive passing scores on their Advanced Placement tests are positively correlated with increased rates of college enrollment (Karp, Calcagno, Hughes, Jeong & Bailey, 2007<sup>27</sup>; Nagaoka, Roderick, & Coca, 2009<sup>28</sup>; Rumberger & Larson, 1998<sup>29</sup>; Wiley, Wyatt, & Camara, 2010<sup>30</sup>). These studies illustrate the importance of continuing to champion on-target academic growth at all school levels.

To ensure elementary, middle and high school student success, ample professional development and lesson planning time for teachers is critically important. Furthermore, in schools with high English Language Learner (ELL) student populations, teachers need not only skills for teaching specific subject matter but also skills at teaching their subject matter to ELL students at different stages of language acquisition. As a result, the Action Team recommended a focus on math, literacy, and ELL teaching strategies to support the success of our region’s teachers and students. The action team also called for greater expanded learning opportunities for students and a robust new effort to engage the business community as an ally in building youth success.



## Goal 4: All Youth Should Graduate High School Ready for College and Career

*ACT research shows that college readiness is highly related to college completion. Unfortunately, of the 1.5 million 2010 high school graduates who took the ACT test, only 24 percent met all four College Readiness Benchmarks in English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science—indicating that fewer than 1 in 4 graduates were academically ready for college.*

–ACT, College Readiness (2011)

Students need to develop skills to be employable in occupations that bring them both fulfillment and economic success.

### Desired Outcomes

- Graduate from high school
- Develop and implement a college or career plan
- Students able to articulate a personal story

### General Indicators

- Access to and participation in college and career counseling
- 9th grade completion of core classes
- High school graduation
- ACT score
- College/vocational enrollment
- College/vocational completion

Additional contributing indicators include: student surveys of college and career plans; apprenticeships/internships; frequency of reference to Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP) in high school; remediation rates; and return for second college year.

### Rationale

The *Graduate Ready* Action Team called for creating a stronger “culture of college” in our region. This college-going mentality is too often lacking in students’ home and school environments, likely because many students and families are not aware of the importance of graduating or scoring well on the ACT, students and families have other immediate needs and priorities, and the cost of post-secondary education is too high.

A regional improvement in graduation rates could make a substantial positive impact on student lives, as well as the state’s economy. For example, raising the state’s high school graduation rate to 90% would increase the gross state product by \$93 million a year and increase state and local tax revenues by \$4.1 million annually (Johns Hopkins University, 2013<sup>31</sup>).



CCI's emphasis on college and career readiness is supported by research indicating that properly preparing students is an important marker of continued youth success. For instance, meeting benchmark scores on college entry tests, such as the ACT, correlates positively with college and career readiness; increased post-secondary enrollment, completion of the first college year, and freedom from remediation classes (ACT, 2010<sup>32</sup>). The action team's emphasis on ensuring that students achieve minimum ACT scores is crucial to helping students be better prepared for the rigor of college and career. Similarly, the Action Plan's emphasis on completion of ninth grade core classes is echoed in studies illustrating that students who fail one or more 9th grade subjects is a predictor of not finishing high school (Kemple, Segeritz, & Stevenson, 2013<sup>33</sup>).

One path to strengthening student achievement is to increase access to programs that offer college and career advising services. The Center for Higher Education Policy and Analysis (2002<sup>34</sup>) reported that college advising promotes students' college aspirations; increases their understanding of college; and strengthens parental roles in encouraging college. Research shows that participation in summer bridge programs, senior year transition courses and school year transition programs, all which encourage academic counseling, guidance counseling, and preparation for college entry exams, correlates to increased secondary and post secondary success (Barnett et al., 2012<sup>35</sup>; Mishook, 2012<sup>36</sup>). Career advising, which is often found in these programs, helps students develop their personal story about their future career path by recognizing each individual student's interests, characteristics and values.

As regional college/career counselors are scarce, CCI is expanding the use of the Naviance platform, which helps students plan for college and career. The program also enables teachers, counselors and administrators to collaborate with students to chart their post-secondary paths. In partnership with Colorado Mountain College, Garfield County School District Re-2 and Garfield School District 16, CCI is helping to introduce Naviance in western Garfield County. CCI aims to increase its use among English Language Learner families to improve college participation in homes where college has not previously been considered an option. Aspen High School has been using Naviance with its entire population of 561 students (11% Latino) for the past 10 years. Basalt High School, through an early CCI program, began using Naviance in fall 2012 with 365 students, 60% of whom are Latino; and Coal Ridge, Rifle and Grand Valley high schools are now beginning to use Naviance with 1,501 students, 42% of whom are Latino.



