A Needs Assessment of Weld County:
Single Parents’ Pathway out of Poverty
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Project Description
A community needs assessment and gap analysis of Weld County to identify the need for and environment around low-income single parents achieving post-secondary education, filling industry gaps, and breaking the cycle of poverty.

Organizational Context
• Larimer County, Colorado human service nonprofit organization – founded in 1986
• Assists low-income single parents to obtain post-secondary education (trade school, associates, or bachelor’s degree), find a career, and move out of poverty
• Eligibility: (1) Single parent, with 50% custody of child aged 13 or younger, (2) below 185% Federal Poverty Level
• Exploring service expansion into Weld County, CO

Scholarly Background
• Needs assessments provide better targeting of services by uncovering & addressing service gaps
• Single parent households are more likely to experience poverty than two-parent households.
• Poverty has negative effects on a child’s health and cognitive, physical, and emotional development, and perpetuates a cycle of poverty.
• Solutions:
  • Individuals with higher education earn nearly double those with only a high school diploma
  • Children of parents with higher education have a greater likelihood of achieving higher education on their own
  • Families with more income move off government benefits and contribute to society by paying higher taxes and increase revenue for their community

Methods of Study
Mixed Methods approach
1. Qualitative: Stakeholder Interviews
   • Directors & front-line staff in social service nonprofits and government agencies
   • Open-ended questions about community programs and service gaps
2. Quantitative: Secondary Data Collection
   • Demographic & labor/industry information
Purpose:
1. Uncover a need for this service in Weld County, if any
2. Discover how Project Self-Sufficiency could fit into the community
   • Differences between Larimer and Weld County

Findings

Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WELD COUNTY - POVERTY LEVELS</th>
<th>WELD COUNTY - EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Residents</td>
<td>Residents under age 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
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27% of children live with a single parent.
20% of children live in households receiving government benefits.

Key Population Demographics:
• 29.6% Hispanic or Latino
• 9.8% foreign born
• 19.3% speak a language other than English at home, mainly Spanish

Economy

Unemployment Rate: 2.2% - Due to low area wages, many people work multiple jobs to get by
A living wage for 3-person single-parent household in Weld County: $26.08

Top Industries: Manufacturing, Construction, Oil & Gas, Agriculture

Of these, Oil & Gas is the only industry that pays, on average, a living wage. All four industries are physical labor; Hard on the body and unsustainable long-term.

Industries needing skilled workers:
Manufacturing, Construction, Healthcare, Transportation, Information Technology

Soft-launch into Weld County: Engage parents already enrolled in school
• Office space in Greeley, near public transportation
• Mobile advisors equipped to work remotely
• Spanish-speaking advisors
• Focus on job placement over career assessments
• Conduct outreach at colleges
• Offer financial assistance within first month of enrollment

Next Steps:
• Survey low-income single parents directly
• Explore new funding opportunities
• Explore local student scholarships
• Connect with potential partners in businesses, government, nonprofit, and faith-based organizations

Takeaway & Recommendations

Community Assets
• Scholarship opportunities for local grads
• Variety of human service organizations that extend county-wide
• Diverse population

Community Gaps
• Transportation
• Affordable Housing
• Affordable & Available Childcare
• Some area food deserts
• Coordination between human services & faith-based organizations
• Support for undocumented residents

Barriers to moving out of poverty
• Lack in livable wage jobs
• Inability to advance in jobs
• Lack of employment-needed skills
• Lack of knowledge of community supports