



REGIONAL LISTENING TOUR REPORT

BRIDGING THE GAP

February 25 - 27, 2015

Eagle, Garfield, Lake, Pitkin, and Summit counties

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Executive Summary

The Mountain Rural Philanthropy Days (MRPD) Listening Tour provided an opportunity for executive level staff from statewide grantmaking foundations to learn more about the broad challenges and issues facing Colorado's rural mountain communities. The MRPD region is comprised of five counties¹. The Tour was conducted in preparation for the MRPD Conference, which is scheduled for June 24-26, 2015 in Rifle, Colorado.

Where did we go? The Listening Tour took place on February 25-27, 2015. The delegation visited all five counties within the region, hosting meetings in Frisco, Leadville, Edwards, Aspen, and Rifle, Colorado. The delegation also toured Avon Elementary School and the Summit County Community Care Clinic. A full itinerary is available as Appendix A.

What did we do? In open discussions, community leaders described the region's character, existing needs, and efforts currently underway to address those needs. Representatives working in the arts and culture, business and economic development, education, agriculture and environment, government, health care, human services, and housing sectors participated.

What did we hear? While there are clear differences among communities in the region, there are also many similarities. A number of participants used the same terms to describe the character of the region and its inhabitants: *collaborative, compassionate, diverse, magnetic, active, and full of opportunity*. At each stop on the tour, participants spoke of common regional needs, including: increasing access to behavioral health care and substance abuse services; serving a transient and diverse workforce; creating a diverse and sustainable economy; strengthening the education continuum; preparing for an aging population; and preserving the environment.

What is next? Each of the regional needs explored in this report are important and significant. The MRPD Listening Tour delegation and representatives from the Mountain Steering Committee selected two issues to explore in greater depth at the upcoming MRPD conference, given the sufficient groundwork that exists to aid in advancing opportunities for further community collaboration and capacity building. They include:

1) Increasing Access to Behavioral Health Care and Substance Abuse Services

2) Basic Needs: Strategies for Inclusiveness

On June 25, 2015, the second day of the MRPD conference, the Steering Committee will convene a gathering of executive directors, topic experts, funders, and state and local government officials to foster collaborative dialogue and opportunities for regional success. Representatives from approximately 20 Colorado foundations will join the discussion on the topic that most resonates with their funding priorities and interests. Participants will identify potential resources and discuss regional successes and challenges, learning from their local counterparts as well as statewide experts and stakeholders. This session will explore vital regional partnerships and opportunities for organizational and community capacity building to better address the identified issues. The sessions are designed to strengthen relationships and encourage dialogue across sectors and jurisdictional boundaries. Recommendations will be summarized and added to this report.

¹ Eagle, Garfield, Lake, Pitkin, and Summit counties

Introduction

The purpose of the Mountain Rural Philanthropy Days (MRPD) Listening Tour, which took place February 25-27, 2015, was to provide an opportunity for executive level staff from statewide grantmaking foundations to learn more about the broad challenges and issues facing Colorado's rural mountain communities. In 2012, during a Rural Funders' Forum hosted by Sue Anschutz-Rodgers, Chair and President of the Anschutz Family Foundation, statewide funders expressed a desire to better understand the region's overarching needs and the actions underway to address these issues prior to attending a RPD conference. The Listening Tour concept was developed as a means to address this information gap so grantmakers would arrive at a RPD conference better prepared to collaborate with nonprofit organizations and local governments to support community needs.

Matt Carpenter, Senior Vice President of Grants at the El Pomar Foundation, chaired the MRPD Listening Tour. In addition, senior leaders from Adolph Coors Foundation, Anschutz Family Foundation, Caring for Colorado Foundation, The Colorado Health Foundation, The Colorado Trust, Corporation for National and Community Service, Kenneth King Foundation, and USDA Rural Development, as well as representatives from the Community Resource Center and MRPD Steering Committee, attended the tour (Appendix B).

The goal of the Listening Tour was to allow funders to hear from community leaders—in open, candid discussions—about the characteristics of the region, existing needs, and efforts currently underway to address them. Three primary questions were asked at each meeting:

- 1. How would you describe the personality and culture of your community?*
- 2. What do you see as a key issue or need in your community?*
- 3. What collaborations or initiatives are currently in place that can be built upon?*

In partnership with the Community Resource Center, the MRPD Steering Committee organized and hosted the Listening Tour with substantial support from the local community, including: Avon Elementary School, Aspen Chamber Resort Association, Aspen Community Foundation, CASA of the Ninth, Colorado Mountain College, City of Rifle, Eagle River Youth Coalition, Lake County Build A Generation, The Literacy Project, Mountain Valley Developmental Services, Our Community Foundation, Pitkin County, Summit County Community Care Clinic, The Summit Foundation, and Vail Valley Partnership (Appendix C). Community leaders working in the arts and culture, business and economic development, education, agriculture and environment, government, health care, human services, and housing sectors were invited (Appendix D). The delegation met with more than 100 people across five meetings, visiting one community in each county, including: Frisco in Summit County, Leadville in Lake County, Edwards in Eagle County, Aspen in Pitkin County, and Rifle in Garfield County. The Listening Tour delegation also toured Avon Elementary School and the Summit County Community Care Clinic.

This report summarizes the community characteristics, issues, and needs that were heard in these meetings. It is not intended to be a comprehensive summary of all regional characteristics and needs.

Cross-Cutting Regional Issues

The Mountain Region is not all that meets the eye – the expansive resorts, five star accommodations, world class skiing and outdoor recreation create the face of the community, but do not expose the whole picture. The transient workforce population, adults and youth struggling with behavioral and mental health issues, the aging and individuals living with disabilities are just a few of the “invisible populations” that drive the rural resort economy. Yet, these groups remain largely unseen, hidden or ignored by the millions of tourists who visit the region each year. The Mountain Region is in fact extremely diverse, both socially and economically, with a wide range of residents including: affluent second home owners, dedicated community leaders, diverse working families, transient workers, adventure seeking twenty-somethings, and settled families attracted to the lifestyle the region provides. This assortment of residents creates energy and diversity, but also weighs heavily on the supportive social sector. During the Tour, community leaders voiced a variety of concerns, in addition to opportunities for growth and progress, including: increasing access to behavioral health care and substance abuse services; serving a transient and diverse workforce; creating a diverse and sustainable economy; strengthening the education continuum; preparing for an aging population; and preserving the environment.

