



Survey of Community Based Organizations that Provide Supportive Services for Job Training or Education (March 2017)

Introduction

At the urging of its members, the Colorado Skills2Compete coalition has dedicated considerable time and effort to examining the availability and delivery of supportive services to those with barriers to employment throughout Colorado. Providing supportive services – such as child care, housing, cash and legal assistance – can help an individual take advantage of gainful employment opportunities. A subcommittee tasked with spearheading this project defined supportive services as services and staff that aid an individual to cover their basic needs while receiving job training or education so that they can acquire a decent paying job. As previously mentioned, examples of supportive services include child care, transportation, housing assistance, legal aid, mental health counseling and other services that help individuals to meet their basic needs. Initially, the coalition relied upon a plethora of anecdotal evidence to deduce that these services are a critical component of the workforce development process. Additionally, those within the coalition and their contacts consistently indicated that there is a shortage of supportive services throughout Colorado due to funding constraints and the fragmented structure of Colorado’s workforce development system.

A number of organizations have conducted research to determine if there is a direct correlation between successful job placement or completion of jobs training programs and the delivery of supportive services. A [national survey](#) conducted by the Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) aggregated data pertaining to this question. Published in June, 2016, the survey results were consistent with the anecdotal evidence brought forth by members of the Colorado Skills2Compete coalition. Over 80 percent of the job training administrators surveyed by IWPR indicated that supportive services are critical to ensure that those with barriers to employment can complete a job training program. Furthermore, this study’s respondents consistently remarked that they are underfunded and, as a result, are unable to fully meet their clients’ needs. Perhaps most importantly for the Skills2Compete coalition, a [February, 2017](#), report by IWPR found ‘that the probability that a participant would complete their [job training activities] increased by 11 percentage points for each additional supportive service received that addressed a particular challenge the participant faced.’

After reviewing the IWPR publications, members of the subcommittee delved into the various sources and data within these reports to further investigate this issue. Examples include a 2012 Mathematica study that found that only a strikingly low 18 percent of women and 12 percent of men exiting the Workforce Investment Act’s adult program in 2009 received any supportive services at all. Furthermore, a May 2015, [study](#) from the Urban Institute, *Bridging the Gap: Exploring the Intersection of Workforce Development and Childcare* concluded that access to child care was critical to completion of education and training programs for low-income people. These and other studies support the coalition’s initial hypothesis that supportive services are a critical component of the workforce development process, but that the provision of these services is often severely limited due to funding constraints.

