

# AGING SERVICES COALITION OF NORTHWEST COLORADO

Older Adults Needs Assessment Survey
2021 | REPORT OF RESULTS

NORTHWEST COLORADO

HEALTH

940 Central Park Dr. Ste. 101 | Steamboat Springs, CO 80487 970-879-1632 | northwestcoloradohealth.org

#### AGING SERVICES COALITION OF NORTHWEST COLORADO

The Aging Services Coalition of Northwest Colorado was formed in early 2020 and consists of senior services organizations and individual community members in Routt, Moffat, Grand, Jackson, and Rio Blanco counties. Adults over the age of 60 represent nearly 25% of the population in these counties, and this number is growing as approximately 10,000 individuals turn 65 every day in the United States. The Coalition's goal is to ensure that Northwest Colorado has sufficient services to meet the needs of the older adults in our communities. The objective is to identify gaps in and barriers to services and to become a unified voice for aging services in the region. Membership in this effort has grown to over 50 participants representing nearly 40 different organizations concentrating on the needs of older adults.

Through collaboration and focused energy, the Coalition is making significant progress towards its objectives. Established as an action-oriented advocate for older adults, the Coalition is making connections at the state and regional levels to bring attention to Northwest Colorado. The strong relationships developed in this short time allow providers in different counties to share ideas and serve as a resource for solving the needs of the people we all serve. We are motivated by the belief that when older adults "age in place" everyone in the community benefits and the lives of residents of all ages are enriched.

**Stephanie Einfeld** 

Chief Executive Officer | Northwest Colorado Health

The Aging Services Coalition of Northwest Colorado 2021 Needs Assessment Survey was sponsored by Northwest Colorado Health and funded by a generous grant from the NextFifty Initiative.





#### NORTHWEST COLORADO HEALTH

Northwest Colorado Health believes that everyone deserves the chance to achieve their best health. Every day, we partner with individuals throughout Northwest Colorado at their homes, in our clinics, and in the community because healthy people and families create a healthy community. We provide high quality, affordable health services for people of all ages. Primary care in our clinics, Prevention Services, Home Health and Hospice, and Assisted Living address health needs from birth through end of life.

Learn more about Northwest Colorado Health at northwestcoloradohealth.org.

#### **NEXTFIFTY INITIATIVE**

NextFifty Initiative is a Colorado-based private foundation dedicated to funding mission-driven initiatives that improve the lives of the older adult population and their caregivers. We seek to fund game-changing efforts to improve and sustain the quality of life for people in their second 50 years. NextFifty Initiative educates about proven initiatives and advocates for transformational change. We consider ourselves an engine for innovation that transforms aging. Our work will impact lives for generations to come.

Learn more about NextFifty Initiative at next50initiative.org.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

1. AGING SERVICE PROVIDERS	3
2. NEEDS ASSESSMENT - SURVEY APPROACH	6
3. KEY FINDINGS	
a. Demographics	7
b. Communication	8
c. Housing	10
d. Socialization/Isolation	12
e. Transportation	14
4. INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN BY COALITION	16

## AGING SERVICES PROVIDERS

A broad network of agencies and organizations supports older adults in Northwest Colorado. Below are some of those important resources whose representatives also serve as members on the Aging Services Coalition.

Area Agency on Aging of Northwest Colorado and Vintage are the two Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) that serve the five counties included in this report. The AAAs were established under the Older Americans Act (OAA) in 1973 to respond to the needs of Americans aged 60 and over in every local community. AAAs plan, coordinate, and offer services that help older adults remain living independently as long as possible.



## AREA AGENCY ON AGING OF NORTHWEST COLORADO

Established in 1974, the Area Agency on Aging of Northwest Colorado contracts with local providers in Garfield, Mesa, Moffat, Rio Blanco, and Routt counties. This critical agency provides services for older adults to help maintain their dignity, health, and independence. Contracted services include Aging and Disability Resources of Colorado (ADRC), caregiver services, evidence-based disease prevention and health promotion programs, legal services, Long-term Care Ombudsman Program, nutrition programs, senior centers, senior companions, State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), transportation, and vouchers for a variety of Material Aid.

agnc.org/area-agency-on-aging-of-northwest-colorado (970) 248-2717



#### **VINTAGE**

Serving Eagle, Grand, Jackson, Pitkin, and Summit counties, Vintage is the Alpine region's aging expert – ensuring that all residents have access to the supports, services, and resources needed as we age. Vintage also provides deep content expertise to ensure our communities and providers meet those needs as well. Programs provided directly through the Vintage umbrella include State Health Insurance Assistance Program, Low Income Senior Dental Program, Caregiver Services, Retired & Senior Volunteer Program, Voucher programs, and more.

