

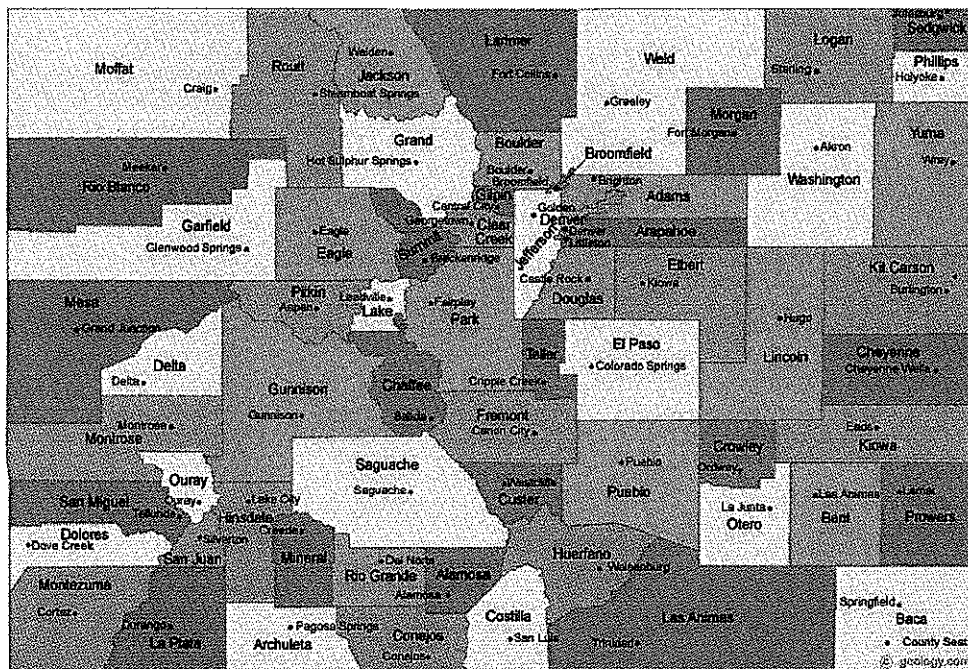
Economic Opportunity Poverty Reduction Task Force

County Best Practices Subcommittee

- Jean East, University of Denver
- Judy Hall, Economic Opportunity Task Force Coordinator
- Mary Atchison, United Way of Larimer County
- Tracey Stewart, Colorado Center on Law and Policy

Colorado County Best Practices

Summary Report on Poverty Reduction and Expanding Economic Opportunity for Colorado Families



Over 20 counties from around the state of Colorado participated in a phone survey this summer. Many counties had not formally set up groups, but have many programs in place. The following counties were selected because they had started poverty reduction work within their regions. Following are some of the findings that may be of interest to the statewide task force.

Group structure and community action

Adams County:

From Adams County Community and Economic Development: They do not have a poverty task force or a collaborative effort with that focus. They do have a CDBG grant with North Metro, Goodwill, and Human Services focusing on an initiative to assist low- to- medium-sized small businesses get started or stay in business. They also have a Homeless Prevention Sub-Committee, Adams County Youth Initiative, Early Childhood Initiative, and many different collaborations with agencies providing services for children and families. They are hoping to strengthen community collaborations by forming a systematic and strategic workgroup in the future (maybe with ARRA funds).

Delta County:

There is no one group that deals with poverty per se. Poverty is an "accepted" state. The Area Development group works on increasing economic opportunities in the area. The HHS staff felt the closest group would be the Community Services Block Grant Advisory Committee. This is a 6 member group, with a Commissioner member, appointed by the Board of County Commissioners. It has specific membership categories and advertises for candidate for 2 year terms each January. Connected also through health department

Denver County:

The Denver City Council and the Mayor's Office has convened a group of citizen representatives to take a broad look at the strategies, programs, and policies that aim to improve the economic prosperity of Denver residents. The Task Force will operate under the following Mission to help guide their work:

To identify ways in which city agencies, community organizations and the business community can work together to more effectively advance the economic prosperity of Denver residents in the hopes that, by creating new partnerships and placing a higher priority on the importance of improved economic outcomes for all Denver residents, we can expand economic opportunities and strengthen our economy.

