

**Adult Services in Colorado’s Libraries: Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How**  
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## Executive Summary

In December 2024/January 2025 a survey was sent to public libraries across Colorado to discern the current state of public library services to adults, with a focus on the previous 12 months. 110 public librarians responded to the survey, representing urban, suburban, town, and rural communities across the state.

Results show that most (50% or more) of Colorado public libraries:

- Employ at least one person whose primary responsibility is adult services
- Fund adult services as part of the library's operating budget
- Try to serve the needs of Colorado's retired adults
- Offer intergenerational programs and services
- Feel their programs for adults are moderately to very well attended
- Provide programming in support of a wide range of topics, including literary and cultural pursuits, social and civic engagement, technology and digital literacy, and health and wellness
- Offer adult programs at a wide variety of times, including on weekends and in the evening
- Also offer programs and services for adults off-site and through outreach

Results also provide a window into the priorities for adult services in public libraries across the state. A majority (50% or more) of Colorado public libraries:

- Want to do more to support 1-on-1 technology assistance, healthy aging, adult education, as well as support patrons applying for jobs and seeking to access government programs and services
- Take into consideration community interests and needs when developing adult services
- Seek help and support determining what community needs and interests are, as well as access to opportunities to share information on program speakers and presenters

In addition to capturing foundational information on what Colorado's public libraries do to serve adults, the survey also documented opportunities for growth and development, including

- Better support for intergenerational programs and services, which often are provided without an intentional focus on connecting generations and age groups together
- Better support for those new to adulthood (e.g. those in their early 20's) and those new to America or to Colorado, as well as adults with disabilities
- Better support for small and tiny libraries, who sought help with funding and staffing at a rate greater than their more urban counterparts
- Better support urban and suburban libraries, who sought help assessing impact and tailoring programs and services at a rate greater than their smaller counterparts
- Better connecting Colorado's public libraries to other state agencies and initiatives: Especially important given the interest among Colorado's public libraries to support patron access to government services and initiatives available to them
- Better support for librarians who want to ensure that the great services they offer for adults across Colorado are robustly utilized

This report showed that Colorado's public libraries – of all sizes – are doing critical work to support adults of all types. With more support and connections these services will continue to grow, develop, and thrive.

## Introduction

### *A very brief history of adult services*

In 1986, Kathleen de la Peña McCook argued that “adult services are reflective” of “the changing role of the public library.”<sup>1</sup> Before the advent of library services for children and young adults, adult services did not exist. It was assumed that *all* public library services were for adults.

As adult services became a separate facet of public librarianship, the primary debate became between those who saw adult services as primarily educational in nature, versus those who saw adult services as primarily recreational. This debate centered around whether the library should focus on catering to popular tastes, or focus instead on uplifting those tastes.

Similarly, before the advent of extension and bookmobile services in the first half of the twentieth century, libraries for rural adults did not exist. Pioneering rural outreach and extension efforts extend into the present in the form of an overarching concern with both who is served and who is underserved in contemporary public library services. This focus also led to the development and refinement of outreach and off-site library services.<sup>2</sup>

By the 1950s, the role of adult services had also expanded to encompass more domains of life. The *Public Library Inquiry* of that decade shows that public librarians felt libraries should support, among adults, “public affairs and citizenship, vocations, aesthetic appreciation, recreation, information, and research.”<sup>3</sup> It was assumed, however, that these pursuits would be supported through reference transactions and collections.

By the 1980s, there was another shift, this time towards adult events, exhibits, programs, and classes. A major catalyst of this was the National Endowment for the Humanities, who partnered with the American Library Association in the 1980s to develop cultural programming for adults. In the 1990s, these efforts coalesced into the Public Programs Office. Programming, sometimes referred to as classes or events, has since become a major facet of adult services.<sup>4</sup> Programming for adults in public libraries now encompasses classes and events focused on “civic/community engagement, digital learning, economic development, education/lifelong learning, health, and job skills.”<sup>5</sup> As programs for groups of adults became more common in adult services, so too did the idea of intergenerational programs: Events and classes that would create opportunities for connection and learning across generations.

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<sup>1</sup> Heim, K. M. (1986). *Adult Services as Reflective of the Changing Role of the Public Library*. *RQ*, p. 180.

<sup>2</sup> Buckland, M. K. (2020). *Ideology and Libraries: California, Diplomacy, and Occupied Japan, 1945–1952*. Rowman & Littlefield.

<sup>3</sup> Heim, p. 182.

<sup>4</sup> The American Library Association Archives. (n.d.). Public Programs Office.  
<https://archon.library.illinois.edu/ala/index.php?p=creators/creator&id=3482>

<sup>5</sup> The Public Library Association. (n.d.). Project Outcome.  
<https://www.ala.org/pla/data/performance measurement>.

A final major development in adult services can be linked to Schools and Libraries Program, a federal initiative established under the Telecommunications Act of 1996, also known as “e-rate.” This initiative cemented the idea of public libraries as on the front lines of the digital divide and digital inclusion, especially for adults.<sup>6</sup>

Given this expansion of what is considered part of adult services, it is critical to understand what adult services currently looks like libraries. To that end, Colorado State Library worked with Dr. Noah Lenstra to design, disseminate, and analyze a survey designed to capture foundational data on adult services across the state.

The survey’s results are organized around **Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How:**

- Who do Colorado’s adult services reach?
- What do these services entail?
- When and where are services offered?
- Why are they offered?
- How are they offered?

The report concludes with information about what Colorado’s public libraries need -- in terms of support -- to offer more effective, impactful, and inclusive adult services.

As a single survey at a single moment in time, this survey does not provide the final answer to these questions, but instead creates space for conversation and dialogue about what adult services in Colorado currently are, so we can support them becoming what we as a society and as a profession desire they become.