Additional programs provided through contractual agreements, through Vintage partners include nutrition education and counseling, home delivered meals, congregate meals, transportation, caregiver support groups, case management, legal services, reassurance, and evidence-based health promotion programs.

yourvintage.org | (970) 468-0295

## **AGING SERVICES PROVIDERS**

#### **GRAND SENIORS**

Grand Seniors is a program of the 501(c)(3) non-profit Mountain Family Center. The program exists to assist Grand County seniors age 60 and older and adults living with disabilities in maintaining their independence and staying in their home for as long as they choose. Services include:

- Transportation to non-emergent medical appointments, grocery shopping, and other essential destinations (avg. 150 one-way trips per month)
- Prescription and supplemental groceries delivery (avg.60 deliveries per month)
- Wellness phone calls (avg. 200 per month)
- · Home aide and assistive devices (crutches, wheelchairs, shower chairs, etc.) available for borrow
- Financial assistance for vision, dental, and other health-related needs on a case-by-case basis and as funding allows
- Social engagement opportunities (craft classes, outings to sports events, theatre, movie afternoons)
- Communication about and referrals to relevant happenings and resources through our monthly newsletter (includes print and email recipients), Facebook, and local newspaper

Contributions for services are accepted on a strictly voluntary basis, and services are never denied due to inability to pay. Grand Seniors serves all of Grand County, including Winter Park, Fraser, Tabernash, Granby, Grand Lake, Hot Sulphur Springs, and Kremmling. When able the program provides some services to older adults in Jackson County.

mountainfamilycenter.org/seniors | (970) 887-3222

#### JACKSON COUNTY COUNCIL ON AGING

A small group of forward-looking citizens started the Jackson County Council on Aging (JCCOA) in 1974. The group recognized the need for supportive services to keep them safe and in their own homes as they aged. The JCCOA seeks to be an extended family for the elderly population of Jackson County through caring, kindness, and concern. The community center, staffed by an administrator and volunteers, is open four days a week. Citizens have access to free internet and a computer specifically fit for the visually impaired. The JCCOA runs an extensive transportation service and addresses the nutrition needs of older adults by providing meal vouchers to local eating establishments, "smile boxes" that have vegetables and milk, and group meals twice a month. Social programming and support groups for caregivers and visually impaired are also offered. The agency serves an important role connecting older adults to resources to help with all medical and other services provided by Vintage.



jccoa.net | (970) 723-3203

#### **ROUTT COUNTY COUNCIL ON AGING**

Routt County Council on Aging (RCCOA) is a mission-driven independent 501 (c)3 nonprofit organization that serves all residents of Routt County. RCCOA strives to determine the needs of the senior citizens in the county and to make every effort to meet those needs with appropriate action. Services provided include meals, transportation, socialization, and resources and referrals for residents age 60+. The agency serves over 300 clients providing an average of 1,400 meals each month through Meals on Wheels and congregate meals in three communities.



Social and exercise programs are offered to keep older residents engaged and healthy. A key component to the success of these programs is RCCOA's robust transportation service, which offers scheduled rides in Steamboat, Hayden, and South Routt.

rccoaging.org | (970) 879-0633

## **AGING SERVICES PROVIDERS**

#### **SENIOR SOCIAL CENTER OF CRAIG**

The Senior Social Center of Craig (SSC) believes that adults over age 50 deserve an opportunity to achieve their greatest potential. Every day, the SSC teams up with active adults in Moffat County communities to help them reach their physical, social, and emotional goals. The SSC provides a permanent, accessible gathering place to enhance the quality of life for senior citizens through socialization, exercise, creativity, and education.



