

SECTION I – FINAL REPORT

Background

The data collection undertaken in this report is part of a larger community improvement process called Compass. Compass is a multistage process where data are collected from multiple sources – secondary data, households, key informants, businesses, associations, and service providers – that can help communities identify their strengths and needs. Once those strengths and needs are identified, citizens can join together to effect positive change in their community.

Objective

The objective of the all the data collected and presented in this report was to provide an overview of the social and economic strengths and needs of communities in Weld County.

Report Organization

The Executive Summary, located prior to this section, presents a synopsis of the report. This introductory section, Section I, provides some background regarding the origin of the needs assessment, delineates the objectives that the research project was designed to meet, and describes the layout of the report. Section II outlines the methods that were used to collect, analyze, and report the data.

Section III offers secondary data and detailed findings derived from the quantitative portion of the needs survey and focus group data for the following 9 issues covered in the survey – 1) Economic Issues 2) Educational Issues 3) Environmental Issues 4) Health Issues 5) Housing Issues 6) Leisure Issues 7) Safety Issues 8) Social Issues and 9) Transportation Issues.

Section IV offers a summary of the key findings that may be used to assist the Compass Steering Committee in their efforts to address key concerns identified in the County.

The Appendix contain survey instruments and tables of the results.

Understanding the Results

Statistical Results

One of the goals of social surveys is that the statistical results obtained reliably reflect the issue being studied and this is in part accomplished by surveying an appropriate number of people. According to the 2000 census, the population of Weld County was 180,963. To achieve a statistical reliability of $\pm 5.0\%$ at the 95% confidence level, 360

respondents needed to be surveyed. By December 2004, a total of 370 respondents had returned a completed survey. Therefore, this study ensures that the findings are statistically reliable at $\pm 5.0\%$. This means that if 65% of the respondents answered “yes” to a question, and that if the entire population of Weld County households had been asked, anywhere from 60-70% would have answered “yes” to the question 19 out of 20 times. Therefore there is a 90 percent certainty that the actual percentage falls somewhere in a range of plus or minus the margin of error.

“Don’t Know” and “Not an Issue” Responses

Throughout this report there are instances where “not an issue” answers were not presented in the table of results and only those answers indicating issues were a minor, moderate, or major are reported. The complete set of frequencies can be found in the Appendix. Thus percentages contained in some tables may not add to 100%. Sometimes researchers excluded “don’t know” responses from the results. However, in this study these responses were included in the results so readers could gain a sense of how much respondents felt they knew about certain issues.

Comparing Subgroup Responses

Throughout the report comparisons are made between different subgroups by income, race, education, and by geographical areas in Weld County. Throughout this report the term “non-whites” represents respondents who indicated they were either American Indian, Asian or Pacific Islander, or Hispanic and were grouped together for additional analyses (n=88).

Breaking the sample down into even smaller subgroups reduces the number of respondents and therefore caution should be used when interpreting differences. Unless otherwise noted, only differences between groups that are “statistically significant at $p < .05$ are reported.

In order to compare how respondents in different areas of Weld County felt about the issues investigated in this needs assessment, Weld County was divided into nine geographical locations. The following geographical groupings were used in various analyses:

North Central Weld Nunn Galetton Pierce Lucerne Ault Kersey Eaton Gill	East Weld Briggsdale New Raymer Grover Hereford Stoneham	Central South Weld Fort Lupton Platteville La Salle Gilcrest	South West Weld Fredrick Berthoud Firestone Dacono Longmont Erie Lochbuie Brighton
West Central Weld Johnstown Milliken Mead	South East Weld Hudson Keenesburg	Windsor Area Windsor Severance Fort Collins Post Office but in Weld County	Evans
			Greeley

Self Report Data

Survey results include respondent's perceptions of community strengths and challenges as well as community economic and social problems. Although perceptions may not be in line with more objective data, perceptions drive behavior and opinions. For example, older adults report having higher levels of fear that they will be a victim of crime than younger adults, even though statistically they are the least likely to be a victim of a crime. This perceived fear, even though it doesn't fit with crime statistics, may cause older adults to alter or limit their activities. Thus perceptions are important to measure and in this report are indicators of how people view their communities. In addition, the household survey asked respondents to indicate how much of an issue certain economic and social issues were for them or someone in their household. Respondents will often underreport personal or household problems, especially in areas such as alcohol or drug abuse.

Scope of the Needs Assessment

The needs assessment, while comprehensive in its coverage of Weld County respondents, assessed only broad economic and social community and household issues. The needs assessment did not investigate any one area in great detail, but rather was designed to give community leaders insights into problem areas. For example, the survey results indicated that 23% of Greeley respondents reported that racial and ethnic discrimination was a major issue in their community. The survey does not provide information about why and under what circumstances individuals feel there is discrimination. Thus as community leaders look into issues of concern, there may be a need for additional focus group or community discussion.

In addition, secondary data from government and non-profits was included on each topic covered. Including secondary data was meant to help readers of this needs assessment understand the broader context of the issues being assessed. However, for some of the topics covered in this assessment, secondary data were not available and it was not possible to include data about every economic and social issue. Therefore the exclusion of secondary data is not meant to reflect relative importance of one issue over another.