Before turning to results, a brief note about how the data were analyzed (explained more fully in the Appendix): Public libraries in Colorado come in many sizes. Based on categories developed by the Colorado State Library, this survey uses the analytical categories of “large library,” “medium library,” “small library,” and “tiny library,” defined as following:

- Large library is defined as a library/library district that serves 250,000 to 800,000 (the largest service area in Colorado)
- Medium library is defined as a library/library district that serves 25,000 to 250,000
- Small defined as a library/library district that serves 2,500 to 25,000
- Tiny defined as a library that serves under 2,500

All other definitions are introduced below in the text.

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<sup>6</sup> Jaeger, P. T., McClure, C. R., & Bertot, J. C. (2005). The E-rate program and libraries and library consortia, 2000-2004: Trends and issues. *Information technology and libraries*, 24(2), 57-67.

## Who is served and underserved in Colorado’s libraries?

The survey asked, “During the last 12 months, did your library offer any services targeted implicitly or explicitly at specific groups of types of adults?” The survey then offered respondents a list of demographic groups from which they were instructed to check all that apply.

*In this and in subsequent figures, percentages that are 50% or more are in bold.*

Who is targeted implicitly or explicitly in adult services at your library?	Large (n=20)	Medium (n=32)	Small (n=31)	Tiny (n=26)	All (n=109)
Retired adults	<b>60%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>81%</b>	35%	<b>61%</b>
Parents or caregivers of children	45%	44%	<b>55%</b>	23%	46%
Adults with English as a second language	30%	<b>53%</b>	<b>55%</b>	8%	42%
Working adults	35%	38%	45%	12%	39%
Members of the LGBTQIA+ community	<b>55%</b>	38%	13%	8%	30%
New adults (i.e. 18-25)	20%	31%	29%	8%	29%
Adults with learning disabilities	<b>60%</b>	28%	13%	4%	28%
Individuals experiencing homelessness	30%	28%	26%	0%	25%
Recent immigrants or refugees	35%	22%	23%	4%	24%
Adults with physical disabilities (differently abled adults)	45%	19%	16%	4%	23%
Women	5%	25%	16%	15%	20%
Caregivers of older adults or other adults with caregiving needs	25%	19%	16%	8%	19%
Men	5%	22%	13%	4%	16%
Neuro-diverse adults (e.g. Asperger’s, Autism)	20%	16%	6%	0%	14%
Other	0%	3%	6%	8%	7%

The only demographic group most libraries made a concerted effort to serve during the last 12 months were “retired adults,” which 61% indicated were a targeted demographic. That said, it is notable that only 35% of tiny libraries reported targeting this demographic. Nevertheless, this fact still made “retired adults” the most frequently targeted demographic group in tiny libraries.

Across Colorado, the second most served demographic group were parents or caregivers or children, reported by 46% of all libraries.

A majority of medium and small library respondents also reported serving adults with English as a second language, while a majority large libraries reported serving members of the LGBTQIA+ community, as well as adults with learning disabilities. All other

demographic groups asked about were targeted by a minority (less than 50%) of responding libraries.

In open-ended responses, libraries also reported targeting programs and services towards the following other groups not asked about on the survey: People living with dementia, those focused on outdoor pursuits, and newcomers (including those with second homes in the community).

## Priority populations in Colorado libraries

The survey then asked respondents “thinking of those same **groups of types of adults**, which groups do you feel are currently underserved at your library?”

Which of the following are priority populations for your library?	Large (n=20)	Medium (n=32)	Small (n=31)	Tiny (n=26)	All (n=109)
Adults with English as a second language	55%	47%	48%	31%	48%
New adults (i.e. 18-25)	50%	47%	35%	42%	47%
Neuro-diverse adults (e.g. Asperger’s, Autism)	35%	63%	39%	23%	44%
Adults with physical disabilities (differently abled adults)	30%	53%	35%	35%	43%
Recent immigrants or refugees	40%	47%	42%	27%	42%
Caregivers of older adults or other adults with caregiving needs	25%	34%	42%	35%	39%
Adults with learning disabilities	25%	50%	29%	31%	39%
Working adults	30%	22%	39%	38%	35%
Individuals experiencing homelessness	25%	47%	26%	19%	34%
Members of the LGBTQIA+ community	35%	38%	29%	12%	31%
Parents or caregivers of children	5%	25%	26%	12%	21%
Men	15%	13%	23%	19%	20%
Retired adults	10%	9%	23%	19%	18%
Other	5%	0%	13%	4%	8%
Women	0%	3%	13%	4%	8%

It is notable that **no one demographic group was a priority for a majority (more than 50%) of public libraries across Colorado.**

Instead, about a third to a half of respondents said the following demographics were priorities: adults with English as a second language (48%), new adults (i.e. 18-25) (47%), neuro-diverse adults (e.g. Asperger’s, Autism) (44%), adults with physical disabilities (differently abled adults) (43%), recent immigrants or refugees (42%), caregivers of older

adults or other adults with caregiving needs (39%), caregivers of older adults or other adults with caregiving needs (39%), working adults (35%), and individuals experiencing homelessness (34%).

Other demographics reported as being underserved in open-ended comments included: tourists, minorities, people without digital literacy, Native Americans, and the Spanish speaking.

**Priority populations in different types of libraries.** We now look at who are priority populations (or underserved) in different types of communities across Colorado. The groups most identified by large libraries as underserved were: Adults with English as a second language (55%), New adults (50%), and Recent immigrants or refugees (40%).

