

UNCHARTED

NONPROFITS LEADING COLORADO'S
NEWCOMER RESPONSE REPORT





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LGA Consulting offers expertise in community-based work and organizational leadership. Our team works with foundations, nonprofits, and government agencies who share our commitment to racial, economic, and social justice values. Our distinctive approach lies in our ability to personally engage with leaders and communities and to understand the rich tapestry of their unique lived experiences. Through our collaborative approach, we develop personalized solutions through process documentation, program evaluation, and organizational development services.

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THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDING PARTNER

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Leading Change
A CFLEADS INITIATIVE

CONNECTING
COMMUNITIES
IN THE AMERICAS



CONECTANDO
COMUNIDADES
EN AMÉRICA



Since achieving statehood in 1876, Colorado has been shaped by the resilience and contributions of immigrant communities. Immigrants have played a pivotal role in the state's development, from building railroads and working mines to advancing agriculture and commerce.

Scandinavian, Irish, Chinese, and Mexican immigrants were drawn to opportunities in mining, railroads, and farming in the 19th century, while Italians, Germans, and Russians contributed significantly to coal mining and agriculture. Latinos, particularly from New Mexico and Mexico, established deep roots in southern Colorado, creating new towns and hubs of trade. Following World War II, Colorado welcomed displaced persons and refugees, including Japanese Americans, Southeast Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans, enriching the cultural and economic fabric of the state.¹ Today, immigrants remain vital, contributing \$21.3 billion in spending power, \$7.7 billion in state and federal taxes, and representing 11.6% of the workforce.²

Equally critical to Colorado's prosperity are the nonprofits that bridge newcomers to opportunity. These organizations prioritize dignity, connection, and economic stability for immigrant communities. Since December 2022, Colorado, especially Denver, has experienced a historic influx of over 42,000 newcomers within 18 months, the highest per capita among non-border cities. Nonprofits, stretched thin, stepped in to meet rising demands, supporting housing, workforce integration, and more. This sector not only fosters belonging but significantly impacts the economy, contributing \$62 billion, \$25 billion to the state GDP, and supporting 262,000 jobs.

The significant and sudden increase in the number of newcomer immigrants needing services strained a sector that operates on slim margins and extreme resource efficiency. At the same, these nonprofits recognized these services as critical to their missions and the health of our communities, and stretched both their budgets and their workforce to meet these needs. They remain committed to serving the evolving needs of our immigrant communities, but the ongoing needs are ever-shifting and increasingly unpredictable. Colorado Senator Julie Gonzales shared her impressions on the stance that Colorado and Denver have taken to support our immigrant communities. "It is hard to build trust. It is easy to break it...I am proud to see the way in which Colorado and Denver have led with our values in one, respecting the importance of that trust, and two, ensuring that we are following and upholding our state laws and the Constitution."³

"We would like to emphasize the profound impact that our work with newcomers has had on both the community we serve and our organization as a whole. The influx of new immigrants has reinforced our commitment to creating innovative, culturally responsive programs that address critical needs. At the same time, now more than ever, our capacity is stretched to the maximum."

- SURVEY RESPONDENT

It is at this juncture that LCFC aims to document the nonprofit sector's initial response as well as the ongoing need and call to action for the philanthropic, government and business sectors to follow the lead of those nonprofits serving our immigrant communities and bolster their efforts.

Survey

The focus population for this survey was nonprofits serving newcomer immigrants, defined as those immigrants who have arrived in the state starting in December 2022. Some foundations and governmental agencies were also included in the survey distribution. The survey was distributed using a "snowball sample," with the intent for those who received it to forward the information to other community-based organizations within their networks involved in providing newcomer services. LCFC has an extensive list of community-based organizations from previous work, including its Adelante Grant Program and the Nonprofit Infrastructure Grant Program. The Denver Mayor Johnston's Office and the newly formed Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, Office of New Americans, also disseminated the survey. Both agencies have broad networks of organizations involved in working with newcomers.