Increasing Access to Behavioral Health Care and Substance Abuse Services

An issue that emerged in each of the five counties was the need for more behavioral health services, with an emphasis on substance abuse prevention and education for youth. As “Colorado’s Playground”, resort communities in the region face an influx of young adults promoting a party atmosphere, which infiltrates the permanent community and schools. Special events catered to tourism are frequent across the region, and are designed to encourage and facilitate this behavior in public settings. A community assessment in Summit County³ showed residents were overwhelmingly concerned about the need for additional behavioral health services. Of all parents surveyed, 75% ranked the emotional stability of children and the need for prevention and substance abuse services as a top tier issue.

Mind Springs Health (MSH), a regional behavioral healthcare provider serving ten counties⁴ across western Colorado, provides services throughout the region, yet cannot fully meet the escalating need. MSH operates the only psychiatric hospital between Denver and Salt Lake City, currently providing only six psychiatric hospital beds for every 100,000 people on the Western Slope; compared to the national average of 14. Representatives cited a wait-list of at least a dozen people every day of the week. More often than not, a bed is not available, and those in need of emergency mental health services remain with law enforcement, in shelters, or local emergency rooms. The Aspen Hope Center, serving Pitkin County and the Roaring Fork Valley, and MSH have collaborated to provide services to meet the growing need, focusing on research, collaborative outreach, and community education efforts to reduce the stigma associated with behavioral health issues. Of the 17 community mental health centers, five behavioral health organizations, and six specialty clinics currently operating in Colorado, MSH is the only agency serving the mountain community⁵. Although other service providers are working to provide access to behavioral health care, they are limited in scope or capacity to address the need for services in the region.

Several communities noted a shortage of qualified workers; specifically serving youth behavioral health needs. This shortage has been accredited to the lack of affordable housing, especially for the resort communities in Pitkin, Eagle, and Summit counties. Participants across all five counties noted the need for more school-based counseling services, which helps to remove access barriers created by the stigmas associated in seeking mental health services. Lake County does not have a substance abuse treatment provider for its youth, which challenges health service providers in offering intensive, wraparound programs. In other counties, long waiting periods can pose a major challenge in addressing

³Public Health Needs Assessment, Executive Summary. Summit County Public Health. Prepared By: Corona Insights. 2012. <<http://www.co.summit.co.us/DocumentCenter/Home/View/1620>>

⁴ Eagle, Garfield, Grand, Jackson, Mesa, Moffat, Pitkin, Rio Blanco, Routt, and Summit counties

⁵ Accessing Mental Health Services, Colorado Dept. of Human Services <<http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/CDHS-BehavioralHealth/CBON/1251581450094>>

emergency needs such as the threat of self-harm or suicide. Both affluent families and the working poor struggle with the need for more youth services.

Many communities are pursuing programs to raise awareness around mental health and substance abuse issues. In Summit County, the Healthy Futures Initiative, a collaboration of community leaders, is investigating launching a social media campaign to address the recent legalization of marijuana. The campaign would focus on how to deal with the changing culture, increased potential exposure and normative messaging about the use of marijuana that youth could face. Colorado families confront a unique issue in this respect, embarking to address a rapidly changing culture with no national precedent on how to educate youth and families to adapt and respond to the shifting landscape. It is of value to note the growing need for substance use and abuse prevention programs across the region as a result of the mixed messages youth receive due to the legalization of marijuana.

Across all five counties, healthcare services are generally available and of high quality, but high premium costs often make care inaccessible resulting in high uninsured rates (see chart below). Uninsured rates in all five counties exceed the state average of 14.3%, with Garfield and Lake Counties having the highest uninsured rates in the region, 28.6% and 23.4% respectively. Families and individuals often go uninsured due to the inability to afford the premiums and lack of knowledge in navigating the complex system. Many can only afford plans with very high deductibles and therefore do not take advantage of services because of out-of-pocket costs. In Lake County, there is not currently an operating hospital, although the community is undertaking a feasibility survey with Centura to determine what services could be provided in the future. Lake County has no maternity, home health, or long-term care specialty services available within the county. Residents must seek specialists in neighboring counties or wait for monthly visits from select specialists, such as a pediatric dentist. Lake County Public Health provides some preventative services and has contributed to a decrease in teen pregnancy in recent years. A community collaborative is currently investigating the possibility of opening a school-based health center, to provide services not only to students but to families and school district employees as well.

HEALTH AT-A-GLANCE	Eagle	Garfield	Lake	Pitkin	Summit	Colorado
Uninsured Rate	17.7%	28.6%	23.4%	17.7%	17.7%	14.3%
Uninsured 0-18 Years	12.7%	19.4%	6.6%	12.7%	12.7%	10.3%
Medicaid	6.8%	13.6%	14.8%	2.5%	6.1%	13.7%
Children eligible of Medicaid or CHP+	4,133	7,731	894	623	2,114	512,267
Eligible Children Enrolled in Medicaid	74.7%	74.2%	92.1%	45.7%	73.5%	84.1%
Colorado Indigent Care Program (CICP)	704	7,731	172	1,401	2,051	684,916
Licensed Social Workers	5	5	0	2	3	657
Clinical Social Workers	15	32	1	11	11	3,926

Serving a Transient and Diverse Workforce

The workforce of the mountain region of Colorado is increasingly diverse. In order to thrive, businesses and communities must embrace this diversity and strive to be inclusive in their work. Creating an inclusive workplace is good for business, and when nonprofit organizations develop their programs and services, the myriad cultural backgrounds and experiences of the workforce must be taken into consideration to create a harmonious community.⁶

To maintain a tourism based economy, the workforce must accommodate the needs of a seasonal service industry. This sector generally encompasses transient employees who fill temporary employment opportunities in both the winter and summer. Additionally, there is an influx of immigrants, primarily from Latin America, West Africa, and parts of Eastern Europe and Asia, who fill service positions that may be seasonal or year-round but do not offer a living wage. Families throughout the region need income three to four times the federal poverty level to make ends meet.⁷ Both subsets of this diverse workforce generally do not seek out opportunities to lay roots in the community as their length of stay is undetermined or they are working several jobs, making it near impossible to truly engage in the community. In addition to these more transient populations, the rural resort workforce includes individuals and families who work professional as well as service industry jobs but struggle to meet the high cost of living in the region. Small employers or those with limited capacity, like nonprofits and school districts, are often challenged to increase worker compensation to meet the living wage standards. Eagle, Pitkin and Summit counties are among those with the highest cost of living in the state, requiring their residents to earn high wages in order to be self-sufficient.⁸