<b>Large Libraries (n=20)</b>	<b>Served</b>	<b>Underserved</b>
Adults with English as a second language	30%	55%
New adults (i.e. 18-25)	20%	50%
Recent immigrants or refugees	35%	40%
Neuro-diverse adults (e.g. Asperger's, Autism)	20%	35%
Members of the LGBTQIA+ community	55%	35%
Working adults	35%	30%
Adults with physical disabilities (differently abled adults)	45%	30%
Caregivers of older adults or other adults with caregiving needs	25%	25%
Individuals experiencing homelessness	30%	25%
Adults with learning disabilities	60%	25%
Men	5%	15%
Retired adults	60%	10%
Other	0%	5%
Parents or caregivers of children	45%	5%
Women	5%	0%

The groups most identified as underserved by medium libraries were neuro-diverse adults (e.g. Aspergers, autism) (63%), adults with physical disabilities (differently abled adults) (53%), and adults with learning disabilities (50%).

<b>Medium (n=32)</b>	<b>Served</b>	<b>Underserved</b>
Neuro-diverse adults (e.g. Aspergers, autism)	16%	63%
Adults with physical disabilities (differently abled adults)	19%	53%
Adults with learning disabilities	28%	50%
Adults with English as a second language	53%	47%
Individuals experiencing homelessness	28%	47%
New adults (i.e. 18-25)	31%	47%
Recent immigrants or refugees	22%	47%
Members of the LGBTQIA+ community	38%	38%

Caregivers of older adults or other adults with caregiving needs	19%	34%
Parents or caregivers of children	44%	25%
Working adults	38%	22%
Men	22%	13%
Retired adults	53%	9%
Women	25%	3%
Other	3%	0%

The groups most identified as underserved by small libraries were: adults with English as a second language (48%), recent immigrants or refugees (42%), and caregivers of older adults or other adults with caregiving needs (42%).

<i>Small (n=31)</i>	Served	Underserved
Adults with English as a second language	55%	48%
Adults with learning disabilities	13%	29%
Adults with physical disabilities (differently abled adults)	16%	35%
Caregivers of older adults or other adults with caregiving needs	16%	42%
Individuals experiencing homelessness	26%	26%
Members of the LGBTQIA+ community	13%	29%
Men	13%	23%
Neuro-diverse adults (e.g. Aspergers, Autism)	6%	39%
New adults (i.e. 18-25)	29%	35%
Other	6%	13%
Parents or caregivers of children	55%	26%
Recent immigrants or refugees	23%	42%
Retired adults	81%	23%
Women	16%	13%
Working adults	45%	39%

The groups most identified as underserved by tiny libraries were: new adults (i.e. 18-25) (42%), working adults (38%), adults with physical disabilities (differently abled adults) (35%), and caregivers of older adults or other adults with caregiving needs (35%).

<i>Tiny (n=26)</i>	Served	Underserved
New adults (i.e. 18-25)	8%	42%
Working adults	12%	38%
Adults with physical disabilities (differently abled adults)	4%	35%
Caregivers of older adults or other adults with caregiving needs	8%	35%
Adults with English as a second language	8%	31%
Adults with learning disabilities	4%	31%
Recent immigrants or refugees	4%	27%
Neuro-diverse adults (e.g. Aspergers, Autism)	0%	23%
Individuals experiencing homelessness	0%	19%



<b>Men</b>	4%	19%
<b>Retired adults</b>	35%	19%
<b>Members of the LGBTQIA+ community</b>	8%	12%
<b>Parents or caregivers of children</b>	23%	12%
<b>Other</b>	8%	4%
<b>Women</b>	15%	4%

**Intergenerational audiences.** In addition to asking about demographic groups served and underserved by adult services in Colorado’s libraries, the survey also asked about intergenerational programs and services, specifically if they had been offered during the past 12 months.

	<b>Large (n=20)</b>	<b>Medium (n=32)</b>	<b>Small (n=31)</b>	<b>Tiny (n=26)</b>	<b>All (n=109)</b>
<b>Yes, intergenerational offered</b>	75%	75%	61%	46%	64%
<b>No, intergenerational not offered</b>	15%	6%	26%	38%	21%
<b>I don't know</b>	10%	13%	13%	15%	13%

Most (64%) said their libraries had offered intergenerational services, but only 46% of tiny libraries reported offering them. Three-quarters of both large and medium libraries reported offering intergenerational services. Some respondents (13%) were not sure if intergenerational services had or had not been offered, and this lack of knowledge may possibly be because in some libraries these services were led by youth services, rather than adult services – a point we will further discuss below when we consider **how** adult services are offered in Colorado.

In any case, only about 1 in 5 respondents said that intergenerational services **were not** offered at their libraries, but 1 in 4 small libraries and 2 in 5 tiny libraries reported **not** offering intergenerational services.

**Participation levels in adult programming.** The survey also asked respondents to reflect on general attendance levels at adult programming. **Across all libraries, the most reported response was that programming for adults is moderately attended.** Less than a quarter said programming was very well attended, and a similar proportion said it was not very well attended. Four said it was not attended at all. **Of those that said their adult programming was not attended at all, three were tiny libraries, and one was a small library.**

Among tiny libraries, exactly half (50%) said their adult programming was either not attended (12%) or not very well attended (38%). Half also said it was either moderately well attended (46%) or very well attended (4%).

<b>All libraries</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Large libraries</b>	<b>%</b>
Very well attended	19%	Very well attended	10%
Moderately attended	60%	Moderately attended	75%
Not very well attended	18%	Not very well attended	15%
Not attended	4%	Not attended	0%
<b>Medium libraries</b>		<b>Small libraries</b>	
Very well attended	28%	Very well attended	26%
Moderately attended	66%	Moderately attended	48%
Not very well attended	6%	Not very well attended	23%
Not attended	0%	Not attended	3%
<b>Tiny libraries</b>		<b>How attended is adult programming in Colorado libraries?</b>	
Very well attended	4%		
Moderately attended	46%		
Not very well attended	38%		
Not attended	12%		

Among small libraries, things were better, with only 26% saying adult programming was not very well attended, or not attended. Only 6% of medium and 15% of large libraries said programming for adults was not very well attended.