## **Strategies, Programs and Actions for Youth Success**

**Aspen to Parachute *Cradle to Career Initiative***

**May 1, 2014**



## Goal 1: All Children Should be Ready for Kindergarten

### Key Targeted Indicators:

- Mothers with multiple risk factors receiving home visits
- Children meeting developmental milestones
- Access to quality early education

### The action team agreed on the following understanding of School Readiness:

*School readiness describes both the preparedness of a child to engage in and benefit from learning experiences, and the ability of a school to meet the need of all students enrolled in preschool or kindergarten. School readiness includes the status and ongoing progress a child makes within the domains of physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, language and comprehension development, cognition and general knowledge, literacy, and mathematics. We recognize that school readiness begins at birth and is enhanced when the entire community – families, teachers, schools, nonprofits, business, government, and individual citizens, work collaboratively to ensure that every child is ready for higher levels of learning. Information gathered from school readiness assessments is to be used for supportive and instructional purposes and cannot be used to deny a student admission or progression to kindergarten or first grade.*

### Strategies, Programs and Actions:

- 1. Increase Parent Referrals for Family Visits to Mothers with Multiple Risk Factors**
  - A. Ask hospitals to make automatic referrals to home visit programs for every birth [UNDERWAY]
  - B. Create an awareness campaign to increase family visits that would include a “point of entry” poster with information about services available to all parents. Distribute it to hospitals, birthing classes, OB/GYN offices, midwives, etc. Identify other communication conduits such as 2-1-1.
  - C. With the local University of Denver Masters of Social Work program, conduct a community assessment to determine the number of babies born each year in the region who are thriving and who need help.
  
- 2. Identify Common Early Education Assessment Tool and Expand Use Across Region**
  - A. Identify and endorse Teaching Strategies GOLD (TS GOLD) as the common assessment tool to be used in preschool and kindergarten classrooms. [DONE]
  - B. Hold information meetings with preschools that are not using TS GOLD or using it only for children supported by the Colorado Preschool Program. [UNDERWAY]
  - C. Provide training, support and technology for expansion of use. Explore ways to manage the wider use, including cost and time required to implement, ensuring consistent use of the tool, and sharing data. [UNDERWAY]

- D. Use TS GOLD assessment data to identify which children need improvement and support, where these children live, and how to help them.

### **3. Expand Access to Quality Early Education**

- A. Create kindergarten “jumpstart” programs
  - Assist Basalt Elementary School with development of a program this summer that will focus on the incoming children who are the least ready for kindergarten. [UNDERWAY]
  - Assess need and feasibility for other school districts, beginning with Crystal River Elementary School in Carbondale. [UNDERWAY]
- B. Expand early literacy program models and mobile preschool classrooms to address immediate needs for quality early education.
- C. Expand use of current preschool facilities by adjusting schedules, enlarging facilities and using facilities year-round.
- D. Investigate new locations such as new housing developments or community centers, and explore program models that provide comprehensive services for children and families such as the Grand Valley Center for Family Learning in Parachute.
- E. Increase financial support for early education including expanding access to Colorado Child Care Assistance and Colorado Preschool programs, and investigating policy changes, ballot initiatives and social impact bonds.

### **4. Create a System of Continual Family Engagement that Begins with Prenatal Care and Continues through Early Childhood Development into Preschool**

- A. Coach parents to play a critical role in the healthy development of their children by helping them understand the importance of talking, singing and playing educational games with children; and providing tools and resources to support their children.
- B. Build adult capabilities to improve child outcomes and school readiness including increasing adult literacy, providing workforce training and connecting families to community resources.
- C. Increase partnerships with schools, doctors’ offices, etc. to provide information and increase awareness of preschool programs.

### **5. Continue to Support and Improve the Quality of Early Education Providers**

- A. Provide quality ratings, coaching to improve quality and mini-grants to make improvements to licensed preschool programs.
- B. Working with Colorado Mountain College (CMC), further develop the local early childhood education certification process to increase the pool of early childhood providers and build capabilities of traditional neighborhood caregivers.