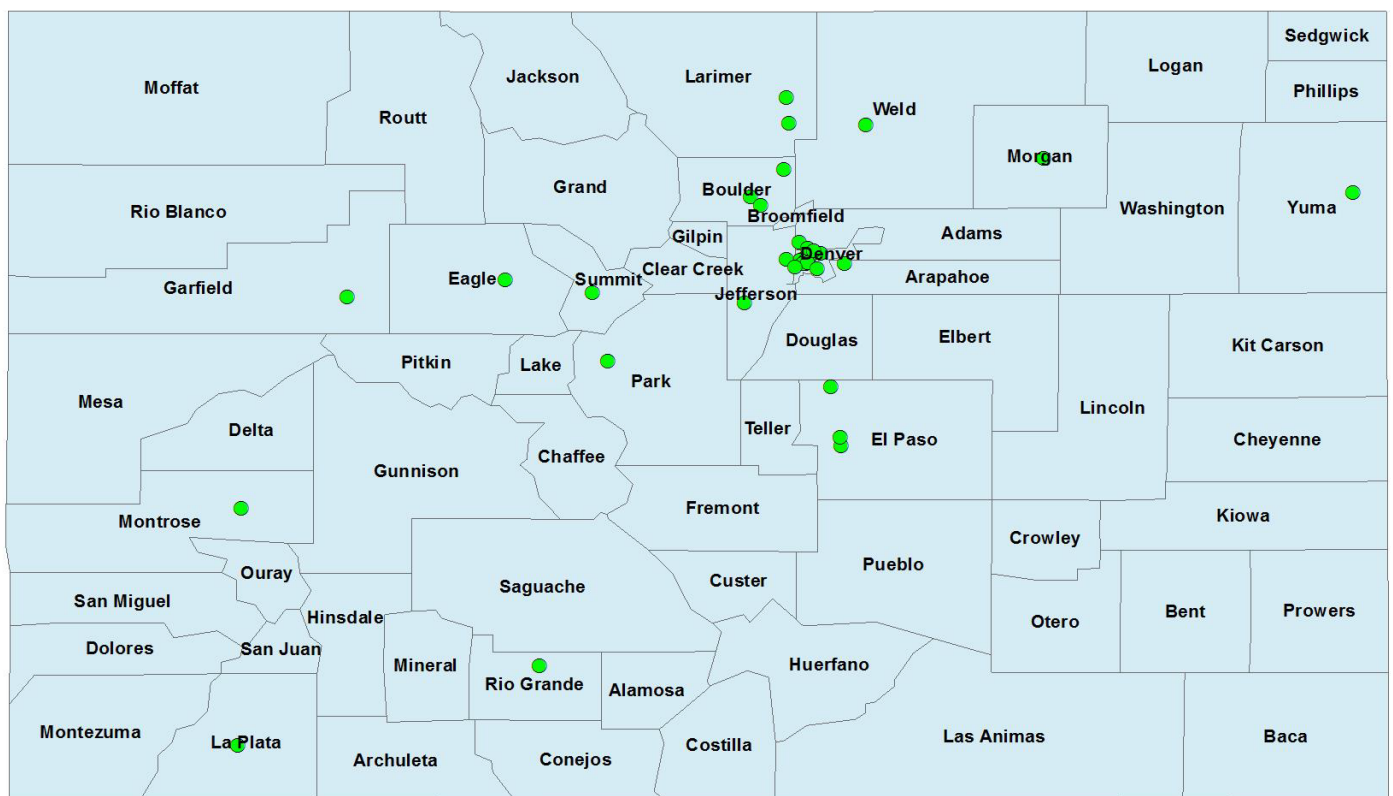
In light of this research, the Colorado Skills2Compete coalition conducted a survey of community based organizations (CBOs) within Colorado that provide supportive services for job training or education. The purpose of this survey was to provide a broad picture of the supportive services landscape in Colorado and identify next steps for the coalition to pursue with the goal of helping individuals with barriers to employment find a decent paying job. The 48 valid responses were collected from various organizations and an analysis of their responses is presented below.

Profile of Respondents

Our sample of respondents consists of 48 unique organizations that provided supportive services to individuals seeking employment, participating in job training, and/or advancing education levels. The Skills2Compete coalition forwarded the survey to members who we knew were employed by community based organizations that provided supportive services to participants for employment and training. These employees also reached out to their colleagues in like-organizations, thus extending the survey's reach. Additionally, we contacted grant-making organizations who financially supported community-based supportive services providers, and asked them to share our survey with their grantees.

A total of 17 counties were represented amongst respondents. Denver County was host to most of these CBOs, containing nearly half, or 21, of those surveyed. Because the Skills2Compete Coalition is based out of Denver, our most engage core is also located in Denver. The snowball approach we took for our outreach resulted in only exacerbating our Denver-centric respondent pool. Despite this concentration, amongst those surveyed are CBOs as far west as Montrose and as far east as Yuma. A limitation of the survey is that respondents from the southwest corner of the state were largely absent (Map 1). This is most likely due to the fact that amongst the respondents we engaged with during the course of our survey outreach, there were none within the Skills2Compete extended network that had contacts in this area.