There are many factors that could play into these different attendance levels across Colorado libraries, including marketing, the need for adult services, community interest in coming to the library for said services, scheduling, among other factors not exhaustively explored in this report.

**Discussion of who is served and who is underserved in Colorado libraries**

This section showed several things:

- There is no one demographic group of adults that is the top priority for all Colorado libraries. Rather a range of different demographics are seen as needing better support and services across the state, with no group identified as a priority by most respondents.
- Retired adults are the only group of adults that most Colorado’s libraries say they have targeted implicitly or explicitly during the last 12 months
- Tiny libraries report the greatest challenges with engagement in services for adults, and are the least likely to focus their attention on particular types of adults

Put together these facts suggest has the following practical implications:

- Tiny libraries (and to a lesser extent small libraries) need foundational help building engagement in adult services and programs. This assistance is needed before they are ready to think about prioritizing services for any specific types of adults

- Large and medium libraries (and to a lesser extent small libraries) already have moderately well attended programs and services, and now need assistance tailoring and focusing and extending those offerings to underserved demographics, particularly those with disabilities to those who are either newcomers to America and/or newcomers to adulthood
- There are opportunities for peer-to-peer sharing across Colorado's libraries about how to serve particular types of adults. Every single demographic category asked about was targeted – either implicitly or explicitly – by multiple public libraries across Colorado. There is a latent possibility to connect those serving particular groups to those who are not serving particular groups to build up the capacity of all of Colorado's public libraries to serve all types of the state's adults effectively and equitably.

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## What is offered, and what do libraries want to offer?

The survey asked a series of questions both on what Colorado's libraries are currently offering to adults (during the past 12 months, or roughly during the year of 2014), as well as what they would like to be able to offer to Colorado's adults in the future.

The story of what Colorado's libraries offer adults is in part a story of tiny libraries being distinct from all others. The types of programs and services offered by Colorado's public libraries evinces a stark divide between tiny libraries and all other types of libraries. **Tiny libraries tended to offer approximately half as many types of adult programs & services compared to all other libraries in Colorado.** Given a list of topics, and asked if they had offered any services or programs in support of them during the last 12 months, large, medium, and small libraries, on average, selected 63-67% of the options. Tiny libraries only selected 38% of the options.

There was only one service area where tiny libraries were nearly on par with their counterparts: literary or cultural Services. 88% of tiny libraries, 90% of small, and 100% of both large and medium libraries reported offering programs or services in support of literary or cultural pursuits during the past 12 months.

In contrast, when looking at digital literacy services, 85% of large, 72% of medium, and 84% of small libraries report offering any programs or services that support technology/digital literacy during the past 12 months. Only 27% of tiny libraries report offering this type of programming. In other words, large, medium, and small libraries were nearly **three times** as likely as their tiny counterparts to offer programs and services that support technological or digital literacy.

Types of adult programs & services offered in last 12 months	Large (n=20)	Medium (n=32)	Small (n=31)	Tiny (n=26)	All (n=109)
Literary or Cultural	100%	100%	90%	88%	94%
Social and Civic Engagement	90%	91%	77%	54%	78%
Technology and digital literacy	85%	72%	84%	27%	67%
Outreach and Offsite	60%	81%	65%	38%	62%
Health and Wellness	70%	63%	65%	46%	61%
E-government programs or services	55%	28%	61%	31%	43%
Adult Literacy & Adult Education	40%	50%	42%	8%	36%
Economy or workforce development	35%	19%	42%	12%	27%
Other	0%	6%	0%	8%	4%
Average (excluding other)	67%	63%	66%	38%	52%

Given these disparities, this section first considers trends among large, medium, and small libraries, before then looking closer at the different situation in tiny libraries. A majority of large, medium, and small libraries reported supporting “social and civic engagement,” “technology and digital literacy,” and “health and wellness.” A majority also reported offering outreach and offsite programming, which will be discussed below when we consider **where** adult services are offered.

On average, less than 50% of large, medium, and small libraries reported supporting “e-government,” “adult literacy and adult education,” or “economy or workforce development.” That said, 61% of small and 55% of large libraries **did** report supporting e-government, while only 28% of medium libraries did. Furthermore, 50% of medium libraries reported supporting adult literacy and adult education. The reasons for these differences are unknown.

The topic least likely to be supported by large, medium, and small libraries was the economy or workforce development, with only 35% of large, 19% of medium, and 42% of small libraries reporting supporting this topic in the past 12 months.

Turning now to the situation in tiny libraries, we see a very different reality. Beyond literary or cultural programming, the only topic a majority supported was social and civic engagement (54%), with a minority reporting supporting health and wellness (46%), outreach and offsite (38%), e-government (31%), technology and digital literacy (27%), economy or workforce development (12%), and adult literacy and adult education (8%).

## **What do libraries see as priority topics in adult services and programming?**

The survey also asked respondents, “when you think of the future of adult services at your library, which of the following are priority topics?” They were presented with a list of options shaped by known priorities and interests at the state-level in Colorado.

Most libraries listed among priorities one-on-one technology assistance (74%), healthy aging (71%), support signing up for government services or programs (57%), adult education (51%), and support applying for jobs (50%). A minority said priority topics at their libraries included class-based technology assistance (39%), adult literacy (39%), telehealth access (29%), harm reduction and overdose prevention (14%).