El Paso County:

They have no task force specifically but have a lot of good community programs. I was referred to Lynne Telford of Pikes Peak United Way by Beth Rolstad. Lynne talked about their Quality of Life Indicator for Pikes Peak Region. There are 10 partners including housing, education, economy, arts, social well being, transportation, community engagement, promoting good health, safety issues.

Grand County:

No coordinated efforts are happening in Grand County. They are seeing an increase in need for benefits in single males who typically work in tourism (ski industry) in the winter and construction in the summer. Construction is nonexistent, so they are struggling this summer.









Douglas County. Spoke with Douglas County Community Development who told me they are working closely with Castle Rock Economic Development and Parker Economic Development. They are working on a framework for better cooperation and collaboration efforts. They have no focus on issues of poverty

Jefferson County:

The county is really not focusing in terms of a task force on poverty. Jefferson is doing a Senior Study Leadership Program Initiative that is identifying services available and what is lacking for seniors.

Response from Jefferson County Human Services:

Jeffco has been involved on many different fronts to deal with reducing poverty and increasing prosperity and self-sufficiency. I had convened a task force last year of county employees to focus specifically on this issue. We had begun by focusing on data gathering, and a goal of reducing poverty by 75% by 2015. We're DOING, not really planning at this point. Players involved include employees from Work Force, Head Start, Community Assistance, child welfare, TANF, etc. Initiatives currently moving forward:

-  Work with the business Community thru Employer of Choice project (where we wrap around services for employees at particular companies to ensure they stay employed - this is a VERY exciting project we're modelling after one started in Michigan)
-  Make working w/faith based communities a priority
-  Make housing a priority; put a full-time employee on this (also working w/other non-profits and the faith community)
-  Make working w/the business community a priority
-  Make outreach a priority
-  Make working w/dual system clients a priority
-  Developing a comprehensive volunteer coordination effort with churches and non-profits partnering with specific business non-profits to enhance WorkForce education offerings (micro-loans)
-  We are interested in addressing the fundamental reasons that people wind up in poverty (lack of education, domestic violence etc.) - not just the barriers they encounter (homelessness, hunger, etc.).

Larimer County:

United Way of Larimer County, in collaboration with The Coloradoan, CSU's Center for Public Deliberation, and the Northern Colorado Economic Development Corporation convened a meeting in October 2007 to begin the design of a county-wide multi-faceted effort to turn around the trend of rapidly increasing poverty in Larimer County. Currently we have eight strategy development teams made up of volunteers, agency, government, business, faith and other types of people. We sought out people with knowledge of the topic they are working on so they can guide us in the development of strategies that are research-based and proven. We also have a Steering Committee made up of about 30 people from across the county. Their role is to advise and assist in bringing all these issues together in a cohesive way.

Mesa County:

Mesa County's task force adopted the model presented at a States Works Conference two years ago from Ruby Payne's "Bridges Out of Poverty". Sue Tuffin, as the Workforce Director, saw signs of a

weakening economy and shared the workshop information within the community. They contracted with AHA consulting and initially trained 27 train-the-trainers who then went out and trained (or did modified workshops) others within the 400 some involved community members. Housing, mental health, school district, colleges, Catholic Outreach, professional within the community, staff and managers of Human Services received training. Clients received a two-week session, "Getting Ahead". The whole community seemed to evolve, bridging gaps, developing a broader base, empowering clients and becoming ever aware of poverty issues that may be the underling cause of poor participation of lack of progress for clients and families in the community.

Mesa created a separate advisory group around this effort and the Workforce is the lead. It is about a 75 member group, including all Human Services agencies within the community, government agencies, employers, faith-based organizations, non-profits, child care community, K-12 schools, community colleges, housing, past and current recipients of services and the working poor are represented.

The Business and Economic Department at Mesa Community College facilitated a community needs assessment and information from that became the framework for RFP's and leveraging TANF reserves. Because of this new coordination, they have developed an additional 43 contracts targeting TANF funds which are addressing more gaps within the service network in the community. These new contract are in addition to the 28 TANF funded contract already in place. Some of the new contracts are with housing, youth, employers, "adopt a block", etc.