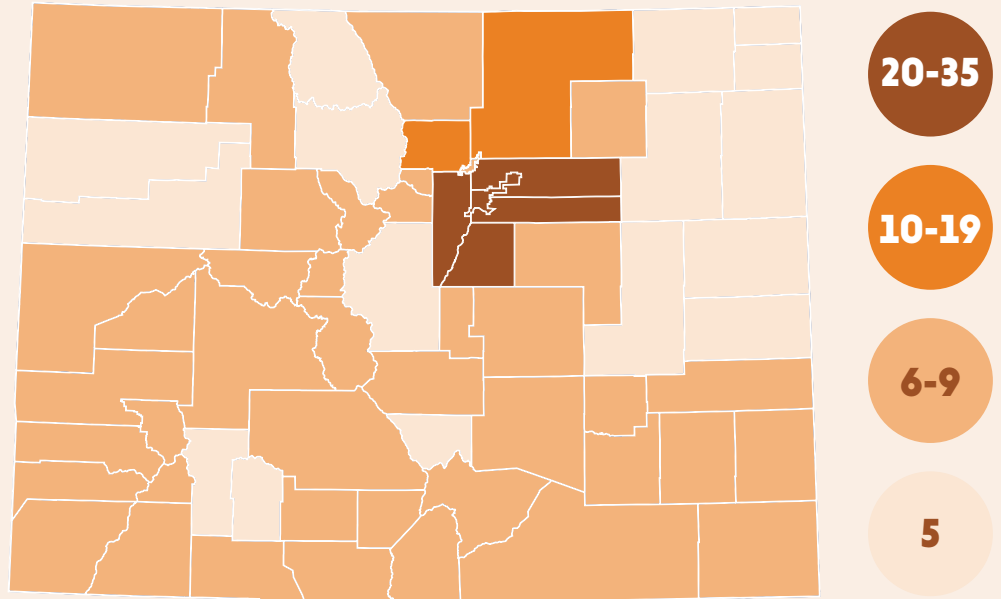
Additionally, several key partner interviews were conducted to follow up on the survey and gain deeper insights and context. The interviews were conducted in English or Spanish, depending on the respondents' preference. Throughout this report, the survey and interview results are de-identified to ensure the confidentiality of the organizations serving a vulnerable community.

The survey and interviews were conducted in late 2024 and early 2025.



LANDSCAPE

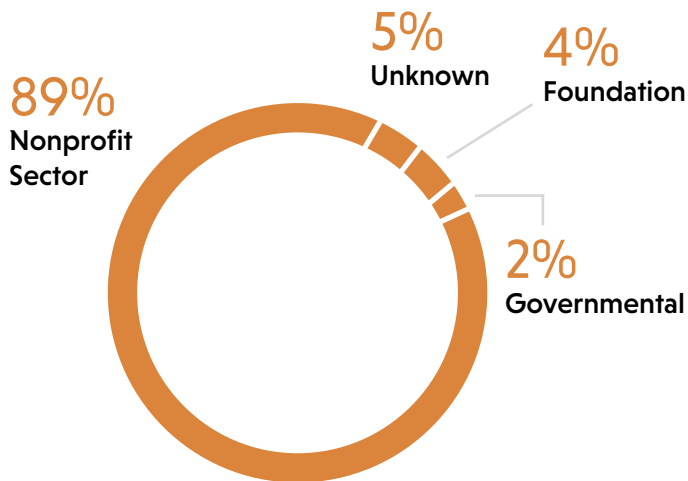
Number of Organizations Serving Newcomers by County



See Appendix 1: Number of Organizations by County

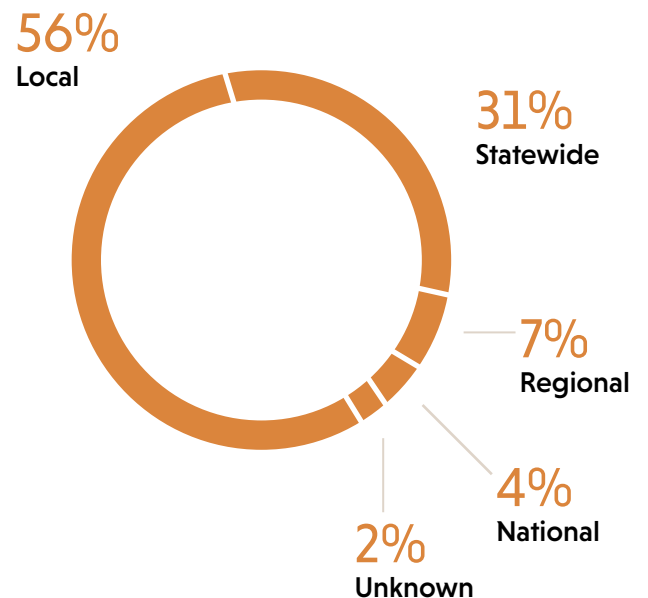
Participants

The survey dissemination efforts resulted in 55 respondents representing 50 unique organizations, with an 82% completion rate. Interviews were conducted with five original survey respondents who agreed to share additional insights.