#### Programs include:

- Socialization: Coffee & Conversation, Cards & Games, Lunch on the Lawn, Movie nights, Music nights, and many special events
- Exercise: Equipment room, Geri-fit, CT Training, Ballates, Chair class, QiGong/Tai-Chi, Yoga, and more
- Education & Art: Drawing, Painting, Tie-Dye, Rock painting, and more, including educational presentations throughout the year
- Senior Outreach Service (SOS): This outreach program targets homebound, frail, and/or low income residents
  age 60 and older who live in Craig and its surrounding communities, striving to improve participants' quality
  of life through consistent, appropriate personal contact.

seniorsocialcenter.org/ | (970) 326-3188

#### WHITE RIVER ROUNDUP

The White River Roundup is a senior nutrition program providing nutritious meals and social support to seniors aged 60 and over. There are two congregate senior meal sites in Rio Blanco County: the Chuckwagon in Meeker and the Radino Center in Rangely. The program also provides homebound meals to older adults. White River Roundup promotes and partners with two critical transportation programs in Rio Blanco. The Meeker Streeker and Rangely Rambler provide rides to older adults and people with disabilities with transportation needs.



rbc.us/312/White-River-Roundup | (970) 878-9650

## **SURVEY APPROACH**

#### THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT **SURVEY FOCUSED ON OLDER ADULTS' NEEDS RELATED TO:**









#### TWO KEY INQUIRIES GUIDED **OUR SURVEY QUESTIONS:**

Which services are needed to remain living independently in the community?

What are the barriers to accessing services?

The 28-question survey was distributed to adults aged 60+ and their caregivers in Grand, Jackson, Moffat, Rio Blanco, and Routt counties. Coalition member agencies posted the survey on their websites and hand-delivered many to their clients. The survey was also distributed via mail and to senior housing communities in Grand, Moffat, and Routt counties.

#### **ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES**

- Identify gaps in supportive services that older adults need to successfully live independently in our communities
- Identify barriers to services and programming
- Assess awareness of existing resources

#### STEPS:

- Cataloged existing resources, services, and programming
- Convened workgroups
- Identified perceived and known challenges
- Developed survey to identify actionable measures



#### **OLDER ADULTS** NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

sponsored by the Aging Services Coalition of Northwest Colorado



#### WHO ARE WE?

The Aging Services Coalition of Northwest Colorado was created to implement strategies to resolve gaps in and barriers to services needed to allow older adults to live safely and with dignity in our communities.

The Coalition covers Grand, Jackson, Moffat, Rio Blanco and Routt counties and consists of individual community members and senior service organizations including:

- The Alzheimer's Association
- Area Agency on Aging of Northwest Colorado
   Routt County Council on Aging
- The City of Steamboat Springs
- Colorado Legal Services Mountain Family Medicine
- \* Northwest Colorado Center for Independence
- Northwest Colorado Council of Governments
- Northwest Colorado Health
- Senior Social Center of Craig The Haven
- The Health Partnership
- Vintage (formerly Alpine Area
- Agency on Aging) White River Roundup

#### WE NEED YOUR INPUT TO MAKE THIS POSSIBLE!

Win one of 20 visa gift cards worth \$25 each!



To qualify please include your name, phone # and email address (if available).

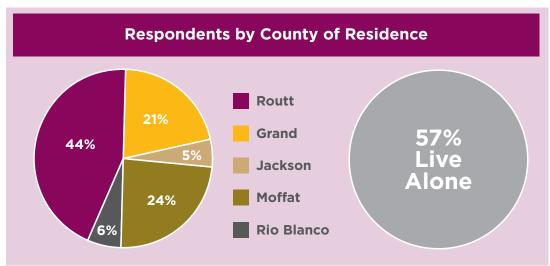
Please respond by March 31, 2021. Para el español, acceda a nuestra versión en línea en northwestcoloradohealth.org/survey o llame al 970-620- 1513 ext. 1 para obtener ayuda.