## Goal 2: All Children Should Develop Social and Life Assets for Success and Happiness

### Key Targeted Indicators:

- Hope, wellbeing, engagement and grit
- Participation in extracurricular activities

### The action team identified the following Life Skills and Character Assets important to youth success:

- Hope, purpose and connection to the future
- Growth mindset
- Grit and resiliency
- Civic engagement
- Creativity and innovation
- Self-regulation, social competence
- Problem solving, goal setting and completion skills

### Strategies, Programs and Actions:

#### 6. Training and Organizing around the Life Skills and Character Assets for Youth Serving Organizations

- A. Agree on a short, simple and clear definition of each skill and asset.
- B. Build curricula around the skills and assets to develop a “common language” and identify evidence-based approaches. Experiment with and pilot program models, and use lessons learned to create a handbook.
- C. Create a program of ongoing coaching, training and mentoring for program providers.
- D. Encourage all youth program providers to teach one or more of the skills and assets. Ask, “What would this look like in my organization?” Provide examples of how organizations can incorporate the skills and assets.

#### 7. Increase Experiential and Career Programming for Students

- A. Create a system to help organize experiential and career programming including expanded learning opportunities, volunteers and the use of “Crew,” a structure for each student to develop a one-on-one relationship with an adult advisor, in addition to being part of a consistent and ongoing small-scale peer community.
- B. Engage with business and agency partners to help students understand career opportunities.
- C. Create program opportunities that extend throughout the region.
- D. Plan to add extra focus and support for the most at-risk students.
- E. Create interventions for kids who have already dropped out.



## Goal 3: All Children Should Succeed Academically

### Key Targeted Indicators:

- 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading
- 8<sup>th</sup> grade math

To address 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading and 8<sup>th</sup> grade math, the *Succeed Academically* Action Team identified key focus areas that would build Teacher Effectiveness and increase Student Academic Success:

- English language learning (ELL)
- Best first instruction
- Effective intervention
- Clear expectations of grade levels
- Assessment through dialogue
- Social emotional learning
- Early literacy

### Strategies, Programs and Actions:

#### 8. Increase Regional English Language Learning (ELL) Program Efficacy to Promote Teacher Effectiveness

- A. Create teacher exchanges among all four school districts. Schedule opportunities for teachers to visit classrooms in other schools to share intervention strategies and learn from each other. Create more ELL coaches to continually improve practice and guide educators.
- B. Explore new ideas from around the nation. Consider holding a symposium with national English language learning thought leaders. Follow up the symposium with a dialogue with teachers from all four school districts.

#### 9. Expand Professional Development Opportunities for Teachers

- A. Create a regional professional development coordinating group with a leader from each school district, plus the Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES). [DONE]
- B. Conduct a four-district assessment of professional development needs. [DONE]
- C. Use current school schedules (Wednesdays in Aspen School District and Roaring Fork School District; Fridays in Garfield School District Re-2; Mondays in Garfield County School District 16) to increase quality professional development time for school staff. [UNDERWAY]
- D. Bring in resources from BOCES, the Colorado Legacy Foundation and the Colorado Department of Education to offer trainings to all four districts together. Ensure ongoing exposure to ideas from beyond our region. [UNDERWAY]



- E. Provide training to school staff in identified best strategies related to the key areas listed above. In addition, improve ongoing coaching for teachers by encouraging principals and superintendents to model active leadership.

#### **10. Increase Expanded Learning Opportunities for Students**

- A. Create “Enrichment Wednesdays” in the Roaring Fork School District to engage students with the community and expand their access to community programs [UNDERWAY]
  - Community programming examples: Mentoring for ELL students; tutoring; sports programs; college application assistance; career counseling with local business professionals; social-emotional learning programs in areas like positive mindset, grit and hope; programs in art, music and theater; career & technical training.
  - Create the logistical structure to accommodate interested community organizations.
  - Add community coordinators in schools to connect students and schools with community resources. Explore the Communities In Schools (CIS) model.
- B. Work with Re-2 and District 16 to expand enrichment opportunities for students on Fridays and Mondays, respectively.
- C. Identify and support additional expanded learning opportunities for out-of-school-time afternoons, weekends and summers.
- D. Widen the use of free web-based programs such as Khan Academy as a tutoring aid. Train community volunteers to assist students in using Khan Academy videos identified by local schools.