Engaging and Respecting Diversity and Working Families

While the mountain communities are often defined by the immense wealth that permeates communities like Vail, Avon, Aspen, and Breckenridge, there is an entire subset of the community who work relatively unseen and keep the service and tourism sectors afloat. As one participant said, “We do a very good job of hiding our poor in Summit County.” This sentiment can certainly be echoed across the region, where resort communities support thousands of seasonal, low-wage jobs attracting transient workers, putting a strain on social service providers and school districts. The economy of the region depends on this significant population of recent immigrants and a more established, diverse workforce. The region has continued to increase their diversity and culture due to the presence of this population; however, the community has not always been inclusive and reciprocal of these cultural benefits. Across the five county meetings, the number of Hispanic individuals in attendance could be counted on just one hand. When Latinos represent 30% of the permanent population in Eagle, Garfield, and Lake counties, this serves as a jarring reminder of the work yet to be done.

School districts are particularly affected by the prevalence of transient families. Dependence on service sector and tourism jobs means a constant turnover in schools that affects the student’s need for community, stability, and readiness for higher education. According to participants, over 50% of K-12 students in Garfield County are Hispanic, sometimes rising to 90% in K-6 schools. With a wide spectrum of students, many immigrant and second generation students face linguistic barriers, often speaking little to no English. There are many instances of bilingual students acting as in-class translators for others who face these immense linguistic barriers. These barriers have been known to cause division and feelings of segregation amongst peers and teachers.

Representatives in every county voiced a desire to more effectively collaborate and engage with the Latino and Hispanic populations. It is important, especially for social service providers, to be able to culturally and linguistically understand, represent, and empathize with the populations they are serving. In order for the Latino, Hispanic, and transient populations to identify Colorado as their home and be active members of the community, they must be treated in a manner that is inclusive, dignifying, and empowering. There is a need for more education and sharing of best practices on how to truly collaborate and engage these populations in a meaningful way, especially in developing and recruiting Latino and Hispanic leadership for boards and committees. The addition of diverse board members can lead to a stronger

⁶ Benefits of Being Inclusive, <http://www.nonprofitinclusiveness.org/benefits-being-inclusive>; The Denver Foundation

⁷ Pearce, Diana M. *The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado 2011*. Prepared for: The Colorado Center on Law and Policy.

⁸ Ibid.

demonstration and commitment to diversity and cultural inclusion on multiple levels, helping to build a culture of inclusion in organizations and the greater community.⁹ A barrier to engaging the diverse populations in the region is a lack of understanding and misinformation about newcomers and people of color. Often referred to as “those people”, the working poor are in reality an exceptionally diverse group, ranging from semi-permanent service sector workers to teachers, therapists, and other professionals who are strained to meet the high standard of living in the region.

The Cross-County Shuffle

A signature commonality among the mountain communities is the vast number of workers that commute every day within and between counties. Almost two-thirds of the working population in Lake County commute every day “over the hill” to and from jobs in Eagle or Summit counties. Representatives stated that up to 40% of the workforce commute to Aspen in Pitkin County each day, most from Garfield County and the lower valley. For most of the region, a majority of jobs can be found in “upper valley” communities like Aspen, Vail, and Avon which employ thousands at ski resorts and affiliated tourism and service sector businesses. The cost of living in these communities is typically far out of reach of the employees’ low wages. The workforce in the region commutes 20-30 minutes or more in each direction every day.¹⁰ This has severe implications for families and can create instability in a region with unpredictable weather conditions that make commuting over snow and ice-packed roads and mountain passes hazardous.

One complication of a commuter workforce that is often overlooked is the impact on available time. Time with family and children, time to engage in recreation and community activities, and simply time for self-health. When a parent commutes at least an hour each day in addition to eight or more hours of work, children are often unsupervised with no one to engage them or provide transportation to activities that do exist. This issue was particularly prevalent in Lake County, where community members cited a difficulty in building a culture of community engagement in low-income populations where adults do not have the discretionary time to act as a model for citizenship. Additionally, youth are not able to participate in after-school programs because they rely on school bus transportation, and are often responsible for the needs of a younger sibling. Ultimately, each community voiced a desire to build a community where people can live, work, and play.

This “shuffle” of the workforce between the community in which they live and that in which they work can create tension between counties. Resort communities are often perceived as “exporting” their social problems to the outlying communities that bear the burden and expense of serving low-income populations. Nowhere was this tension more evident than between Garfield and Pitkin counties. There have been political challenges in ensuring accountability to serving the workforce of Aspen/Pitkin County by supporting social service agencies throughout the rest of the Roaring Fork Valley. Participants in Lake County cited they were “connected to resort communities, whether we want to be or not”. Living wage jobs are often difficult to find, and while the unemployment rate is fairly low in all five counties, the jobs that exist often do not pay a living wage, are seasonal or temporary, and do not provide adequate benefits and health insurance. To make ends meet, there are many instances of multiple families living in single-family homes. According to Family and Intercultural Resource Center in Summit County, the workforce who sustain the resorts are often just out of reach of Medicaid benefits and typically allocate 50% of their income to rent, 30% for childcare, and 15% for health insurance, leaving little room for unanticipated expenses like car repair and emergency room visits.¹¹

Attainable Workforce Housing

Some communities have made significant strides in providing more attainable housing options for their workforce, although many shy away from calling any option in the resort communities “affordable”. The City of Aspen has a robust workforce housing program that provides housing for about 50% of their workers. However, housing subsidies are given to persons with an annual income of \$15,000 up to those with as much as \$900,000 in assets, leaving out undocumented

⁹ Walker, Vernetta L., and Beborah J. Davidson. "Vital Voices: Lessons Learned from Board Members of Color." Board Source. <<http://racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/boardsource.pdf>>

¹⁰ State and County QuickFacts, U.S. Census Bureau. <<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/08000.html>>

¹¹ Pearce, Diana M. *The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado 2011*. Prepared for: The Colorado Center on Law and Policy.