Map 1. Community Based Organizations Surveyed, by County

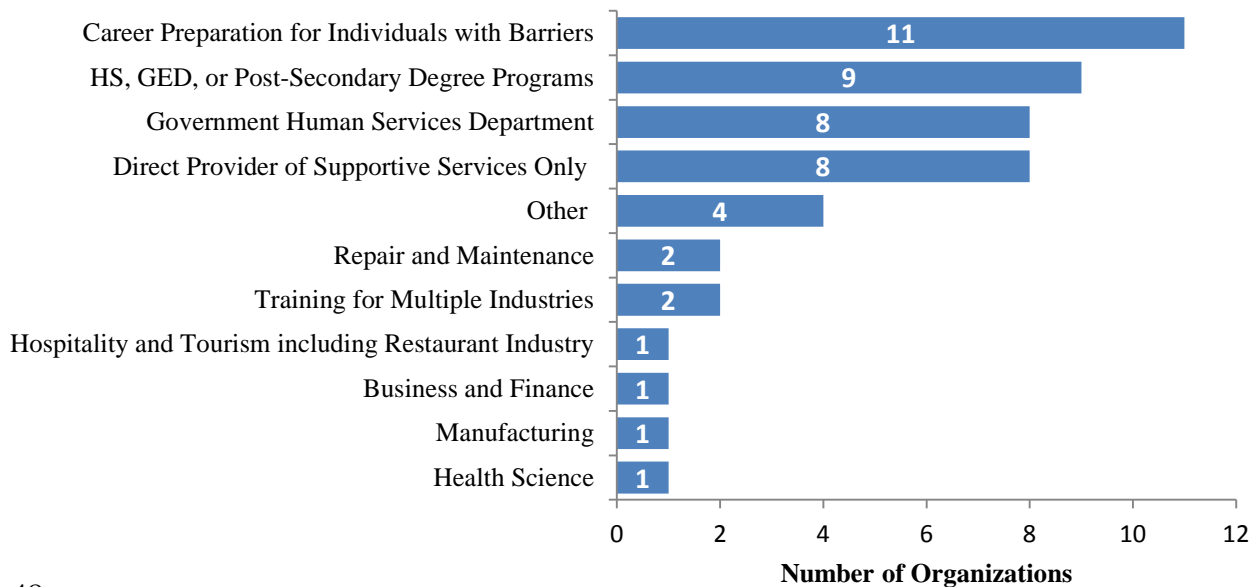


Community Based Organizations Surveyed
● Community Based Organization

In addition to geographic diversity, we were able to pool respondents from 11 broad areas of focus amongst employment and education seekers (Figure 1). We designed categories for our 48 respondents by analyzing each's mission statement and website content. Career preparation for those with barriers to employment, both severe and mild, were the most common type of CBOs we surveyed. By career preparation, we refer to soft

and job placement skills. Some of the barriers that participants may experience are homelessness, disability, or child care needs. Having a sufficient level of education to begin many of the workforce and skill development programs offered to participants is crucial. Since this is such a factor for job placement, there are multiple organizations that have taken this to be their central focus. It is these organizations help participants become more “work ready.” Government involvement and spending play a big role in providing the type of workforce development programming that leads to job creation. Hence, amongst many of our respondents were the human services departments of multiple counties, which are providing the training, education, and support services for many job-seeking participants themselves. Many times these agencies are unable to provide all the supportive services necessary for the lifetime of a participant. Therefore, they rely heavily on referrals to local partners. Participants connect with these direct providers of supportive services in order to supplement their job training or education needs when their programs or local human services departments are unable to serve their diverse needs. Our “other” categorization refers to organizations that did not have a distinguishable area of focus to be a stand-alone group. The remaining organizations were few and singular in their focus.