In general terms, priority topics did not vary hugely between large/medium/small and tiny libraries. Tiny libraries were **more likely** to list some things as priority topics than other libraries, such as telehealth access (35% of tiny libraries) and support for patrons signing up for government services or programs (50% of tiny libraries). Tiny libraries were **much**

**less likely** to indicate that technology assistance, in either class form or 1 on 1, was a priority topic, compared to other libraries.

What are priority topics in adult services at your library?	Large (n=20)	Medium (n=32)	Small (n=31)	Tiny (n=26)	All (n=109)
Technology assistance (1 on 1)	85%	63%	81%	62%	74%
Healthy aging	70%	72%	74%	58%	71%
Support for patrons signing up for government services or programs	50%	50%	58%	58%	57%
Adult Education	25%	50%	71%	38%	51%
Support for patrons applying for jobs	65%	44%	52%	35%	50%
Technology assistance (class-based)	55%	38%	42%	15%	39%
Adult Literacy	50%	38%	48%	12%	39%
Telehealth access	20%	19%	32%	35%	29%
Other	10%	16%	19%	12%	17%
Harm reduction and overdose prevention	15%	16%	13%	4%	14%

There were also differences among different types of libraries in terms of health issues. For instance, when looking at telehealth access and harm reduction/overdose prevention there was a noticeable difference between how large/medium and small/tiny libraries responded. 32-35% of small/tiny libraries said telehealth access was a priority topic at their libraries, while only 19%-20% of large/medium said it was. In contrast, 15-16% of large/medium libraries said harm reduction & overdose prevention was a priority, while only 4% of tiny libraries said it was.

A sizable number of libraries also indicated other priority topics, and those are presented below, based on the size of the population served.

*Large libraries*

- Connecting customers to community, resources, and stories. Providing spaces for work and play. Starting ESL classes.
- Multicultural and LGBTQ programming, generally DEI programs that include and/or represent marginalized communities

*Medium libraries*

- Crafts, art, cooking, book clubs.
- Financial wellness/literacy, memoir writing or other "leaving your legacy" programs

- Entertainment-type programs such as Murder Mystery.
- Social activities will also be important in our area. We are a rapidly growing community, and many adult patrons have expressed interest in ways to connect with other adults and form new friendships.

*Small libraries*

- Clubs, crafting, ways to come together and communicate outside of hot topics like politics, etc. Ways to heal our divisiveness.
- Entertainment, education, author connections
- Support groups, and facilitated community conversations on a variety of topics
- Support for Spanish-speakers
- Seniors looking for socialization and learning
- Our core attendees seem to appreciate the opportunity to learn new skills and socialize. [This person suggested they needed help getting community participation in other programs and services, writing] we have telehealth kits and a dedicated room, but these are very rarely used. Our most successful programs are a weekly yoga class and the 2-3 art and craft classes we offer each month. We have partnered with Public Health to offer aging well classes and book clubs, and these are moderately successful. Our program on social security was poorly attended.

*Tiny libraries*

- Looking at other activity-based classes for 2025
- Fraud reduction
- Have talked about the library being a place for adults to gather for handy work like crocheting, needle work, cross stitch, etc or just coffee and conversation

## Program and services offered in Colorado’s libraries

The following large table, which starts on the following page, aggregates all the information collected from participants about specific programs and services their libraries had offered to adults during the past 12 months (again, roughly during 2024). This table shows 13 specific adult programs or services were offered by a majority of Colorado’s public libraires, including:

1. Book discussion groups or clubs - 85%
2. Reading incentive programs for adults - 72%
3. Craft classes, groups or workshops (e.g. sewing, knitting, quilting, needlework, woodcrafts, etc.) - 70%
4. Author presentation or reading - 68%

5. Arts creation workshop or club (e.g., visual arts, fine arts, photography) - 63%
6. Art or cultural exhibit and/or gallery showing - 62%
7. Technology and Digital Literacy focused on General computer skills - 59%
8. General Internet use (e.g., set up e-mail, Web browsing, Web searching) - 57%
9. Smartphone and/or app use - 52%
10. Social connection events for adults (e.g. mixers, human library, community conversation, etc.) - 51%

This list of the most widely offered adult programs illustrates that a range of types of programs are offered across the state’s libraries, with more than 50% of respondents offering everything from book discussion groups to social connection events, from computer classes to craft classes.

Data also inform us about the types of programming infrequently offered, and which may require more support if it is desired that they be offered more regularly. No specific e-government, health and wellness, adult education, or workforce development program was offered by most respondents. Nevertheless, 46% did report offering programs on developing healthy lifestyles, 41% offered Indoor physical activity and/or exercise programming programs, and 38% offered outdoor and/or nature activities programming. Less offered were other types of programming: 37% reported offering current events discussions and speakers, 30% offered voter education and/or civic literacy education programs, and 28% offered adult literacy & adult education: English for non-English speakers (e.g., ESL or ELL classes, conversational groups, literacy tutoring). A wide variety of other programs was offered by less than one quarter of respondents.