Morgan County:

No collaborative efforts in Morgan County.

Rio Blanco County:

They are seeing increased need but have no comprehensive coordinated effort.

Routt County:

The intention is to create an organized group to design and implement solutions to those issues that prevent people from being self-sufficient in Routt County.

Sterling/NE Colorado-Serving Elbert, Lincoln, Logan, Sedgewick, Phillips, Yuma, Washington, Kit Carson, and Cheyenne counties:

Nothing comprehensive is happening in this area. Agencies are working together doing what they normally do. Collaboration is good. Poverty has increased, and they are seeing family members how have moved away are moving back and trying to find jobs where there are none available.

Weld County:

United Way of Weld County—they have projects that focus on one aspect of poverty or another, but have not created any comprehensive effort that incorporates multiple partners and a variety of issues.

Issues to address through collaboration

Denver County:

The task force will review work that has already been done on various issues such as housing and livable wages to incorporate judicious research into this planning and to implement programs and policies that would increase access to economic opportunities for Denver citizens. This is a short list from 2 of the 6 subcommittees set up by the task force.

1. Cliff Effect Solutions
2. Services, Savings, and Costs of Moving from Poverty to Work

3. Denver as advocate for Self Sufficiency Standard
4. Social Entrepreneurship
5. Addressing barriers to public assistance programs
6. Job creation

Larimer County:

We have 12 areas of focus, identified by a community process:

- a. Access to Child Care
- b. Workforce Development—identifying critical skill sets, access to job training opportunities, support systems to access job training
- c. Low income housing
- d. Better Jobs—improving the quality of existing jobs
- e. Mentoring to enhance individual and family resources
- f. Health care
- g. Awareness of diversity and poverty
- h. Community awareness of the importance of a focus on the health and well being of children and youth
- i. Transportation
- j. Increasing academic success
- k. Financial justice—encouraging positive banking for low income
- l. Financial literacy
- m. Public Policy

Once strategies are developed United Way of Larimer County will take the lead on bringing together funding for the initiatives. While United Way will not be the sole funder, they do have seed money to put towards projects. In addition, grants and major gifts will be utilized.

Mesa County:

Focus is to keep modeling “Bridges Out of Poverty” and keep the awareness alive within the community. Focusing on the hunger initiative, food banks and implementing aggressive outreach efforts to get food stamps to families in need.

They are tracking effects of hunger on academic achievement. They have started a program in elementary and middle schools reaching about 900 kids who have inadequate food during the weekend and thus perform poorly the first of each week at school. This new program gives identified kids food sacks to take home to eat during the weekend. They have seen improvements. They are working on back to school back packs and school supplies for fall. These are just some examples of the issues being addressed.

Routt County:

Similar to Larimer. More a matter of people on the brink of affordability of living in Steamboat. Affordable housing, Youth services, health care, child care, etc.—they all revolve around the ability to be self-sufficient and prevent people from falling into poverty.

Summit County:

It's more a matter of people on the brink of affordability of living in the resort areas. Affordable housing and transportation to work are the biggest issues. It all revolves around the ability to be self-sufficient.

Perspective on Poverty

Delta County:

No – poverty an accepted state, area has a “rugged individualism” perspective

Larimer County:

We view poverty as a very complex, multidimensional issue that needs to be addressed on several different levels through a variety of approaches.

Mesa County:

Issues of poverty are multifaceted and takes time to understand it and recognize it. There goal is to end poverty as we know it and make sure all families and individuals have stable, adequate shelter, food, health care, etc.

Routt County:

Not yet.

Stakeholders/Leadership Structure

Denver County:

The task force is comprised of policy makers, business representatives and industry experts who will recommend five transformative, actionable, concrete, and measurable actions that will lead to economic outcomes.

Mesa County:

Department Heads of Gov Agencies, professionals within the community, all non-profits, very inclusive. Different members take turns to facilitate group process. Decisions are made as a whole.

Larimer County:

We have a Steering Committee that oversees, advises, and coordinates. United Way of Larimer County has a staff person dedicated to this effort. Our stakeholders consist of community members from across the spectrum.