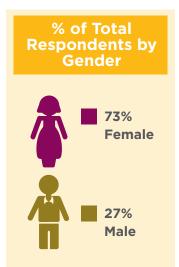
#### **ASSESSMENT GOALS**

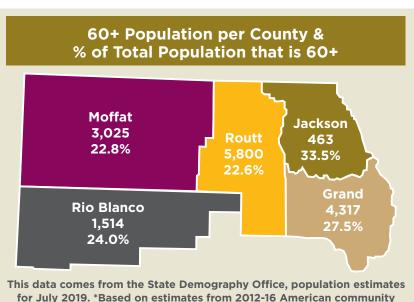
- Identify priorities
- Develop programming
- Implement services and resources
- Educate older adults, caregivers, service providers and community leaders

## **DEMOGRAPHICS**

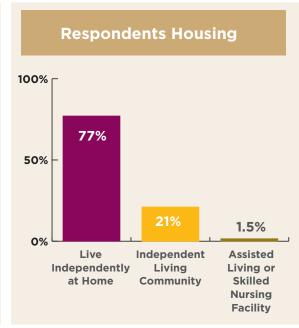
#### WE HAD OVER 280 RESPONSES WITH REPRESENTATION FROM ALL FIVE COUNTIES

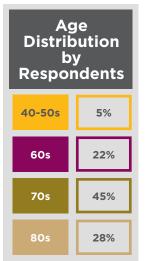






Survey of the U.S. Bureau of the Census.





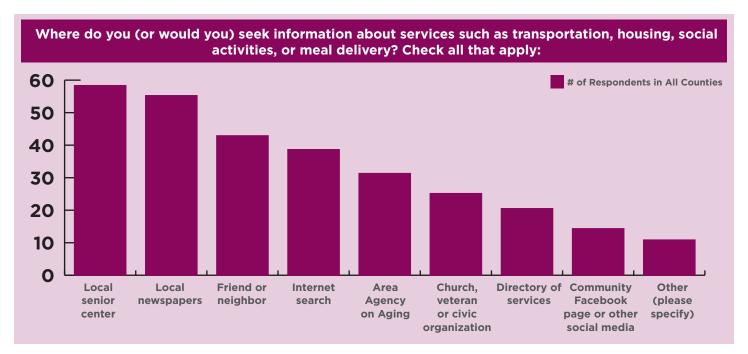


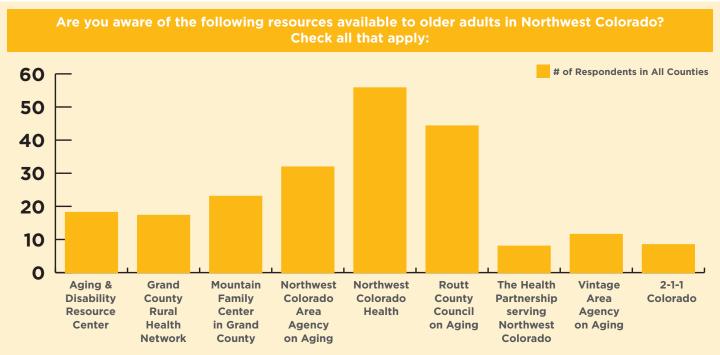
## COMMUNICATION

Aging is a gradual process that many of us approach with denial or at least trepidation. Recognizing the need for assistance can be challenging enough, but finding resources can be daunting. In Northwestern Colorado, we have a plethora of services that meet many of the needs of our older adults from food insecurities to transportation. It is important that residents know how to find information when it is needed.

We wanted to understand where our older adults go for information today, how they want to receive information, and who they trust when they need services. When the time comes and a need is identified, our goal is that finding resources will be simple and efficient.

#### **SURVEY RESPONSES - COMMUNICATION**





## COMMUNICATION

#### **COMMUNICATION FINDINGS**

• Local senior centers (58%) and local newspapers (53%) are significantly the "go to" resource for information in our communities. Jackson and Rio Blanco counties also significantly rely on "friends or neighbors".







Friends or Neighbors 69% in Jackson and 50% in Rio Blanco

• Older adults want resource guides in a multitude of formats including paper (59%), online (53%), and phone call to a resource (38%).