Geographical Reach

Respondents were asked to indicate their reach to gauge if the nonprofits serving newcomers were local, statewide, or national organizations. All 64 Colorado counties had at least five organizations serving that area. Denver had the most service providers, with 35 organizations providing services in Denver, followed by Adams and Arapahoe, with 30 organizations providing services.



NEWCOMERS SERVED

BETWEEN DECEMBER 2022 - NOVEMBER 2024

24%
Over 2,000

24%
Under 100

9%
1,000-
2,000

4%
751-1,000

4%
501-750

11%
301-500

24%
101-300

The Numbers

Respondents were asked about the average number of people served by their organizations before the increased newcomer arrivals in December 2022. Almost all respondents (95%) indicated that they saw an increase in service requests from December 2022. Only three respondents (5%) answered that they had not experienced an increase or were unsure.

To understand the essential question of the scale of the newcomer response, respondents were asked to provide a range indicating the number of newcomers served from December 2022 to the time of this survey in November 2024. This question offered a range of options to ease the complexity of the response and the challenge of ascertaining precise figures.

As expected, the smaller organizations, typically serving fewer than 1,000 people per year, likewise served a proportional number of newcomers, between 1-300. The larger organizations, typically serving between 3,000 or above each year, absorbed services for more significant numbers of newcomers, more than 2,000.



SUPPORT

Organizations were asked to describe the services they provided in terms of:

Services that already existed within their organization's work,

Services that were added in response to newcomers' needs,

Services that were added and now have become an ongoing permanent service,

Services that were accessed through referral sources,

And services that were needed but were not accessible within their community.

The most commonly indicated *existing* services before December 2022 were:

- Basic needs
- Food assistance
- Transportation
- Legal immigration assistance
- ESL
- Employment training & placement
- Mental health care
- Interpreting services
- Education (enrolling children & adult education)
- Financial education
- Understanding U.S. culture

The services most commonly *added in response to the newcomers' needs* were:

- Short-term housing
- Basic needs
- Food assistance
- Transportation
- Legal immigration assistance
- Mental health care
- Interpreting services
- Education (enrolling children in school)
- Understanding U.S. culture

The services indicated as *not available* of the respondents were:

- Short-term & long-term housing
- Legal immigration assistance
- ESL
- Employment training and placement
- Medical and dental care
- Mental health care
- Financial education
- Understanding U.S. Culture
- Spiritual/Faith



Legal immigration assistance was the only service that became embedded as a permanent service following the increase in the number of newcomer immigrants by 20% or more of the respondents.



Medical and dental care were the most likely to be referred (at 56% and 57%), while dental care was cited as the service least available (32%).



The growing need for behavioral health was also identified, including mental health support and substance use disorder treatment.

Referred services were high across the board, which shows the vitality of the nonprofit ecosystem and the spirit of collaboration, as they continue to respond to evolving impacts and needs from immigrant communities and community members. Appendix 2: Type of Services provides a detailed table of the percent of organizations by the types of services available to newcomers.



"We saw more questions about mental health and how to support children, especially teenagers...Issues like anxiety, depression, and the inability to travel back home to say goodbye to loved ones have had a deep impact." - INTERVIEW RESPONDENT



While this data portrays the availability of particular services, key partner interviews provided additional insight into the accessibility of various resources in terms of both language and digital access. As one interview respondent shared,

"...One of the biggest barriers isn't just language—it's access to technology. We saw this clearly during COVID. Even if people have smartphones, they often don't know how to book an appointment online, for example, for the consulate. Many don't know how to scan documents or navigate online systems." INTERVIEW RESPONDENT



RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Average Budget

Before the newcomer response in December 2022, the responding organizations' average budget was almost evenly split: 35% had a budget under \$300,000, 31% had \$301,000 - 1 million, and 33% had over \$1 million.