Figure 1. Organization Type or Focus

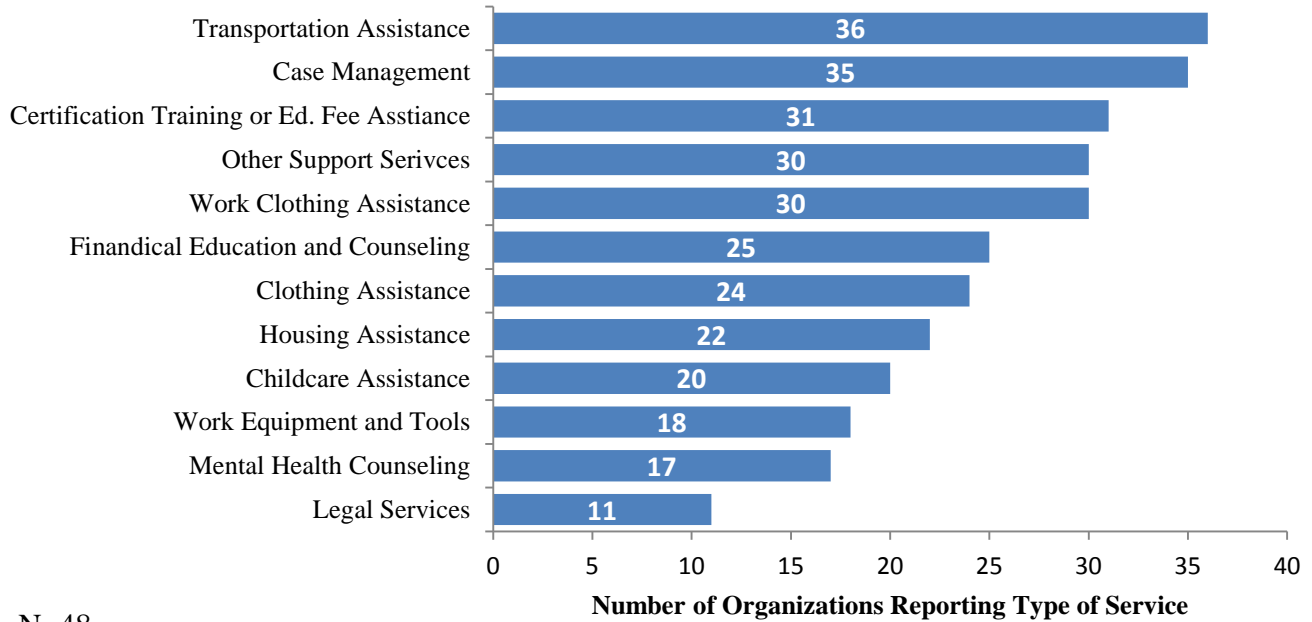


N=48

Types of Supportive Services

Amongst our 48 respondents, we found 11 different kinds of supportive services and one category (“other”) for all the ones that had not been identified with any one certain type (Figure 2). These are amongst the most commonly identified supportive services types in a national study by the [Institute for Women’s Policy Research](#). Organizations provide multiple supportive services, and thus the sum of all supportive services provided exceeds the number of respondents.