- Each county has a unique older adults' resource that can serve as a communications hub for reliable information:
  - Grand Grand Seniors (Mountain Family Center)
  - Jackson Northwest Colorado Health and Jackson County Council on Aging
  - Moffat Northwest Colorado Health and Senior Social Center of Craig
  - Rio Blanco Area Agency on Aging of Northwest Colorado
  - · Routt Northwest Colorado Health and Routt County Council on Aging

#### **COMMUNICATION RECOMMENDATIONS**



Create a central agency or "hub" in each community to serve as the focal pont for all aging services and resources

2

Develop a resource
guide for existing
and new service
providers so
they can most
effectively serve
the older adults in
our area



Develop a thorough communication plan for older adults, family members, and caregivers, so when the time comes, they know where to find what they need



Take advantage of existing state and regional resources not currently being used by implementing them in our region

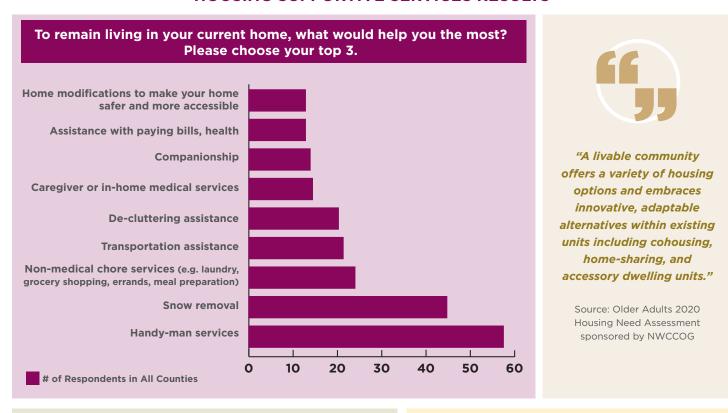


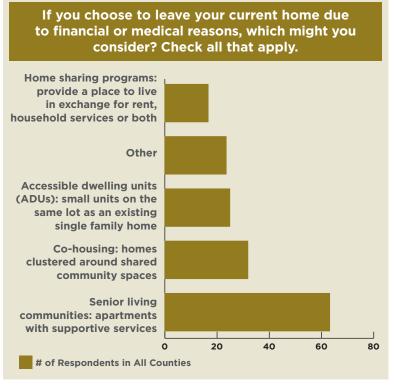
Create an "older adults" mindset in the counties, towns, and organizations that serve our community to address the specific and unique needs of older adults

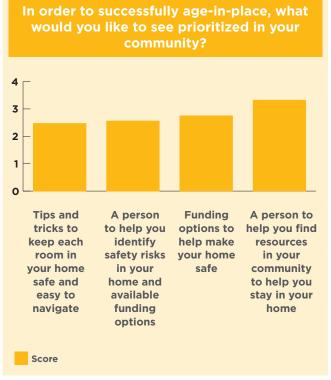
### HOUSING SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Affordable housing is a region-wide issue particularly for older adults. Many in our community age out of their existing homes due to the overwhelming challenge of maintenance and upkeep. As their ability to drive declines, socialization decreases which hinders access to services. The survey suggests that over half of older adults live alone, adding the increased burden of managing chores, medical appointments, bill paying, and home maintenance without help.

#### HOUSING SUPPORTIVE SERVICES RESULTS







## HOUSING SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

#### HOUSING SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FINDINGS

A variety of services are available to older adults to remain living independently in their homes. Many are grassroots initiatives, such as the snow removal program provided by 4H in Jackson County. Other state and federal programs include the Housing Choice Vouchers funded by HUD for rent assistance, the Winterization Assistance Program administered by NWCCOG, and the Home Modification Waiver offered by the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF). The survey highlighted the need to ensure that community members can take advantage of these programs. It also helped identify where we need to focus our efforts.

• Services needed to remain living independently



Handyman services were the top need for four out of five counties



Snow removal was the in the top two for all five counties



Non-medical chore services was the third most identified service

- When asked what older adults would like to see prioritized, over 61% ranked "A person to help you find resources in your community to help you stay in your home" as their first or second choice.
- When considering alternate housing options, 63% chose independent living communities as an option.