Redirected Funds

A solid majority (63%) of the respondents reported redirecting their existing budgets to support newcomer efforts, highlighting the tension many nonprofits face between serving their existing clientele and responding to the intense and immediate needs of newcomers.

"Over the past year and a half, we have shifted much of our focus from serving immigrants who have been in the U.S. longer to responding to the immediate needs of recently arrived immigrants. While this shift was necessary to meet the urgency of the current situation, it is critical that we do not lose sight of the ongoing needs of immigrant communities who have been here longer and still require support for stability, integration, and growth."

- INTERVIEW RESPONDENT

Most organizations (55%) received no new funding to support newcomers, instead stretching existing budgets and staff to meet rising demand.

Source of Funding

On average, respondents receive 40% of their current funding from foundations, followed by 23% from the government, 15% from individual donations, 8% from other sources, including endowments and earned income, and 6% from corporate donations. The number does not add up to 100% because some respondents did not provide data. With foundation funding being the largest source of funding, followed by government funding, foundation funding is a critical source for sustainability in the coming years.

New Funds

The organizations responding to this survey garnered almost \$5.8 million in funding to serve the newcomers to our state. Within that, one organization reported bringing in \$4 million, which means that the 13 remaining organizations that reported additional funding brought in an approximate average of \$135,000. However, also important to note, the majority of respondents (55%) did not receive new (additional) funds to respond to newcomers but, rather, stretched their existing budgets and staffing to meet the increased need.



FUNDS NEEDED TO CONTINUE

Of the 56 survey respondents, 37 indicated that additional funding is needed to continue serving newcomers. While the specific amounts varied—ranging from multi-million dollar losses due to uncompensated services to general requests for any additional support—most organizations cited additional staffing as a critical and ongoing need, with 82% identifying it as essential to sustain their response. Funding needs were also considered in relation to organizational budget sizes, and many respondents shared insights on the broader organizational impacts and anticipated ongoing challenges for their communities.

Percent of Funds Spent on Response

Respondents indicated that they spent, on average, 26% of their budgets toward the newcomer response, although the percentages reported ranged from 0 to 100%.

SMALL

Budget less than \$300,000

FUNDING NEED:
\$10,000 – \$500,000

AVERAGE NEED:
~\$30,000

MEDIUM

Budget: \$300,000 – \$1,000,00

FUNDING NEED:
\$15,000 – \$450,000

AVERAGE NEED:
~\$100,000

LARGE

Budget more than \$1,000,000

FUNDING NEED:
\$10,000 – \$20,000,000+

AVERAGE NEED:
Just over \$250,000

Regardless of the size of the organizational budget, almost a third of the respondents (17) indicated an additional funding need of \$50,000 or less to sustain their services for newcomers.

ADAPTING TO MEET THE NEEDS



Shifting Perceptions

Respondents were asked to share if they experienced negative attitudes or perceptions due to the response to newcomers. This could include internal and/or external reactions. The responses were fairly evenly split, with 43% reporting they experienced negative reactions, 41% reporting they did not, and 15% reporting they were unsure. Some of those who had negative experiences were in jurisdictions that passed anti-immigrant legislation.

Respondents described, in their own words, the type and scale of the changes they made to be able to respond to the newcomers' needs. They also shared what changes would be necessary to maintain services to newcomers. Changes related to services were primarily grouped into: the creation of new programs and services, adaptation of existing services, and existing services with new demand. Respondents also described increased staffing and volunteer engagement, organizational collaboration, internal initiatives and structural changes, partnership and relationship building with newcomers, educating receiving communities, navigating political pressures, and policy advocacy.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS SHARED:

"We have received threats for our work around welcoming people even though we're not a shelter."

"...[our city's] nonprofits feel we have a target on our backs."

COMMUNITY- DRIVEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Building a Robust Network of Support

"We are so proud of Denver and Colorado overall. The state and city need to be ready for the coming deportation crisis as people come up on their final asylum hearing and most are not represented and will be denied. Nonprofits and service organizations must be ready to protect immigrant integration and protection policies and not fall under the thrall of xenophobic, criminalizing or scarcity mindsets and instead be creative, connected and persistent in our work. Together we can confront the coming injustices."