workers as well as the thousands of workers who live outside Pitkin County.¹² While the City of Aspen has a population of about 6,500 people, its seasonal workforce tops 11,000, many of whom must drive more than an hour to work each day creating a significant strain on resources.¹³ This program has been criticized for its narrow scope, only providing housing for workers but few opportunities for those in need of transitional or supportive services. Lake County has also been able to provide more affordable housing through developments like Tabor Grand. Ultimately, the high cost of living in all five counties often makes housing out of reach for middle class professionals and drives the significant commuter economy. The average home price in four of the five counties in the region is well over the state average. For many communities, “affordable” housing culminates in large trailer parks with variable conditions and frequent cases of multiple families sharing a single-family unit. The prevalence of trailer parks in the shadows of major resorts emphasizes the divide between the wealthy and the working poor throughout the region. In Garfield County, many struggle to find affordable 2-3 bedroom family homes, which is necessary to support a thriving middle class. In Lake County, trailer parks and older homes lacking insulation pose a challenge in their energy efficiency. As a high elevation community with a winter season stretching nine months, skyrocketing utility costs often overwhelm working families.

Aside from the need for more housing for the substantial workforce, affordable housing options are also needed for vulnerable populations like the elderly and individuals living with disabilities, as well as the growing homeless population in the region. There is little flexibility in supportive housing, often requiring at least 40 hours of work per week, something that is not always feasible for youth and adults living with disabilities. Several counties face a lack of sustainable transitional housing units, and homeless shelters often bear the burden of sheltering thousands each year. Many of those taking advantage of the shelter and its resources would benefit from transitional housing units. Where affordable housing does exist, the conditions are variable. In Pitkin County, the least expensive housing units are often over \$600,000 and in poor condition. In Lake County, while more affordable housing does exist, aging homes require significant maintenance and updating, which can be daunting for first-home owners or investors.

HOUSING AT-A-GLANCE	Eagle	Garfield	Lake	Pitkin	Summit	Colorado
Vacant Housing	42.5%	13.3%	29.9%	42.0%	62.8%	11.0%
Vacancy Status: Seasonal, Recreational, or occasional use homes	80.4%	24.5%	59.2%	79.3%	84.2%	42.5%
Average Home Price	\$498,151	\$339,990	\$174,312	\$729,043	\$457,823	\$237,800
Average Monthly Rental Cost	\$1,173	\$709	\$563	\$1,089	\$1,008	\$753

Creating a Diverse and Sustainable Economy

Across the board, the communities of the Mountain Region are trying to develop innovative ways to stabilize and diversify the economic landscape. Many towns are dependent on the I-70 corridor and its constant influx of visitors. The infrastructure of this tourism corridor remains integral to the vibrancy of resort communities, but many are looking ahead to prepare for the rise and fall of a natural resource economy. Whether it is dependency on resource extraction, like the mining operations in Lake County and the oil and gas industry in Garfield County, or the resort and tourism industry in Summit, Eagle, and Pitkin counties, singular dependency raises concerns for all communities. Up to 80% of the property tax base in Garfield County comes from the oil and gas industry. In Leadville, the Climax Molybdenum Mine, one of the county’s major employer, is anticipated to close by 2037, posing a looming threat and a relatively short timeline for the community to find other employment and economic development opportunities. Resource economies have notoriously followed a boom and bust cycle that can severely impact a small community during an economic downturn. While the

¹² Kranish, Micheal. "Along a Colorado River, from a Trailer Park to Aspen, a Stark View of the Nation’s Vast Wealth Gap - The Boston Globe." The Boston Globe, 29 Mar. 2015.

¹³ Ibid.

tourism economy can provide more stabilized opportunities, the associated hospitality and service sector jobs cannot provide a living wage or healthcare benefits, and the social sector often bears the burden of these insufficiencies. Lake County is currently in conversations to bring a resort hotel to the community, which could bring hundreds of jobs and serve as a major economic driver. While some look forward to the potential development, others hesitate to grow a resort community similar to their neighbors along the I-70 corridor. Division remains within select communities over the benefits to a diverse economy. Pitkin County in particular has thrived under its seasonal ski and tourist economy, and many community leaders are steadfast in their commitment to maintaining its brand as a ski community, although others voiced concerns regarding the sustainability of such a singular economic base.

Many communities have encouraged the growth of small businesses to begin the process of economic diversification, and look to take advantage of a community’s natural assets. In order for small businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive, there must be access to key infrastructure like public transit and reliable broadband, which many communities still struggle to ensure. Broadband was a notable issue in Garfield, Lake, and Pitkin counties, which have worked to attract large, competitive providers to establish a robust and regional network. In this more mobile and technology-dependent era, it is extremely difficult to attract young, tech-driven entrepreneurs without basic access to services. Similarly, public transit is key for a robust workforce. There are several regional transportation systems, but they can be infrequent and limited in scope. Lake County is connected to Eagle County and Summit County through ECO Transit and the Summit Stage bus routes, but each runs only twice a day, catering mostly to nine to five commuters rather than the public at large. Similarly, the Roaring Fork Transportation Authority (RFTA) connects Aspen with the rest of the Roaring Fork Valley, but it does not serve the entirety of west Garfield County, leaving communities like Parachute and Battlement Mesa inaccessible by public transit. Summit County, which has an extensive, free public bus system, is unique in its intra-county operations.

ECONOMY AT-A-GLANCE		Eagle	Garfield	Lake	Pitkin	Summit	Colorado
Labor Force		28,911	32,968	3,414	10,292	17,800	2,806,544
Unemployment Rate		3.9%	3.3%	4.2%	6.3%	3.4%	3.7%
Median Household Income		\$74,456	\$57,022	\$44,610	\$72,745	\$63,697	\$ 58,433
Average Hourly Wage		\$19.78	\$21.35	\$15.38	\$20.80	\$16.85	\$24.00
Poverty Rate		10.9%	11.9%	14.3%	10.1%	13.7%	13.2%
TOP EMPLOYERS							
Eagle County*	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Vail Resorts Eagle County Schools Vail Valley Medical Center Eagle County Government Vail Cascade Resort & Spa 			Garfield County	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Garfield School District Valley View Hospital Mountain Arc Mechanical HVAC Walmart Supercenter Schmueser & Associates Inc. 		
Lake County	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Climax Molybdenum Co. (Mining) Ski Cooper Lake County Intermediate School Pitts Elementary School Lake County High School 			Pitkin County	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Little Nell Hotel Montagna At the Little Nell St. Regis-Aspen Westin-Snowmass Resort Jarden Corp. 		
Summit County	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Keystone Resort Copper Mountain Resort Everist Material LLC Keystone Resort Ski/Ride School Beaver Run Resort & Conference 						

*Information was amended as of May 29, 2015.