#### HOUSING SUPPORTIVE SERVICES RECOMMENDATIONS



Identify existing
home modifications
and repairs
resources including
funding and grant
opportunities

2

Ensure that
resources are known
by community
members and service
providers to increase
the utilization of
these programs and
opportunities

3

Work with volunteer programs to make sure older adults' needs are understood and prioritized

4

Evaluate programs in other communities (e.g. snow removal, handyman service) for implementation throughout

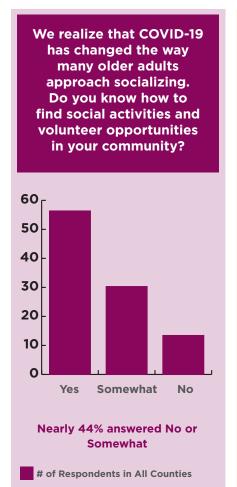
Northwest Colorado

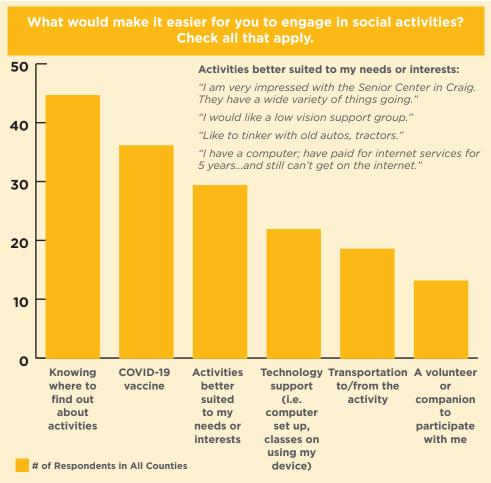
5

Take advantage of the work previously captured in the Older Adults 2020 Housing Needs Assessment sponsored by NWCCOG that included Eagle, Garfield, Grand, Jackson, Pitkin, Routt, and Summit counties.

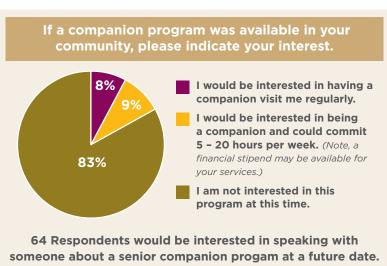
## SOCIALIZATION

Socialization and opportunities to volunteer are critical to the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of older adults. The survey explored barriers to accessing opportunities for volunteering and socializing to reduce isolation of our older residents.





The Coalition also evaluated potential interest in a **companion program** that would pair older adult volunteers with clients providing face-to-face interaction 2-3 times a week.





## SOCIALIZATION

#### SOCIALIZATION KEY FINDINGS

Our communities have varying social structures and networks of opportunities for older adults to engage in social, exercise, and volunteer activities. Yet many residents prefer not to engage, are not able to, or simply haven't found activities that interest them. The survey highlighted the need to better communicate socialization opportunities and to expand programming to meet the varied interests of the community.

- Nearly 45% overall indicated that knowing where to find information about activities would make it easier to engage, opening an opportunity to focus on communication. This number was 50% or greater in Grand, Moffat, and Rio Blanco.
- Transportation and companionship were two needs identified by the survey to reduce isolation in all communities.
- Forty-eight respondents said that technology support would make it easier to engage socially. With the increased focus on telemedicine, improved access to health care is an added benefit of technology support.
- Sixty-four respondents would be willing to speak with someone about a companion program.



45% of Respondents:
Clear Communication /
Where to Find Information



48 Respondents: Technology Support to Increase Engagement



64 Respondents: Companion Program Interest

#### SOCIALIZATION RECOMMENDATIONS



Promote what each community offers - communicate existing social and volunteer resources to community members, including transportation, companionship, and technology support

2

Create intergenerational opportunities to reach a broader audience within the older adult age range engaging "younger" older adults (50s-60s) with those having higher needs

3

Work with community organizations to include an older adult mindset expanding the variety of social outlets for seniors

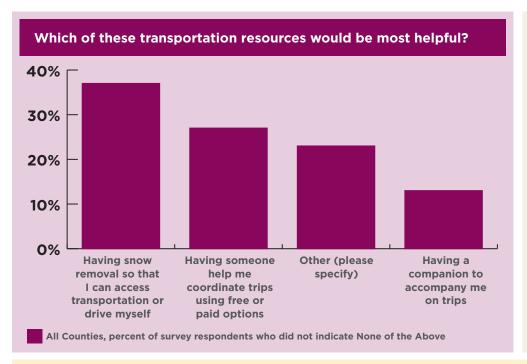


Further evaluate
companion programs
to establish the
appropriate model
(lighter involvement,
such as phone calls,
to more robust
participation) for
various communities

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Transportation is key to accessing services, reducing isolation, and living our lives fully in mountain and rural communities. In northwestern Colorado, we have a relatively robust transportation system. Our senior centers own and operate van services; most independent senior living communities have transportation, and public and other transit options offer in-town and town-to-town services. For those living more remotely accessing these options can be challenging.