- SURVEY RESPONDENT

*Full responses are summarized in Appendix 3:
Survey Respondents' Summarized Comments.*

Creation of new programs & services, such as:

- Orientation to the U.S. culture and systems navigation
- New materials like "informational booklets"
- Shifts to essential service provision, including clothing, hygiene items, and food distribution; housing; transportation assistance; legal assistance; and medical services

Adaptation of existing programs

- With both language and cultural adaptations

Existing programming with increased demand

- Including increased need to cover costs due to newcomers' ineligibility for many government assistance programs (e.g. Child Care Assistance Program)

Increased staffing & volunteer engagement

- With a focus on bilingual staff expertise
- Staff role expansion

Organizational collaboration

- Developed a network for rotating outreach among organizations
- Provided physical space to other entities serving newcomers
- Launched a regional response network to coordinate response and share resources

Internal initiatives & structural changes

- Creation of a secondary trauma support group
- Staff cultural competency trainings
- Internal working groups for coordination and holistic service provision
- Recommitment to values and policies

Newcomer community partnership

- Building trust and rapport with newcomers
- Spreading positivity
- Outreach and education on prevention of human trafficking

Focus on education for receiving communities, including:

- Tensions of resource distribution (i.e. work permits) between existing immigrant communities and newcomers
- Additional pro-immigrant outreach and education to counter the backlash and provide sense of belonging and community

CALL TO ACTION

FOR BUILDING A STRONG NONPROFIT INFRASTRUCTURE



01.

The nonprofit sector built an expansive, collaborative infrastructure in record time — funders and policy makers must support and sustain it to address emerging gaps in the safety net.

This report found that all Colorado counties had services available as well as a strong presence of referrals being made between organizations, indicating that the nonprofit collaborative infrastructure and ecosystem is emergent, and organizations have developed relationships with the newcomer communities. This connectedness will allow these organizations to be coordinated and respond effectively to future needs as they arise and evolve. The funding community has a role to play in solidifying this network, reducing duplication of services as well as time spent on fundraising, helping philanthropic resources go further.

"We have built a strong network mostly by women. We are not competing; we uplift each other and protect each other and ensure our organizations don't shut down because our communities need us. It is built on trust, respect, and love."

- INTERVIEW RESPONDENT

02.

Serving newcomers strengthens us all.

It is striking that while organizations and their workforce were stretched in responding to the sudden and significant increased need for services, many organizations reiterated their commitment to serving newcomers to our communities and the values aligned in doing so.

"We are driven by determination, our work doesn't stop. For us, it's a priority to support not only newly arrived immigrants but also those who have been here for some time...If one person improves their situation, we all benefit as a community."

- INTERVIEW RESPONDENT

03.

Support nonprofit staff well-being to sustain adaptive and responsive work.

While organizations remain deeply committed to serving immigrant communities, many are stretched thin. They are working to balance sustaining existing programming with responding to new and emerging needs—often without the staff capacity or resources to do both effectively. This includes integrating newcomer response efforts alongside support for long-established immigrant communities.

As needs shift—for example, the types of legal services required—organizations must remain connected and prepared to adapt. But this constant pivoting has real impacts on staff, including burnout and secondary traumatic stress. Without intentional support for staff well-being and manageable workloads, the ability of organizations to respond effectively may be compromised.

"We continue to see a need for family law services, and an even greater need for immigration services. We are unable to meet this demand because the organizations providing these services are overwhelmed...We rely heavily on external resources to expand our capacity to serve the community."

- SURVEY RESPONDENT

04.

Invest in nonprofit infrastructure, including legal and technical support.

As the policy and political landscape continues to shift, organizations are navigating increasingly complex challenges. In addition to connecting community members to legal services, many organizations themselves are seeking legal support and other forms of technical assistance to respond to these changes.

At the same time, they are working to manage a significant volunteer response, often without the internal capacity to effectively organize and sustain this level of engagement. Meeting the needs of immigrant communities requires not only commitment, but also infrastructure—operational systems, legal guidance, and technical support that allow organizations to manage their work and respond with impact.

"How do we take care of the staff on the front lines? Without the people, we won't be able to sustain the work."

- INTERVIEW RESPONDENT

05.