Specific type of adult program or service	L	M	S	T	All
Book discussion groups or clubs	95%	88%	87%	69%	85%
Reading incentive program for adults	85%	94%	74%	27%	72%
Craft classes, groups or workshops	85%	88%	71%	31%	70%
Author presentation or reading	70%	69%	74%	54%	68%
Arts creation workshop or club (e.g., visual arts, fine arts, photography)	80%	72%	61%	38%	63%
Art or cultural exhibit and/or gallery showing	65%	75%	68%	35%	62%
Technology and Digital Literacy: General computer skills (e.g., )	75%	56%	77%	23%	59%
General Internet use (e.g., set up e-mail, Web browsing, Web searching)	75%	50%	77%	23%	57%
Smartphone and/or app use	65%	50%	65%	27%	52%
Social connection events for adults (e.g. community conversation)	55%	59%	65%	19%	51%
Film Screening and/or Film Discussion	60%	56%	52%	35%	50%
Developing healthy lifestyles programs (cooking, exercise, meditation)	65%	41%	52%	27%	46%
Art/Cultural/Historical lectures	55%	56%	52%	15%	46%
Safe online practices (e.g., privacy, protection from online scams)	75%	44%	58%	4%	45%
Gaming groups or meetups for adults (e.g. board games, chess)	30%	63%	42%	23%	42%
Genealogy, family history, and local history	45%	41%	52%	23%	41%
Indoor physical activity and/or exercise programming (e.g., tai chi)	50%	50%	45%	15%	41%
Theatrical, musical, or poetry performances (e.g., concerts, plays)	45%	31%	55%	27%	40%
Outdoor and/or nature activities programming (e.g. birding, hiking)	50%	38%	45%	15%	38%
Current events discussions and speakers	55%	34%	42%	15%	37%



General familiarity with new technologies (e.g. e-readers, tablet devices)	40%	34%	55%	8%	36%
One-on-one resource navigation assistance either by appointment or as needed (performed by library staff)	45%	16%	55%	19%	34%
Voter education and/or civic literacy education programs	40%	31%	29%	19%	30%
English for non-English speakers (e.g., ESL or ELL classes)	30%	44%	29%	4%	28%
Using video conferencing technologies (e.g., Zoom, FaceTime)	30%	9%	58%	8%	27%
One-on-one resource navigation assistance either by appointment or as needed (note: performed by visiting partner)	20%	25%	35%	12%	24%
Mental health information and/or education programming	25%	22%	26%	15%	23%
On-site tax filing and preparation (e.g. DIY tax filing stations, VITA)	40%	16%	29%	8%	22%
Parenting and/or caregiving classes	20%	22%	29%	8%	21%
Financial literacy for retired and/or older nonworking adults (e.g., Medicare, accessing retirement savings, fixed income living)	25%	13%	32%	8%	20%
Education on managing a health condition or a disease (e.g., diabetes)	15%	9%	39%	8%	19%
Lectures or education programs related to government assistance or benefits for nonworking, retired, or older adults (e.g., Medicare 101)	20%	16%	35%	0%	19%
Education programs for finding and assessing health information (e.g., using consumer health databases)	15%	6%	35%	15%	18%
Workforce and career development education or services (e.g., interviewing skills, resume development)	30%	9%	23%	4%	17%
Financial literacy workshops or lectures for working adults (e.g., banking, investments, understanding retirement savings, budgeting)	25%	9%	23%	4%	16%
Non-English language learning (e.g., classes of other languages for English speakers, non-English conversational groups)	5%	19%	26%	4%	16%
Education and instruction for accessing and using employment databases and other job opportunity resources	25%	9%	16%	8%	15%
Provided GED or High School Equivalency preparation courses and services (e.g., Career Online High School, Excel Academy)	20%	16%	19%	0%	15%
On-site healthcare providers with limited healthcare screening services	15%	6%	29%	8%	15%
Notary services	10%	13%	19%	8%	13%
Digital content creation (e.g., Adobe Premiere Pro, GarageBand)	20%	13%	10%	0%	11%
Licensing application or granting for non-library agency (e.g., DMV)	5%	3%	29%	0%	10%
On-site career or job counseling	10%	13%	13%	4%	10%
Basic literacy skills for adult learners (e.g., basic math, reading, writing)	5%	6%	23%	0%	10%
Assistive Technology use (e.g., JAWS, Fire Vox, Click-n-Type)	25%	6%	13%	0%	10%
Citizenship/Naturalization Classes or Ceremonies	25%	13%	0%	0%	9%
Lectures or education programs related to government assistance or benefits for families and/or households with children (e.g., Medicaid)	10%	6%	19%	0%	9%
Local government and/or social services agencies resource fair or expo	5%	6%	16%	4%	9%
Telemedicine or telehealth hub services (including privacy pods)	0%	3%	13%	15%	8%
Health or wellness fairs or expos	0%	9%	13%	4%	8%
Networking events to connect entrepreneurs to funders, potential collaborators and/or those that can help a business succeed	10%	6%	10%	4%	8%
Small business development and management services (e.g. assistance on business plan development)	15%	9%	10%	0%	8%
Candidate forums and/or debates	0%	13%	13%	4%	8%
On-site mental healthcare providers with limited screening and/or therapy services including licensed social workers	10%	9%	10%	0%	7%
Residency and/or naturalization application	10%	3%	3%	0%	5%
Web site development (e.g., HTML, Drupal, WordPress)	10%	6%	0%	0%	4%

This data also demonstrates a stark divide between tiny libraries and all other libraries in terms of variety of adult services offered. While large, medium, and small libraries indicated, on average, that they had offered between 30-40% of the programming types asked about on the survey, tiny libraries indicated that on average they had only offered 13% of the programs asked about. In other words, **tiny libraries offered about one-third of the types of programs offered by large, medium, and small libraries.** In fact, only two programs were offered by a majority of tiny libraries: Book discussion groups or clubs (69%) and Author presentations of readings (54%). Between a quarter and a half of tiny libraries also reported offering the following:

- Arts creation workshop or club (e.g., visual arts, fine arts, photography) - 38%
- Art or cultural exhibit and/or gallery showing - 35%
- Film Screening and/or Film Discussion - 35%
- Craft classes, groups or workshops (e.g. sewing, knitting, quilting, needlework, woodcrafts, etc.) - 31%
- Reading incentive program for adults) - 27%
- Smartphone and/or app use - 27%
- Developing healthy lifestyles programs (e.g., food, nutrition, cooking, exercise, fitness, meditation) - 27%
- Theatrical, musical, or poetry performances (e.g., concerts, plays, poetry slams) - 27%

This list of programs offered by tiny libraries illustrates a focus primarily on arts, reading, crafts, and culture. Only two types of programs **not** focused on arts and culture were offered by more than a quarter of tiny libraries, and those focused on smartphone and/or app use (27%) and on developing healthy lifestyles (27%).