Strengthening the Education Continuum

While low-wage, seasonal jobs are often the norm in rural resort communities, all five counties are making efforts to provide better educational opportunities for youth to strengthen and elevate their workforce. The concept of “grow your own” has been particularly embraced by Colorado Mountain College (CMC), a regional community college network providing opportunities to students in the five-county region and beyond. There is a particular need to provide an improved continuum of education from early childhood through higher education. CMC reported that 50% of all incoming students, and 70% of Hispanic students, are not prepared for college, requiring more intensive remedial education which requires more years to receive a degree which in turn leads to higher non-completion rates. There is a clear need to improve this pipeline of education, and several counties are making significant strides in addressing gaps that exist. Lake County has developed a community Youth Master Plan to better address collaboration and partnership between youth and community-serving organizations and be more strategic in programming and fundraising. In Pitkin County, the Aspen Community Foundation has undertaken a “Cradle to Career” initiative, engaging social service agencies and leveraging community support for strategic and collective impact. The Cradle to Career initiative is supported by AmeriCorps members and has engaged dozens of local organizations to address four key goals, including: kindergarten readiness and social development, academic success, high school graduation, and career and college preparedness. All of the counties noted the need to provide more services for immigrant students who need dual-language support. There have been significant efforts to build collaboration between youth-serving organizations, but gaps still exist.

Early Childhood Education

Several counties noted the rising challenge of providing affordable childcare services within their communities. The effort to keep childcare costs below 15% of a family’s income is increasingly important to ensure the economic vitality of families. In Eagle County, an average of 22% of a family’s income goes to childcare.¹⁴ Parents recognize the importance of social and emotional well-being for their children and service providers are constantly working to bridge the gap between what parents can afford to pay for childcare and what childcare centers need in order to operate quality businesses. Both the City of Aspen and Summit County have passed a tax supporting childcare, making it more accessible for all families. Throughout the region significant gaps exist in care for the zero to two age range; Lake County has no licensed childcare centers that serve children under one year of age, and only one licensed childcare center that serves one to three year olds. In Garfield County, one participant noted she had been on a waiting list since she found out she was pregnant 6 months ago, which is a common issue for mothers in the region.¹⁵ Both Garfield and Pitkin counties also noted the difficulty of building a childcare center central to businesses and schools, all the while being in an affordable location. Informal, unlicensed home childcare is pervasive where the cost of a licensed center is prohibitive, but these numbers are difficult to track for fear of legal repercussions. The importance of early childhood education in preparing students for school is well-known, yet over 55% of fourth-graders in Lake County are not proficient in reading, with this number topping 30% in Garfield, Summit, and Eagle counties. These students will continue to fall behind their peers without significant remediation.

Youth Development

Every community voiced a desire to better engage parents and families in youth development efforts, whether through a “family care navigator” or mentorship programs. Garfield County in particular has battled to engage communities and families in investing in education. The West Garfield County school districts (RE-2 and D-16) recently moved to a four-day school week rather than close schools due to budget cuts. With 46% of students in the county qualifying for free and reduced lunch (FRL), this can pose significant hardships for families who depend on the school district for basic childcare needs. This number tops 70% in select schools with high numbers of at-risk youth. The RE-2 school representative shared a haunting story of a young student who had eaten only syrup for dinner one evening, emphasizing the importance and reliance by families on school meals. Food insecurity is a significant issue in the district, which provides healthy food totes

¹⁴ Wong, Melanie. "Child Care Presents Problems for Parents | VailDaily.com." The Vail Daily, 1 Mar. 2015.

¹⁵ Ibid.

to over 1,000 students each weekend. The Colorado Department of Education reports that 59% of FRL participants were not college ready in 2013, compared to 31% of non-FRL students. There is also a significant population of recent immigrant students who are highly-vulnerable, traumatized individuals due to the experiences they endured prior to arriving in the United States. The district is not equipped to accommodate these students, nor to provide a comprehensive network of culturally and linguistically appropriate support and safety-net services.

Many communities emphasized the need to grow mentorship programs to target at-risk youth and provide a support network that may not be available at home. The Mountain Mentor Program in Summit County noted the constant need for more mentors as the demand exceeds availability. Youth-serving organizations are also looking at new ways to engage parents and families in the success of the student. With parents often working multiple jobs and long hours, it is difficult for them to provide the necessary support and attention their children truly require. Several elementary schools in Eagle County have established parent mentor programs to empower parents to get involved in the classroom. Organizations like the Aspen Youth Center provide youth an opportunity to get engaged in their community through volunteer service and career education, but these programs are often few and far between. When youth feel engaged in their community, it can spark a desire to stay and become a future leader within their community.

EDUCATION AT-A-GLANCE	Eagle	Garfield	Lake	Pitkin	Summit	Colorado
Young Child Population (<5)	3,599	4,363	504	751	1,505	337,626
Licensed Child Care Center	23	11	2	10	22	N/A
Licensed Family Child Care	20	50	1	2	22	N/A
ECE License Capacity per County	2482	1672	278	1070	1220	N/A
Number of Children Served	1808	1708	159	211	1214	N/A
Avg. Weekly Cost of Child Care Center*	\$235.07	\$182.23	\$185.00	\$361.25	\$273.48	N/A
Avg. Weekly Cost of Family Child Care*	\$234.41	\$199.79	\$175.00	\$330.00	\$202.21	N/A
Annual Avg. Cost of Infant Care	\$13,033	\$12,297	N/A	\$18,186	\$15,325	N/A
Annual Avg. Cost of Pre-School Care	\$11,105	\$10,842	\$8,047	\$16,333	\$12,588	N/A
Avg. Weekly Cost of School Age Care Program*	\$170.00	\$566.67	\$38.75	\$395.00	\$206.00	N/A
School Aged Population (5-17)	9,094	10,971	1,285	2,202	3,406	903,322
Kindergarteners Full-Day	95.8%	74.5%	100%	100%	100%	70.3%
Under 18 in Poverty	14.3%	16.3%	26.6%	9.3%	12.7%	17.1%
Free and reduced lunch	42.4%	46.0%	66.1%	5.4%	37.4%	40.9%
4 th Graders NOT proficient in reading	33.3%	34.5%	55.9%	18%	30.9%	32%
HS Graduation Rate	72.0%	78.2%	76.5%	96.7%	87.6%	73.9%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	47.0%	26.6%	28.1%	56.8%	47.7%	37.0%

*This information has been amended as of 05/13/15.