Routt County:

United Way of Routt County and DHS of Routt County are primary. We will try to engage the community.

Roles for clients, consumers or affected members of the community

Denver County:

The meetings are open to the public. Interested parties can have access to all the materials and can be part of the on-line open dialog for comments. To be part of this process and have access to all the documents, please go to www.e-Colorado.org. You must sign up and establish your own password in order to participate.

Larimer County:

We have involved clients/consumers on committees and in focus groups. We have found that many consumers do not have the ability to attend regularly scheduled meetings, so have found that focus groups work best for us.

Mesa County:

Clients and affected members of the community are very active with the process and they value the opinions of the constituents. They are why Mesa is doing all of this. Example: Feed back from clients was transportation issues; most have their own vehicle but they break down etc. Started Angels Auto's and has classes on how to maintain their own vehicles. Also have funded free public transportation.

Routt County:

It's too early to tell.

Government Level of Change

Denver County:

Local, state and federal.

Larimer County:

Local and state.

Mesa County:

Local.

Potential Outcomes

Denver County:

Some of the outcomes would include asset building, access to business opportunities, and economic prosperity.

Larimer County:

We are asking our groups to recommend strategies that create systemic change in our Larimer County community, and make recommendations for implementation. United Way of Larimer County, under advisement of our Steering Committee and partners, will take the lead on ensuring that the process begins and following up as needed. We are also developing a Community Assessment Project that will be hosted on Larimer County's web site. This will measure select community-wide indicators over time.

Mesa County:

Assist all to reach the highest level of self-sufficiency as possible. Make sure all have medical and food stamps. Continue to increase heightened level of awareness in community. Hard issue to sell within such a conservative community but it is happening.

Routt County:

Not yet defined.

Metrics used to measure your outcomes

Denver County:

Colorado Self-Sufficiency Standard (July 2009)

Eagle County:

Colorado Self-Sufficiency Standard (Spring 2008)

Garfield County:
Colorado Self-Sufficiency Standard (Spring 2008)

Larimer County:
We use the Community Assessment project that was mentioned above. In addition, we will also be looking at the American Community Survey data to see if the poverty rates in our county decline over time.

Mesa County:
They are basing measures on the County Needs Assessment that was done. Still have child care at 225% of poverty and that is the goal overall.

Pitkin County:
Colorado Self-Sufficiency Standard (Spring 2008)

Routt County:
Resort community issues. Timing is good to look at this problem; people will be willing to talk about it.

Summit County:
Colorado Self-Sufficiency Standard (Spring 2008)

Success Stories

Denver County:
Just started implementation.

Larimer County:
We haven't begun to implement yet. We are in our 2nd year of development, and plan to begin implementing some of our strategies over the next 6-12 months.

Mesa County:
"Many, many personal successes and strengthen and expanded partnerships".

Challenges

Delta County:
1. Transportation
2. Mine layoffs
3. Poverty in senior farm workers

Denver County:
Getting the public engaged or involved.

Larimer County:
This work takes a long time and people get tired. Also, our community doubts the reality of the number of people living in poverty. Getting people and organizations to work together and think outside the box.

Mesa County:
Getting a highly conservative right wing community engaged. County commissioners do not attend the meetings and are not very interested or involved.

Routt County:

Things are definitely getting more difficult for folks. No numbers, but those who were able to piece together a living by getting both summer and winter seasonal work are not able to do that now due to lack of construction jobs and also fewer ski industry jobs. They are struggling badly.