We see a very different programming profile in all other libraries. Among small libraries, 19 different types of programs were offered by most (50%+) respondents. An additional 18 programs were offered by between a quarter and a half. The 10 most offered programs in small libraries were:

1. Book discussion groups or clubs - 87% of small libraries offered
2. Technology and Digital Literacy: General computer skills - 77%
3. General Internet use (e.g., set up e-mail, Web browsing, Web searching) - 77%
4. Author presentation or reading - 74%
5. Reading incentive program (note: for adults) - 74%
6. Craft classes, groups or workshops (e.g. sewing, knitting, quilting, needlework, woodcrafts, etc.) - 71%
7. Art or cultural exhibit and/or gallery showing - 68%
8. Smartphone and/or app use - 65%

9. Social connection events for adults (e.g. mixers, human library, community conversation, etc.) - 65%
10. Arts creation workshop or club (e.g., visual arts, fine arts, photography) - 61%

We see in small libraries a strong focus not only on arts and culture, but also on technology (3 of the top 10 program types), as well as social connections.

Among medium libraries, 14 different types of programs were offered by most respondents. An additional 11 were offered by between a quarter and a half. The 10 most offered programs in medium libraries were:

1. Reading incentive program for adults - 94% of medium libraries offered
2. Book discussion groups or clubs - 88%
3. Craft classes, groups or workshops (e.g. sewing, knitting, quilting, needlework, woodcrafts, etc.) - 88%
4. Art or cultural exhibit and/or gallery showing - 75%
5. Arts creation workshop or club (e.g., visual arts, fine arts, photography) - 72%
6. Author presentation or reading - 69%
7. Gaming groups or meetups for adults (e.g., Dungeons & Dragons, Table Top Role Playing Games, board games, chess, dominoes) - 63%
8. Social connection events for adults (e.g. mixers, human library, community conversation, etc.) - 59%
9. Technology and Digital Literacy: General computer skills - 56%
10. Film Screening and/or Film Discussion - 56%

Interestingly, there is less focus on technology among medium-sized libraries, and more focus on social connections, with gaming groups and general social connection events both appearing in the top ten program types.

Finally, among large libraries, 17 different types of programs were offered by most respondents. An additional 17 were offered by between a quarter and a half. The 10 most offered programs in large libraries were:

1. Book discussion groups or clubs - 95% of large libraries offered
2. Reading incentive program for adults - 85%
3. Craft classes, groups or workshops (e.g. sewing, knitting, quilting, needlework, woodcrafts, etc.) - 85%
4. Arts creation workshop or club (e.g., visual arts, fine arts, photography) - 80%
5. Technology and Digital Literacy: General computer skills - 75%
6. General Internet use (e.g., set up e-mail, Web browsing, Web searching) - 75%

7. Safe online practices (e.g., privacy, Internet safety, protection from online scams) - 75%
8. Author presentation or reading - 70%
9. Art or cultural exhibit and/or gallery showing - 65%
10. Smartphone and/or app use - 65%

In large libraries we see a strong focus both on arts/culture/reading, as well as on technology.

At the end of the section on adult programming, we concluded with an open-ended question asking libraries if there are any other types of programming your library offers that did not fit into the categories and sub-categories we asked. Respondents offered many responses, including:

#### **Large libraries**

- A focus in adult programming currently is intergenerational and loneliness prevention-based programs. We also aim to provide DEI programming to encourage diverse voices.
- AnyAbility is a program that specifically offers programming for adults with cognitive or physical disabilities who primarily spend much of their day at a group organization that takes them into the community for different activities and experiences
- Book A Librarian-where staff provided a curated list of books based on answers to questions on a survey. Example: Genre, Last book you read that you liked, favorite authors, subject matter you don't care for etc. [We] also offer an ongoing jigsaw puzzle that people can work on for 2 minutes to 2 hours.
- Creative writing program specific to Adults with developmental Disabilities
- I try to have programs to celebrate cultural heritage months (ex: Native American Heritage Month) and/or important cultural dates (ex: Cinco de Mayo)
- [We] offer a program called Library Explorers that is for adults with developmental disabilities. It is well attended, and we have accessibility tools available so we can offer craft programs. The accessibility tools are available to anyone who needs them, not just the Library Explorers.

#### **Medium libraries**

- Afterhours activities such as murder mystery, movies, game night
- Death Cafes, Great Garden Series, Poetry and Writing open mics and groups, annual Literary Festival, History Live programming with SW Colorado Humanities Round Table, Avalanche Awareness, and more

- Homebound delivery program
- Is volunteering for adults considered a service? We have about [19] volunteers in regular rotation
- Local travel series, music on the desk, Contests (writing contest with rotary, pumpkin decorating/gingerbread/peeps)
- Resources for those experiencing homelessness
- Starting next year we will be hosting a blood donation drive.
- There is an adult group that comes to play pinochle 4 times a week. There are jigsaw puzzle enthusiasts who come to work on the current puzzle.
- We offer homebound delivery services for adults not able to make it to the library for any reason. We also offer Chromebook Kits for adults who are not able to leave home but need technology access.
- We will be starting more programming by digital navigators in the new year.