#### **11. Expand Access to Full Day Kindergarten**

- A. Increase financial resources to provide funding for at-risk children to attend full day kindergarten.
- B. Seek policy changes such as increasing State funding that would provide full day kindergarten.



## Goal 4: All Youth Should Graduate High School Ready for College and Career

### Key Indicators:

- ACT scores
- High school graduation rates

### The action team agreed on the following understanding of College and Career Readiness:

*The level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed in a college course or technical school. This includes both academic skills such as reading, writing, oral communication, mathematics, academic conventions, problem solving, and critical thinking required for college-level study, and non-cognitive or 21st century skills such as adaptability, perseverance (tenacity), problem solving, collaboration and teamwork, creativity, responsibility, professionalism, ethics, and technology use necessary for college and work. Students will need, through later preparation, to develop technical skills to be employable in occupations that bring them fulfillment and economic success.*

### Strategies, Programs and Actions:

#### 12. Align High School Curricula with College and Career Readiness

- Convene our region's guidance and college counselors, school district curriculum planners and other school leaders to identify challenges preventing high school students from being better prepared for college readiness assessments.
- Schools could conduct their own internal curriculum reviews to explore opportunities for alignment with college/career readiness.
- In partnership with CMC, offer the Accuplacer college readiness assessment before and after 11<sup>th</sup> grade to track student readiness.
- Offer concurrent enrollment courses through additional CMC partnerships.
- Offer ASCENT (Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrollment) scholarships to students wishing to earn college credit during a fifth year of high school.
- Promote the use of Post-secondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR) high school diploma endorsement criteria.

#### 13. Infuse Schools and Families with a College-Going Culture

- Inculcate a college-going culture in schools by exploring additional and creative ways to introduce college to young students and their families.
- Send automatic CMC letters of acceptance to all local high school seniors.
- Inform families about the importance of college/career readiness. Demystify the culture of school, the high school graduation pathway and the college application process.
- Engage churches, libraries and others to help with family outreach and education. Create parent groups to help with communication and education.



**14. Expand College/Career Advising and the Use of the Naviance Platform in Schools**

- A. Add Naviance to the current college/career advising partnership between Re-2, District 16 and CMC. Naviance is a web-based platform that increases students' understanding of college and career choices, enhances counselor effectiveness, and tracks results for school and district administrators. [DONE]
- B. Complete the expansion of Naviance to all high schools in the region.
- C. Pursue the model of a college/career advisor at each high school and middle school, and provide support needed to implement.
- D. Expand systemic approaches, like the Pre-Collegiate Program, to mentor more students for college and career. [UNDERWAY]
- E. Expand the CollegeTrek model (young volunteer professionals working with college/career advisors to provide college application mentoring and assistance inside schools) throughout the region.
- F. Offer ACT WorkKeys exams through CMC to assess the career readiness of students not planning on college.

**15. Provide Support and Financial Aid for College-Bound Students**

- A. Create further support mechanisms for students “to and through” college.
- B. Increase financial resources to provide additional aid to more students.
- C. Experiment with a “Future Center” in local schools based on the model of the Denver Scholarship Foundation.

**16. Recruit and Coordinate Volunteers to Provide Tutoring, Mentoring, College Readiness Support**

- A. “Pirate Stores.” In each interested community and school, recruit community volunteers for tutoring programs in the style of 826 Valencia.
- B. Recruit college students to speak to current high schools students about college life and what it takes to get there.
- C. Create opportunities for older students to tutor younger students in math and reading, and to be role models.
- D. Create a database of mentors and tutors in our region as a resource for schools, parents and youth serving organizations.

**17. Educate Students about Career Paths and Options by Enlisting the Professional Community to Provide “Real World” Connections**

- A. Enlist business leaders to help make the connection between the relevance of high school and success later in life.
- B. Create regular opportunities for leaders to make career presentations to students about their professions; offer job shadowing opportunities and technical and career internships; and provide incentives for academic excellence.
- C. Develop high school career exploration programs and pair classes with CMC.
- D. Partner with CMC to create new career/vocational programs in fields with job opportunities in our local economy.