Nonprofits have built an extraordinary response — now philanthropy must trust them with multi-year support to sustain and expand their impact.

As described throughout this report, community-based organizations were well positioned to understand and respond to the emerging needs as they presented themselves, creating new services, as well as adapting and expanding existing services. In addition to providing these services, they expanded staffing, created new partnerships, launched internal organizational initiatives to enhance effectiveness, engaged in public awareness and education, and policy advocacy. Funding multi-year operating grants will address many challenges these organizations face, including decreased federal funding options, administrative time associated with fundraising, which can support staff capacity in other areas, and the ability to repurpose funding as needs shift in real-time. Organizations are also reporting a more intentional shift toward needs-based fundraising as opposed to donor-driven fundraising.

"I really appreciate a lot of the foundations reaching out to us directly and telling us... how can we help? Being flexible [about] how we use the money if they can... is important. We will adapt. Knowing they have our backs is important for us."

- INTERVIEW RESPONDENT

"The Constitution is extraordinarily clear on this, and the Constitution protects us all regardless of your immigration status."

Julie Gonzales, Colorado State Senator

The average annual amount indicated to sustain programming levels was \$120,000; however, almost a third of respondents indicated an additional funding need of just \$50,000 annually or less to maintain their support for newcomers. Most organizations also indicated an increased staffing need of between 1 and 5 additional staff. This need, however, assumes that these organizations' base funding is maintained when, in reality, many are now facing threats to their existing funding on top of the increased need. The threats to funding lie not only in the amount of available funding but also in the perceived and actual vulnerability of organizations accepting certain types of funds and the reporting requirements that could result in compromising the safety of their communities.

By mapping the reach and response of the organizations responding to the current moment, we see a sector and a community that is on the ground, connected, committed, and poised to serve the needs of our immigrant communities. The philanthropic community can stand in solidarity to sustain these community-led efforts and support crucial services. Despite the rapidly shifting national environment, Colorado Senator Gonzales reminds us, The Constitution is extraordinarily clear on this, and the Constitution protects us all regardless of your immigration status."

APPENDIX 1: NUMBER OF ORGANIZATIONS BY COUNTY

60%+

Denver (66.04%)

50–59%

Adams (56.60%)

Arapahoe (56.60%)

40–49%

Jefferson (47.17%)

30–39%

Douglas (37.74%)

Broomfield (32.08%)

20–29%

Boulder (24.53%)

Weld (18.87%)

El Paso (16.98%)

Pueblo (16.98%)

10–19%

Alamosa, Summit (15.09%)

Archuleta, Baca, Bent, Dolores, Eagle, Gunnison, Huerfano, La Plata, Lake, Larimer, Montezuma, Montrose, Prowers (13.21%)

Chaffee, Clear Creek, Conejos, Costilla, Crowley, Delta, Elbert, Fremont, Gilpin, Kiowa, Las Animas, Mesa, Moffat, Morgan, Otero, Ouray, Rio Grande, Routt, Saguache, San Juan, San Miguel, Teller (11.32%)

<10%

Cheyenne, Custer, Garfield, Grand, Hinsdale, Jackson, Kit Carson, Lincoln, Logan, Mineral, Park, Phillips, Pitkin, Rio Blanco, Sedgwick, Washington, Yuma (9.43%)

APPENDIX 2: TYPES OF SERVICES

The table shows the percentage of those indicating the status of those services (i.e., if they were existing services before December 2022, newly added in response, etc.).

	EXISTING SERVICE PRIOR TO DEC 2022	SERVICE ADDED TO RESPOND TO NEWCOMERS	NEW PERMANENT SERVICE	REFERRAL WITHIN THE COMMUNITY	SERVICE NOT AVAILABLE
Short-term Housing (including shelter)	13%	28%	9%	60%	28%
Long-term Housing	4%	10%	4%	60%	33%
Basic Needs (toiletries, clothing, laundry)	28%	32%	8%	48%	8%
Food Assistance	32%	26%	6%	48%	8%
Transportation	24%	30%	6%	40%	16%
Legal Immigration Assistance	30%	28%	20%	40%	20%
ESL	22%	9%	4%	54%	20%
Employment Training and Placement	25%	16%	10%	43%	25%
Medical Care	16%	6%	2%	56%	28%
Dental Care	9%	4%	4%	57%	32%
Mental Health Care	21%	21%	13%	44%	27%
Interpreting Services	42%	22%	8%	28%	18%
Education (enrolling children in school)	22%	27%	8%	43%	18%
Education (adults)	21%	15%	6%	53%	19%
Financial Education	26%	15%	15%	40%	28%
Understanding U.S. Culture	22%	31%	8%	31%	24%
Spiritual/Faith	16%	4%	2%	47%	40%