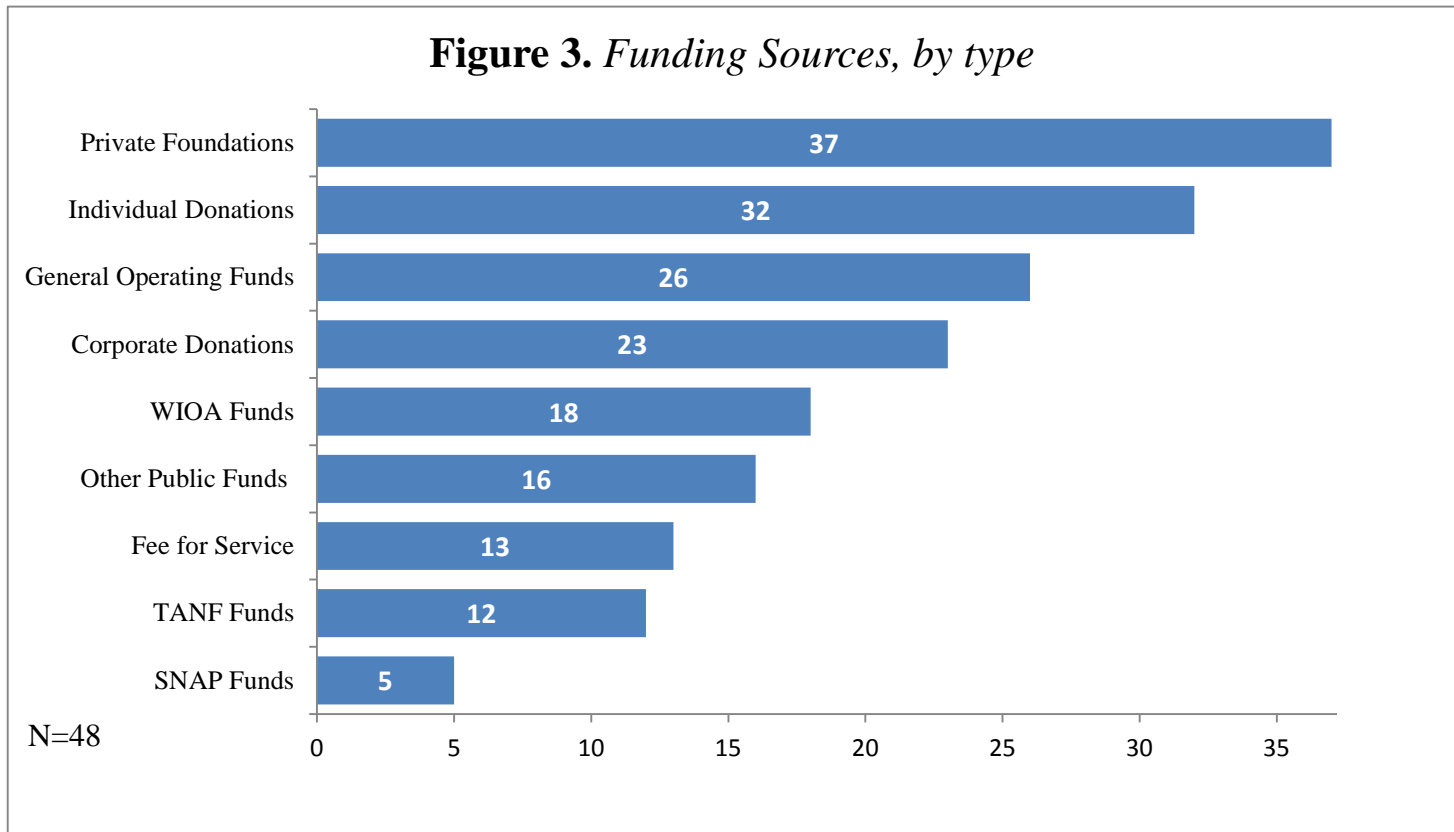
Figure 2. *Supportive Services Provided, by Type*