Through the survey we aimed to understand whether community members used public transit options, and, if not, why. Driving can become more challenging as we age especially with the winter elements prevalent in our region. When the time for transportation assistance arises, we want our older adult population to know their options.

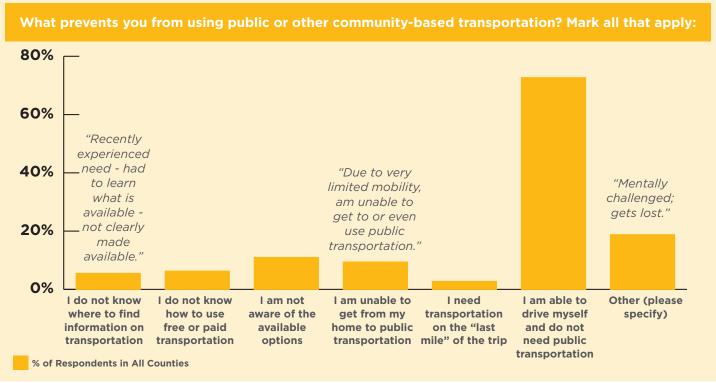




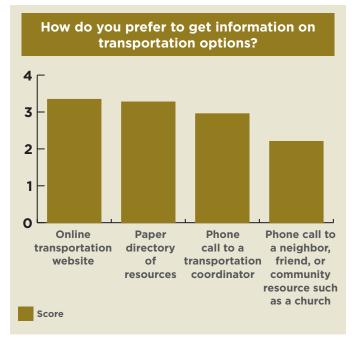
"I have transportation for myself but there are many folks who don't drive who are unable to go to appointments due to limited transportation options here."

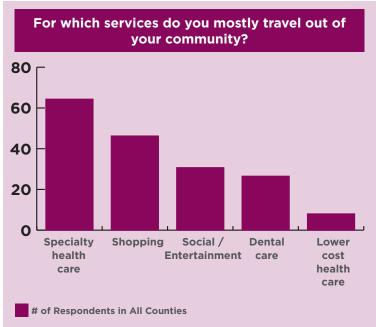
"Handicap ramp to driveway."

"Just knowing someone could help me with transportation is good to know."



## **TRANSPORTATION**





#### TRANSPORTATION FINDINGS

We learned that we have a very independent population and many of our residents choose to drive themselves as much as possible. With a number of older adults leaving the region for medical care, we feel it is imperative to make sure reliable transit options are known and accessible.

- For those wanting assistance, **snow removal** (50 respondents) and having someone assist in coordinating travel (36 respondents) were most important.
- Nearly 73% of respondents indicated they drive themselves. Of those that would use public transportation, 65% reference not knowing what is available, how to use it, or where to find information as barriers.
- Respondents want to access transportation service information via both online websites and paper directories.
- Residents are **primarily leaving the area for medical care** (specialty care and dental service) followed by shopping (46%) and social/entertainment (31%).







**Snow Removal Most Important** 

73% Drive Themselves

**Leaving for Medical Care** 

#### TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS



Promote existing transit options to community members and service providers to fully take advantage of services available and to encourage use of these services

2

Evaluate whether Jackson County's 4-H snow removal programs may be duplicated in other communities

3

Continue collaboration with state and regional transportation experts on initiatives to increase NEMT options in northwestern Colorado

#### INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN BY COALITION

The recommendations that evolved from the survey results coalesced into initiatives that the Aging Services Coalition has undertaken to solve unmet needs.

## 1) Create an "Aging Services Hub" in each community to be the <u>first stop for older adults' services</u>, resources, and referrals.