The types of services listed in the "Other" category included: economic opportunity/business development, home visitation programs for children 0-5 years, doula services for pregnant families, wrap-around supports for teen moms, digital literacy, afterschool programs, HIV/AIDS services, services for migrant victims of crimes, sobriety/recovery services, and more.

APPENDIX 3: SURVEY RESPONDENTS' SUMMARIZED COMMENTS

Commitment to Serving Newcomers

- The response has deepened the organization's commitment to its values and roots. Serving newcomers strengthens the entire community. Additional resources and support is vital to sustaining this mission.
- We are thankful to have played a role in supporting newcomers to Denver and beyond.
- Though this has been a creative challenge for us as an organization, we are a much better community as a result of the emergency response program for newcomer families.
- We are grateful to have been able to serve our new neighbors helping them connect to benefits which help them thrive in their new communities. We are excited to continue to serve this community and look forward to new sources of funding.
- We are so proud of Denver and Colorado overall. The state and city need to be ready for the coming deportation crisis as people come up on their final asylum hearing and most are not represented and will be denied. Nonprofits and service organizations must be ready to protect immigrant integration and protection policies and not fall under the thrall of xenophobic, criminalizing or scarcity mindsets and instead be creative, connected and persistent in our work. Together we can confront the coming injustices.

Worry about the Political Climate

- We want to continue serving newcomers, but worry about the impacts and our ability to maintain our core programming with the change in political climate and impending issues for newcomers.
- We are concerned about the impact of the 2024 election, and potential increased need for mental health services and responding to other needs that come up for students.

Description of Ongoing Needs

- We are expanding our programming to support the newcomers' needs.
- Childcare and affordable housing continue to be the most requested resources, and are the most slim.
- We are a small but mighty food and family resource center who has been overwhelmed by increasing need and decreasing funds post-pandemic. We had to cut back on the amount of food per family last year due to dwindling resources. We also had to shift from one-time emergency rent assistance to longer-term housing stability programs as a result of limited funding.

- Having U.S. Citizen & Immigration Services come to Denver to process the Employment Authorization Document application was extremely beneficial and effective. I believe getting them to come again would motivate the nonprofit community to keep going with the workshops.
- We have had so many priority issues and are constantly switching to the next crisis at hand. There is so much need, for housing, language access, and English classes that are taught in French and Spanish, bus passes and transportation, applying for jobs, taking assessments, wage theft amongst black and brown communities.
- Newcomers will need immigration legal assistance moving forward under the new administration and other services that will not be available for the immigrant population, especially newcomers.

Organizational Capacity Challenges

- We declined \$50,000 additional funding that was offered to us to provide case management because it required adding additional outcomes to the work we were doing, rather than expanding the outcomes we were working toward. Also, \$50,000 would not be sufficient to hire a full-time staff member with benefits.
- The current response is unsustainable. Organizations are doing more without more resources. We need a collective solution.
- It became difficult to find referral agencies with capacity or to keep up with the changing landscape; everyone was stretched thin.
- We continue to see the need but it is becoming more challenging to secure general operating dollars due to the ARPA funding fading away and the current political climate. We are trying to stay away from a donor-driven approach and moving into a need-driven approach.
- We saw an initial interest from funders and donors, but have noticed a decrease in interest from donors recently.
- With the end of multiple grants, we had to lay off a number of staff that are critical to continue to support our newcomers.
- We are having to use other resources to meet the needs of folks coming into our organization. We can use support with figuring out how to balance existing funding commitments with what folks on the ground need.

ENDNOTES

1

Colorado Nonprofit Economic Impact Report, Philanthropy Colorado, 2024.

2

Map the Impact: Immigrants in Colorado, American Immigration Council, retrieved March 2025.

3

City Cast Denver, 6 March 2025.