Growing an Educated Workforce

Providing high quality youth services from birth through graduation is increasingly important to ensure an educated and engaged workforce. When students are prepared to learn at a college level, with little to no need for remediation services, businesses and communities thrive. CMC reported that by 2020, 75% of jobs in the region will require some post-secondary training. Across the region, school districts have partnered with CMC to provide more pre-collegiate and dual enrollment programs, as well as additional support for first-generation students. During the Tour, CMC representatives announced all high school seniors in the district will receive an automatic acceptance letter to the school, in addition to receiving a \$1,000 scholarship. CMC is targeting students that need remedial class work in preparation for higher education in order to build a more qualified regional workforce. Summit County in particular has a strong pre-collegiate program for first-generation students that has a 100% graduation rate. Lake County has pioneered expeditionary learning programs that have been overwhelmingly successful and have led to great optimism in a “turn-around” school district.

While building a more skilled workforce, communities also need to be mindful of creating an environment that will allow them to thrive. This includes livable wages, affordable housing, public transportation, a year-round economy, and a culture of success and growth. To ensure success, communities also voiced a need for more paid internship programs and opportunities to build interpersonal and professional skills. Vail Valley Partnership and major employers like Gallegos Corporation have begun building programs to provide technical skills to young adults, but there is still a significant need to build these partnerships throughout the region. Resort communities continue to struggle to provide true living wage job opportunities outside of the hospitality and service sectors; as such, they struggle to have a thriving middle class that can participate in a year-round economy. Across the board, community leaders agreed they wanted to support an education system, which allows people to be educated, get a college degree, and find gainful employment in their hometown.

Preparing for an Aging Population

Across the nation, communities are faced with a significant shift in demographics as the Baby Boomer generation continues to move into retirement. This is a key issue in rural communities where many seniors desire to “age in place”. There is a significant need to improve the infrastructure and care network for the aging, and an immediate need to expand home healthcare services. Many communities have prioritized home healthcare over building new senior housing and care facilities. While mountain communities are often not ideal for an aging population due to the difficulty of transit and high elevations, many anticipate their retired populations will choose to remain in their homes. Eagle County alone anticipates a 123% growth in the over 65 population by 2030. There are no nursing homes in Lake, Eagle, or Summit counties, and few transportation services for seniors currently exist. There is also an immediate need in the region to expand the caregiver network, a workforce that is currently overworked with a high turnover rate. Several communities noted the opportunity to engage this aging population in a new way, whether through interfacing with youth to share the history of the community or other collaborative efforts.

Preserving the Environment

Protecting the natural beauty of the region emerged as a popular and consensus-building issue. With so much of the economy based on outdoor recreation, it is no wonder the majority of community leaders were in agreement that protecting public lands was essential to growth and future success. Pitkin County reported its constituents are aligned on the environment as a top priority, from second home owners to the working poor. In Eagle County, 79% of the population chooses to live in the community because of the access to public lands and recreational opportunities. While federal funding has declined in recent years, local municipalities and nonprofit organizations have stepped in to fill in the gaps. In Lake County, huge strides have been made to mitigate environmental damage from mining operations. Approximately 70% of Superfund sites in the county have been de-listed and are eligible for brownfield redevelopment. Similarly, pollution to the Arkansas River has been reversed, now ranking as a “gold medal” river with access to world-class fishing. Lake County is in the process of improving connectivity to public spaces from local neighborhoods, in addition to adding parks and playgrounds. This has been a collaboration between local agencies and community members who feel

empowered to solve social issues as citizen groups. All of the counties boast robust Open Space programs and miles of trails.

Communities are aligned to protect the environment, which drives the mountain region's economy, and there are certainly areas for improvement. One of the most pressing environmental issues is water conservation. Local environmental groups have worked with the Colorado Water Conservation Board to ensure continued water resources and efforts to conserve and protect the region's precious resource. There continues to be high demand for water in the region with dwindling supplies. The ski industry in particular is highly water dependent, and the region supplies a portion of water resources for major Front Range communities. There has been some movement towards more sustainable business practices and research into becoming a renewable resource producer. Several communities are building solar farms and have emphasized the importance of recycling and utilizing energy efficiency tactics. Garfield County has recently achieved zero status thanks to their investments in solar energy, which is currently estimated at an annual value of producing over half a million dollars' worth of energy.¹⁶

Next Steps

Each of the regional needs explored in this report are important and significant. The MRPD Listening Tour delegation and representatives from the MRPD Steering Committee selected two issues to explore in greater depth at the upcoming MRPD conference, given the sufficient groundwork that exists to aid in advancing opportunities for further community collaboration and capacity building. They include:

1) Increasing Access to Behavioral Health Care and Substance Abuse Services

2) Basic Needs: Strategies for Inclusiveness

On June 25, 2015, the second day of the MRPD conference, the Steering Committee will convene a gathering of executive directors, topic experts, funders, and state and local government officials to foster collaborative dialogue and opportunities for regional success. Representatives from approximately 20 Colorado foundations will join the discussion on the topic that most resonates with their funding priorities and interests. Participants will identify potential resources and discuss regional successes and challenges, learning from their local counterparts as well as statewide experts and stakeholders. This session will explore vital regional partnerships and opportunities for organizational and community capacity building to better address the identified issues. The sessions are designed to strengthen relationships and encourage dialogue across sectors and jurisdictional boundaries. Recommendations will be summarized and added to this report.

¹⁶ Essex, Randy. "In Solar Energy, Western Colorado Town Outshines Other Communities." Casper Star-Tribune Online. Glenwood Springs Post Independent, 27 Apr. 2015. Web.