Creating a cohesive and comprehensive one-stop hub, be it virtual or center-based, facilitates the flow of information to residents and the community of providers serving older adults. Our goal is for older adults, caregivers, family members, and service providers to use the Hub as their launching pad for information gathering and referrals to services. As programs emerge locally, within the AAA or at the state level, the Aging Services Hub will be the integral county resource for participation and input to all things senior.

Routt and Jackson counties have robust senior programs through their Councils on Aging that are ingrained in their communities. Both provide meals, transportation, and social engagement opportunities. Currently these agencies serve as referral resources to other resources for older adults. In Grand County, two organizations primarily serve older adults: Grand County Health Network and Grand Seniors run by Mountain Family Center. The Senior Social Center of Craig plays a vital role in serving seniors not only in Craig, but throughout Moffat County. In Rio Blanco a community-effort by municipalities, the hospital, and local recreation centers exists to meet the community's needs. The Coalition has begun meeting in these communities to formalize the Aging Services Hubs and develop support systems to carry out the success of the concept.



## 2) Identify and implement state, regional, and other existing resources that are not currently in use or fully implemented in our region.

A number of programs already exist which the Coalition would like to see implemented in Northwestern Colorado. Taking advantage of systems already built provides a fast track to increasing the number of and availability of services. Examples of implementations in progress include:

i. Seniors Blue Book (SBB) is a printed directory of community resources and services ranging from advocacy to home health to wellness. The resource guide is currently only available in communities along the Front Range and Western Slope of Colorado, however the Coalition has met with SBB's publishers who have agreed to add Grand, Jackson, Moffat, Rio Blanco, and Routt counties to its Western Slope edition in 2022. Our Coalition is currently working with service providers and the publishers to ensure the guide is as comprehensive as possible!



#### INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN BY COALITION

- ii. **2-1-1 Colorado** is a United Way program offering both online and phone-support connecting Coloradans to vital resources across Colorado. The program has an Aging and Disability section available to highlight unique services for older adults. Test usage of 2-1-1 for our region revealed that local resources are not sufficiently represented in the database, and the survey underscored that 2-1-1 is not well known by users. The Coalition will develop an outreach program to its 30+ member organizations, plus other service agencies, to populate the database with our region's critical resources.
- iii. A Housing Resource Tool is being created to document home improvement and modification programs available to residents. Building off the work done by NWCCOG's Older Adult 2020 Housing Needs Assessment, the Coalition wants to put the tools in the hands of local leaders and providers serving our community. Whether it's a US Department of Energy funded winterization program, a Medicaid funded home modification program, HUD rental assistance, or Colorado tax credits, some communities need guidance and education on the availability and usage of these programs.





3) Develop and implement an Aging Services Promotion campaign to put all resources at the fingertips of our older adults.

The goal of our promotion campaign is twofold:

- a) Promote the Aging Services Hub and available resources including transportation, socialization, technology, and housing services to maximize the use of resources and simplify the search process. Whether an individual begins their search for services through county or town websites, local newspapers, or friends and family, we want users to find answers simply and without hassle. As importantly, we want those who advise on services to be fully aware of all resources at their disposal.
- b) Older adults' needs should not be an afterthought, but a frame of mind that is embedded in the way we plan, fund, and live. The Coalition will actively work to integrate an "older adults" mindset into local and county leadership to positively impact critical needs such as housing, mental and physical health, and supportive services. Additionally by educating community employers and event planners on the economic and volunteer contributions of older adults we expect to positively expand the variety of social and workforce opportunities.



#### **New Transit Resources in 2021**

As a coalition we continue to work collaboratively to promote these critical resources throughout the community



- Bustang, CDOT's intercity service, operates daily between Craig and Denver connecting through Kremmling and Granby.
- NWCCOG's Mountain Ride website (mtnride.org) provides a valuable tool with links to non-emergent medical transit (NEMT) options by county.
- MedRide, a new NEMT provider, brings a much needed service to those who cannot otherwise get to/from medical appointments.

# NORTHWEST COLORADO HEALTH

## THANK YOU FOR READING!

For more information, please visit northwestcoloradohealth.org 970-879-1632 | 940 Central Park Dr. Ste. 101, Steamboat Springs, CO 80487