## Engaged and Supported Families and Communities

All four CCI action teams share a common belief that family and community engagement are critical to the success of the *Cradle to Career Initiative*. To support them, we must build a community infrastructure or “scaffolding” to link schools, families and community and strengthen their ability to support the success of our youth.

### Strategies, Programs and Actions:

#### 18. Engage the Business Community in Supporting Youth Success

- A. Explain how students’ academic success positively affects our region’s economic success. Define what schools and youth need – and how businesses can help. Adopt a strategic, targeted approach.
- B. Engage business leaders and civic organizations in supporting specific actions from this collaborative, collective impact process.
- C. Provide examples of additional ways businesses could help: sponsoring a professional development program; allowing employees to attend parent/teacher conferences without penalty; adding printed youth-success messages to paychecks; offering internships; making career presentations in schools, etc.
- E. Ask business and civic leaders to declare each town to be “A Child Centered Community”

#### 19. Launch a Regional Public Awareness Campaign on the Critical Importance of Supporting Youth Success

- A. Target both families and community to educate and raise awareness.
- B. Communicate the importance of early education, social emotional and life skills, academic success, and the value of college and career readiness.
- C. Inform families of existing resources including early education, out of school time, and college/career readiness programs, and funding options.
- D. Find alternative routes to communicate (word of mouth, home visits, churches, social media, cultural and school events, and traditional media campaigns).

#### 20. Create a Data Sharing System to Link and Support Schools, Families and Youth Serving Organizations

- A. Contract with CiviCore to link community resources through an internet platform for the region. Use it to connect schools, organizations, students and families. [DONE]
- B. Connect school databases with CiviCore to alert youth organizations when participants need extra help.
- C. Track post-secondary matriculation and alumni. Track students’ final high school transcript deliveries to confirm actual college enrollment.



## Additional Important Factors

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Our regional community must also address the following underlying issues in order to ensure that all youth have the opportunity to succeed:

- A. Student health and health care access, including behavioral health
- B. Violence and substance abuse
- C. Stable housing
- D. Hunger and nutrition
- E. Teen pregnancy

The Aspen to Parachute *Cradle to Career Initiative* is conferring with leaders of local and state health initiatives to explore creation of a comprehensive plan to address these critical issues.



## Appendix A: Goals, Outcomes and Indicators

<b>Cradle to Career Initiative</b> Building Youth Success from Aspen to Parachute			
<u>Goal 1</u> Ready for kindergarten	<u>Goal 2</u> Develop social and life assets for success and happiness	<u>Goal 3</u> Succeed academically	<u>Goal 4</u> Graduate high school, ready for college & career
<b>YOUTH OUTCOMES</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy, well-timed births</li> <li>• Supported and supportive families</li> <li>• Visible system of early education and family support</li> <li>• Community commitment to school readiness</li> <li>• Children prepared for school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic engagement and community service</li> <li>• Self-regulation, social competence</li> <li>• Problem solving, goal setting and completion skills</li> <li>• Sense of hope, purpose and optimism for future</li> <li>• Grit and resiliency</li> <li>• Creativity and innovation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate 21<sup>st</sup> century skills</li> <li>• Academic achievement and growth</li> <li>• Proficiency in reading, writing and speaking</li> <li>• Proficient in grade-level math</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduate from high school</li> <li>• Develop and implement a college or career plan</li> <li>• Students able to articulate a personal story</li> </ul>
<b>TARGETED INITIAL INDICATORS</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to and participation in:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Quality early education, childcare and preschool</li> <li>○ Early intervention services</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Percent of mothers with one or more risk factors receiving family visits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish social emotional baseline data of local children and youth by year end 2013</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to and participation in full day kindergarten</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to and participation in college and career counseling</li> <li>• 9<sup>th</sup> grade completion of core classes</li> </ul>
<b>TARGETED LONG TERM INDICATORS</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting developmental milestones as defined by assessment tools</li> <li>• Instances of child abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement in extracurricular and community activities</li> <li>• Social emotional competence such as wellbeing, hope, optimism, grit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequate academic growth</li> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading</li> <li>• 8<sup>th</sup> grade math</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High school graduation</li> <li>• ACT score</li> <li>• College/ vocational enrollment</li> <li>• College/ vocational completion</li> </ul>
<p>Health and Social Emotional Development on Track</p> <p>Engaged and Supportive Families and Communities</p>			





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