Appendices

Appendix A. Listening Tour Itinerary

Wednesday, February 25

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM – Listening Tour with Summit County

- **Host:** The Summit Foundation
- Buffalo Mountain Room - Summit County Commons – 37 County Road 1005, Frisco 80443

12:15 – 1:30 PM – Lunch & Site Visit of Summit Community Care Clinic

1:30 – 2:30 PM – Travel to Leadville

2:30PM – 4:30PM – Listening Tour with Lake County

- **Host:** Colorado Mountain College
- Room 401, Climax Leadership Center - CMC Timberline Campus - 901 South Hwy 24, Leadville 80461

Lodging: Delaware Hotel | 700 Harrison Avenue | Leadville 80461

Thursday, February 26

8:00 - 9:00 AM - Travel to Edwards

9:00 - 11:00 AM – Listening Tour with Eagle County

- **Hosts:** Vail Valley Partnership and Our Community Foundation
- Eagle County Health Service District Building – 1055 Edwards Village Blvd., Edwards 81632

11:00 AM - 12:30 PM - Lunch & Site Visit of Avon Elementary School

12:30 - 2:30 PM – Travel to Aspen

3:00 – 5:00 PM – Listening Tour with Pitkin County

- **Hosts:** Aspen Chamber Resort Association and Aspen Community Foundation
- Monarch Room – Limelight Hotel Aspen – 355 South Monarch Street, Aspen 81611

5:00 – 6:00 PM – Travel to Glenwood Springs

7:00 PM – Networking Reception with MRPD Steering Committee

Lodging: Hotel Denver | 402 7th Street | Glenwood Springs 81601

Friday, February 27

8:30 - 9:30 AM – Travel to Rifle

9:30 – 11:30 AM – Listening Tour with Garfield County

- **Host:** City of Rifle
- Rifle Creek Room - Grand River Hospital Conference Center - 501 Airport Road, Rifle 81650

11:30 AM – 1:00 PM – Lunch and Listening Tour De-Brief

Appendix B. Listening Tour Delegation

Adolph Coors Foundation

- John Jackson, Executive Director

Anschutz Family Foundation

- Abel Wurmnest, Program Officer

Caring for Colorado Foundation

- Chris Wiant, President and CEO
- Linda Reiner, Vice President of Strategy and Communication

Community Resource Center

- Maria Fabula, Chief Executive Officer
- Leah Rausch, RPD Program Manager
- Amanda Barlow, RPD Program Associate
- Emily Treece, AmeriCorps VISTA
- Gretchen Van De Carr, Board Vice-Chair

The Colorado Health Foundation

- Amy Latham, Portfolio Director – Health Care & Health Coverage

The Colorado Trust

- Heather O'Malley, Community Partner

Corporation for National & Community Service

- Dan Dunlap, State Director

El Pomar Foundation

- **Delegation Chair:** Matt Carpenter, Senior Vice President for Grants

Kenneth King Foundation

- Janice Fritsch, President

U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development

- Pattie Snidow, Community and Economic Development Director

Appendix C. Community Hosts & Support

Eagle County

- Rebecca Gould, Our Community Foundation
- Chris Romer, Vail Valley Partnership

Garfield County

- Nathan Lindquist, Planning Director, City of Rifle
- Randy Winkler, Mayor, City of Rifle

Lake County

- James Taylor, Vice President, Colorado Mountain College

Pitkin County

- Debbie Braun, President and CEO, Aspen Chamber Resort Association
- Erik Klanderud, Vice President of Membership, Aspen Chamber Resort Association
- Valerie Carlin, Deputy Director, Aspen Community Foundation
- Tamara Tormohlen, Executive Director, Aspen Community Foundation

Summit County

- Jeanne Bistranin, Executive Director, The Summit Foundation
- Lee Zimmerman, Out-Going Executive Director, The Summit Foundation

Site Visits

- Roy Getchell, Principal, Avon Elementary School
- Sarah Vaine, Executive Director, Summit Community Care Clinic

Steering Committee Support

- Emma Bielski, *Stepping Stones of the Roaring Fork Valley*
- Barbra Corcoran, *CASA of the Ninth*
- Leslie Cook-Knerr, *Lake County Build a Generation*
- Mikayla Curtis, *Eagle River Youth Coalition*
- Colleen Gray, *The Literacy Project*
- Mitzi Ledingham, *Pitkin County*
- Dana Peterson, *Mountain Valley Developmental Services*

Appendix D. Community Meeting Attendees

Wednesday February 25, 2015		
Summit County		
Dave	Askeland	Colorado Mountain College
Thomas	Davidson	Summit County
Kathy	Davis	Mind Springs Health
Tamara	Drangstveit	Family and Intercultural Resource Center
Deb	Edwards	St. Anthony Medical Center Foundation
Candy	Elkind	Colorado Mountain College Foundation
Amy	Jackson	Advocates for Victims of Assault
Gary	Martinez	Summit County
Julie	McCluskie	Summit County School District
Christine	Scanlan	The Keystone Center
Jen	Schenk	High Country Conservation Center
Brianne	Snow	Family and Intercultural Resource Center
Patty	Theobald	Colorado Mountain College Foundation
Sarah	Vaine	Summit Community Care Clinic
Laurie	Blackwell	Youth and Family Services
Megan	Nuttleman	Keystone Science School
Dave	Miller	Keystone Science School
Gini	Bradley	The Summit Foundation
Lake County		
Katie	Baldassar	Lake County Build a Generation
Mike	Bordogna	Lake County
Bruce	Hix	Lake County
Jason	Horning	Cornerstone Church
Greg	Labbe	City of Leadville
Annie	Livingston	Senior Center/National Alliance for Mentally Ill
Peggy	Marshall	First Presbyterian Church
Jacob	Mohrmann	City of Leadville
Gloria	Perez	Wraparound Program - Dept. of Social Services
Alice	Pugh	Full Circle of Lake County
Dolores	Semsack	Lake County
Jaime	Steuver	City of Leadville
Nicole	Thompson	Leadville/Lake County Economic Development
Lynne	Westerfield	Cloud City Conservation Center
Wendy	Wyman	Lake County School District R1
Mike	Conlin	Lake County Open Space Initiative
Jane	Heinz	Lake County Public Health
Melanie	Maupin	Colorado Mountain College
Leslie	Cook-Knerr	Lake County Build a Generation