N=48

Funding

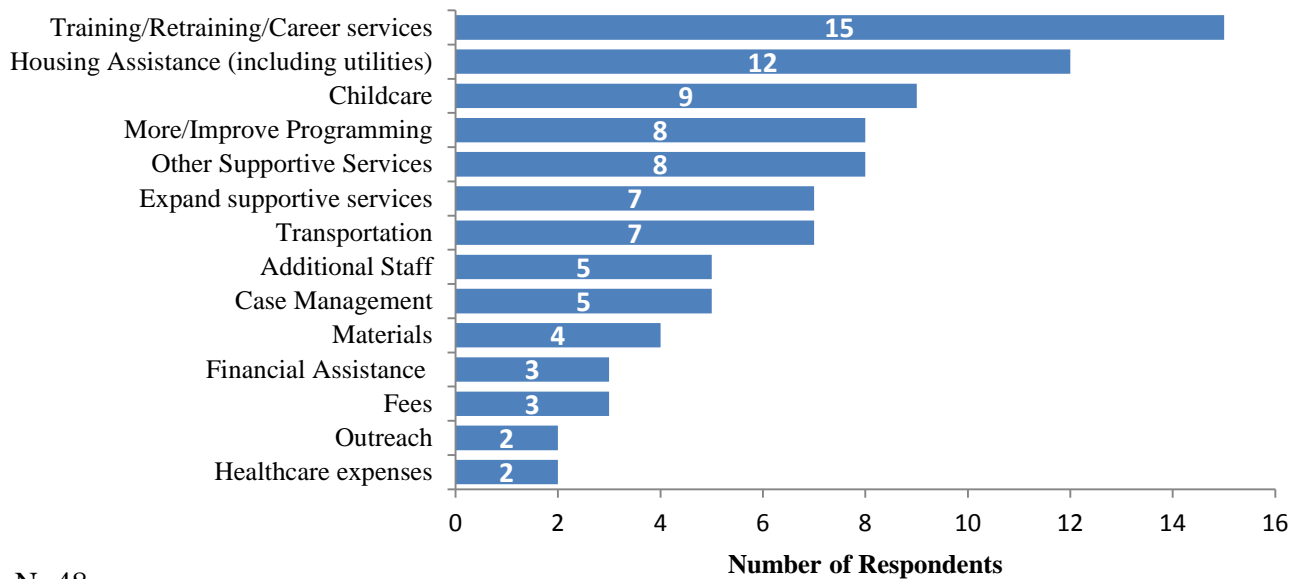
Below are the nine most common sources of funding for supportive services (Figure 3). Although this figure helps us see what type of funding sources are out there for supportive services, it does not tell us which funding type actually contributes the most to the supportive services landscape. Private foundations are the most common of these sources, with about 69% of respondents claiming they received foundation money for the purpose of supportive services. Although a significant portion, this data point must be seen in context. Since we asked private foundations to forward the survey to their grantees, many of our respondents were sure to check off private foundations as a funding source. Individual philanthropy is also a vital funding source contributing to this landscape. Since all organizations surveyed are operating on tight budgets, very few have dedicated personnel to fundraise for them. In fact, we found that more than half of the organizations claim to have “one or less- the “or less” represents a volunteer or part-time worker-,” full-time equivalents dedicated to fundraising on their behalf. This is relevant because it could reflect a lack of organizational emphasis on funding streams for supportive services. The “general operating funds” breakdown also reinforces this interpretation. This category was created to showcase that some organizations did not explicitly distinguish their supportive services funding from other sources. This could also represent a flaw with our survey design, in which respondents filling out the survey on behalf of their organization did not have sufficient knowledge of the funding mechanisms in place. Corporate donations followed behind this category. Lastly, rounding out the bottom four are different publicly funded sources. During the course of case management, or while enrolling with an organization, participants may qualify for public benefit programs that could go toward the funding of their own supportive services.



Priorities

One of the main reasons this survey was developed was to assess how community based organizations would spend additional dollars around supportive services if they were given additional funds. Question #5 was tailored towards this inquiry and the results revealed something that had not been reflected in the literature. Results from this question showed that the number one priority for additional funds would have gone to fund training, retraining, and/or career services. This category was understood as the development of a skill, hard or soft, that would lead to a job for a participant. Since many of our respondents have distinct industry focuses or connect participants to a range of job training or career options, the programming for respondents in this category varied widely. Yet, this could have been due to the fact that many of our organization respondents were already providing some kind of training or educational component amongst their programming, and wanted to see that kind of programming expand. Nevertheless, an emphasis on the development of further training/retraining/career services could also be in response to participants' demand for them. Others that floated to the top of respondents' lists were housing, childcare, and transportation. These supportive services are not new to the supportive services landscape, and their appearance amongst top future priorities show participants' continued need for them.

Figure 4. Priorities for Additional Funds



N=48

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact us below:

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