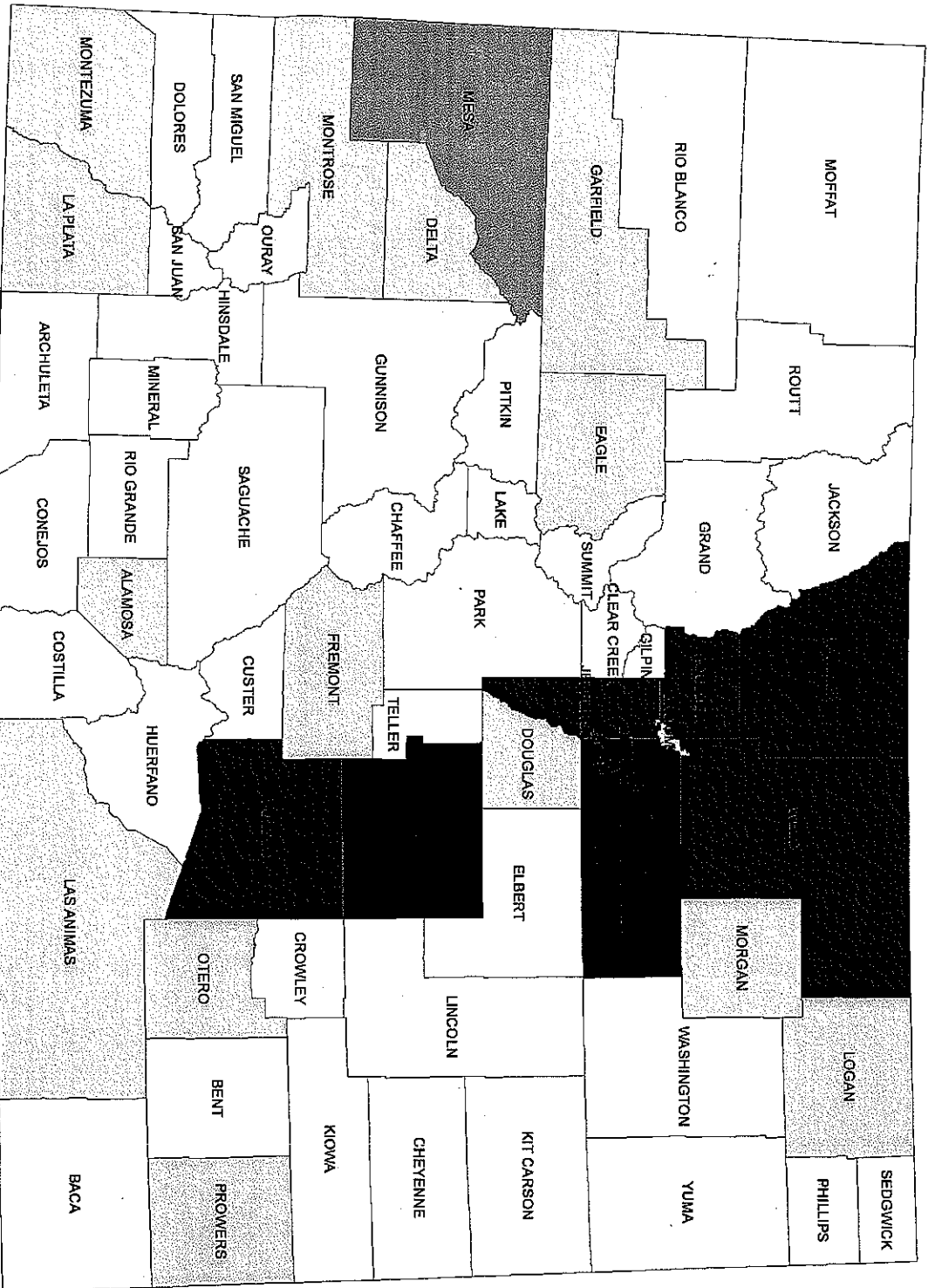
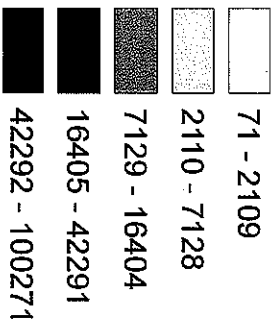
Sterling/NE Colorado-Serving Elbert, Lincoln, Logan, Sedgewick, Phillips, Yuma, Washington, Kit Carson, and Cheyenne counties:

Political will to change.

Other comments:

Multiple counties agree with Mesa: "No magic silver bullet. Success takes a lot of hard work and persistence. Help one person, one family at a time. Don't lose sight of needs of K-12 children."

Number of People in Poverty by County



Free and Reduced Price Lunch, 2008

Percent of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch by School District

- 6% - 22%
- 23% - 36%
- 37% - 48%
- 49% - 61%
- 62% - 88%