Appendix D. Community Meeting Attendees

Thursday, February 26, 2015		
Eagle County		
Carrie	Benway	Family Learning Center
Mikayla	Curtis	Eagle River Youth Coalition
Krista	DeHerrera	Town of Gypsum
Seth	Ehrlich	SOS Outreach - Eagle County
Scott	Fitzwilliams	U.S. Forest Service
Roy	Getchell	Avon Elementary School
Colleen	Gray	The Literacy Project
Jamie	Gunion	Vail Recreation District
Kate	Jerman	US Forest Service
Karen	Koenemann	Eagle County Public Health
Ken	Marchetti	Edwards Community Authority
Jeanne	McQueeney	Eagle County
Ellen	Moritz	FirstBank of Avon
Laurie	Mullen	West Vail Liquor Mart
Greg	Osteen	Vail Valley Cares
Dan	Pennington	Vail Valley Medical Center Foundation
Kathryn	Rejgo	Colorado Mountain College
Jeremy	Rietmann	Vail Valley Partnership
Mike	Rushmore	Our Community Foundation
Jill	Ryan	Eagle County
Diane	Scherr	Colorado Mountain College Foundation
John	Shipp	Dionysus Hospitality
Beth	Slifer	Slifer Designs
Michelle	Stecher	Eagle River Youth Coalition
James	Van Beek	Eagle County
Mia	Vlaar	East West Resorts
Traci	Wodlinger	Eagle County Schools
Gary	Woodworth	Gallegos Corporation
Pitkin County		
Adam	Frisch	City of Aspen
Matt	Hamilton	Aspen Skiing Company
Rick	Lofaro	Roaring Fork Conservancy
Kate	Fuentes	Aspen School District
Karmen	Pittenger	Aspen Hope Center
Richard	Pryor	City of Aspen
Shirley	Ritter	Kid's First
Steve	Skadron	City of Aspen
Nan	Sundeen	Pitkin County Health & Human Services
Frieda	Wallison	Pitkin County Republicans
Susan	Philip	Town of Basalt
Sarah	Woods	Roaring Fork Conservancy
Richard	Gonzalez	Colorado Mountain College
Deborah	Breen	Aspen Valley Hospital Foundation
Candace	Cross	Aspen Community Foundation
Charles	Cunniffe	Colorado Mountain College
Brad	Tyndall	Colorado Mountain College
Sharon	Raggio	Mind Springs Health
Mitzi	Ledingham	Pitkin County Health & Human Services

Appendix D. Community Meeting Attendees

Friday, February 27, 2015		
Garfield County		
Amy	Barr	United Way of Garfield County
Carrie	Besnette-Hauser	Colorado Mountain College
Emma	Bielski	Stepping Stones – Roaring Fork Valley
Jim	Coombs	Grand River Hospital
Barb	Corcoran	CASA of the Ninth
Tedi	Gillespie	Western Colorado Community Foundation
Theresa	Hamilton	Garfield County School District RE-2
Tom	Jankovsky	Garfield County
Jenny	Lindsay	Family Resource Centers
Stuart	McArthur	Town of Parachute
Kasey	Nispel	Rifle Chamber of Commerce
Dana	Peterson	Mountain Valley Developmental Services
Kristi	Grems	Mind Springs Health
Juanita	Williams	Town of Parachute
Randy	Winkler	City of Rifle
Dana	Wood	Livewell Garfield County
Wilma	Paddock	Garfield County Library
Mike	Samson	Garfield County

Appendix E. Characteristics of the Mountain Region

Summit	Lake	Eagle	Pitkin	Garfield
Active	Athletic	Active	Affluent	Awesome
Busy	Diamond in the	Attainable Housing	Artful	Collaborative
Collaborative	rough	Busy	Bright Opportunity	Colorado Dream
Compassionate	Diverse	Busy	Collaboration	Committed and
Connections	Energy	Centerpiece	Collective	Involved
Diverse	Expectant	Collaboration	Compassionate	Community
Educated	Exquisite	Community	Compassionate &	Diverse
Engaged	Fierce	Compassionate	Forgiving	Gas patch to Glitter
Magnet	Hardy	Dichotomous -	Diversity	gulch
Multi-employed	Independence	Wealth vs. Poor	Extraordinary	Gateway
Passionate	Intellectual	Diverse	Extreme	Gateway to Western
Responsive	Nature loving	El Jebel	Family	Rockies
Scrappy	Scrappy	Generous	Great Opportunity	Growth
Supportive	Tenacious	Glorious	Home – live, work,	Involved
Working a lot	Tough	Happy Valley	play	Misunderstood
	Unlimited, but	Healthy	Leadership	Momentum
	unknown potential	Hopeful	Life-long Education	Opinionated
	Unsinkable	Interconnected	Life-long home	Passionate
	Vibrant & social	Learning	Magnet	Persevering
		Opportunity	Mind, Body, Spirit	Politically Diverse
		Powerful	Progressive	Positive
		Progressive	Supercalifragilisticex	
		Public Lands	pialidocious	
		Relentlessly		
		Collaborative,		
		Shared sense of		
		urgency to provide		
		equity and		
		opportunity		
		Socially &		
		Economically Diverse		
		Still Growing		
		Transportation		

Appendix F. Acknowledgments

THANK YOU to all those who dedicated their time and efforts in supporting this Listening Tour. We are truly thankful for each and every one of you.

Our Hosts

Jeannie Bistranin

The Summit Foundation

Debbie Braun

Aspen Chamber Resort Association

Valerie Carlin

Aspen Community Foundation

Roy Getchell

Avon Elementary School

Rebecca Gould

Our Community Foundation

Erik Klanderud

Aspen Chamber Resort Association

Nathan Lindquist

City of Rifle

Chris Romer

Vail Valley Partnership

James Taylor

Colorado Mountain College

Tamara Tormohlen

Aspen Community Foundation

Sarah Vaine

Summit Community Care Clinic

Randy Winkler

City of Rifle

Lee Zimmerman

The Summit Foundation

Funder Delegation

Matt Carpenter - Chair

El Pomar Foundation

Dan Dunlap

Corporation for National & Community Service

Janice Fritsch

Kenneth King Foundation

John Jackson

Adolph Coors Foundation

Amy Latham

The Colorado Health Foundation

Heather O'Malley

The Colorado Trust

Linda Reiner

Caring for Colorado Foundation

Pattie Snidow

USDA – Rural Development

Chris Wiant

Caring for Colorado Foundation

Abel Wurmnest

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Mountain Valley Developmental Services