#### **Small libraries**

- Access to Legal Aid
- Annual Literary Festival, Multi-day cultural events (Crane Festival)
- Avalanche Awareness, Stewardship Series, Leave No Trace, Armchair travel program, entertainment (concerts)
- Programs with Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Great Decisions and Living Room Conversations
- Historical Programming, especially local history focused programs
- Informational/educational programs specific to our area (i.e. Radon, Septic, and Wells for Mountain Living). Partnerships with agencies such as the CSU Extension Office
- Swing Dancing, Cat Cafes, Mahjong and Cribbage, Sewing, Trivia Nights(off site) Puzzle Competitions, Cookie Swap
- The Grand County Public Health sends us a registered nurse once a month and she does blood pressure checks. They also provide healthy cooking and eating nutritional programs and demonstrations
- Travel programs, music
- We do virtual reality programming, including travel programs for adults, which are mostly attended by older adults
- We have virtual author talks through the Library Speakers Consortium and partner with the League of Women Voters to host Great Decisions (from the Foreign Policy Association). We have offered Sound Baths in the past that were popular and well attended. We host at least 6 gardening classes every year in conjunction with the

Colorado Master Gardener program. We have a robust summer reading program for adults with raffle prizes donated by local businesses.

- We offer book signing
- We offer the Winter Adult Reading Program

### **Tiny libraries**

- Book Club and Summer Reading Program
- Family-oriented programming
- seed classes to go along with our seed library.
- Sit & stitch program - Adults can learn to knit or crochet, or they can bring whatever craft project they want and just be social. Adult coloring
- Tele=Health Privacy Booth, Tech Help twice a month
- We also offer a Silent Book Club where adults come to read in the quiet with each other (nobody comes anymore). We are also planning on starting a Podcast to talk about the library and library events.
- We are partnering with our local bank to present several sessions on financial literacy
- We've done topic talks series and winter reading programs in the past.
- [We] organize and provide the scheduling for the Med D program. Our staff are also Med D certified to assist patrons.

### **Inter-generational services and programs offered in Colorado**

In an open-ended question, respondents were asked to provide information on intergenerational programs and services offered by their libraries, and 73 chose to do so.

Many of these respondents discussed how their libraries offer all ages or family programming that does not explicitly have an intergenerational aspect to it. As defined by Generations United, a leading national organization focused on intergenerational strategies, intergenerational programming focuses on “unit[ing] generations in ways that enrich participants’ lives and help address vital social and community issues while building on the positive resources that young and old have to offer each other and to their communities.”<sup>7</sup> It generally focuses on connecting generations together, usually focusing on extra-familial connections.

In contrast, when discussing intergenerational programming, and its importance, one large library stated that “getting the whole family involved is key to success.” Some respondents implied that they categorize as “intergenerational” any programs that happen to have

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<sup>7</sup> See [https://committtoconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/CtoC-Intergen-Engagement\\_508.pdf](https://committtoconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/CtoC-Intergen-Engagement_508.pdf) for more information on this definition.

multiple generations in the same room, such as a storytime attended by, say, young children and their caregivers.

Many open-ended descriptions of intergenerational programs focused on family programming, including quotations on:

- At children's events, we have split the tables to have both an adult craft and a simple child's craft to work side by side. We offer family classes in our makerspace. - Large library (L)
- Family Sewing, Mother's Day Event (Spanish), Painting Event (Russian), Grandparents Day Passive Program L
- We partner together to create family programs that will include children/teens and adults to get more out of our programs. But also, to be more inclusive in having those inter/multi-generational programs. L
- A lot of crafting programs are great for families to attend together - Medium library (M)
- Family Friday programming - M
- Movie screening for families, Family events and programs. Makerspace programs. Study rooms are available for adults and children who need a quiet place to study, work on homework, interviews, play digital games, communicate with others over Zoom and similar extensions. We also have passive programs where anyone can sit and make a craft, color, play video games, boardgames - M
- Our Family Play Festival aimed at teaching parents how to develop their kid's literacy skills – M
- We are also going to be launching a Spanish-language class for children, and alongside that, we will be offering English classes to the adults of those children. – M
- Family-focused programs (we are planning several geared toward Spanish-speaking families) - M
- Many of our collaborative programming are offered to everyone, so parents and children do them together – Small library (S)
- Mostly [our intergenerational programming is] to fit the needs of new parents – S
- Wrap around programming for the children of adult ELL students – S
- Lots of family programming for all ages – Tiny library

Still others discussed programs that happened to engage different generations, but that did not create opportunities for connections across generations. For instance, a large library wrote that “We have found that our community enjoys a competition for which group can read the most on average, between adults and youth.” Others mentioned how Big Read initiatives and other large events such as holiday open houses or movie

screenings are intergenerational, in the sense that multiple generations attend these large events. For instance, one medium library said that to provide “Staffing support at large-scale events” staff from across youth and adult services would routinely work together. A small library said “Our two departments [youth/adult] often collaborate on larger programs like summer reading, one-book community read, crane festival.” A medium library said that when they think of intergenerational services, “This makes me think of bigger, resource-sharing type events like fairs. We often have adult services librarians at the tables giving out information about programs, and the children’s team will put together a storytime or craft for kiddos while their parents are walking around. For other big community programs like our night at the museum or the Hispanic Heritage Month celebration, we do the same thing.” It was not always clear in these comments if these programs actually spark connections or interactions across generations, or rather simply involve different age groups.

There were also a few notable outliers, in terms of libraries that did offer more robust intergenerational programming. A medium library stated that they offer “Board game nights for teens/emerging adults,” that they implied mixed together teenagers and those who have aged out of the teen age.

A tiny library offered this interesting insight: “We worked together to create Lyons Lit Fest, and produce a documentary for and about the town. Both tried to target interests and input from all ages.”

Another library discussed making existing programs intergenerational by re-imagining their audiences. A medium library said “I think it is just a new way staff are thinking about programs to a wider audience and seeing what happens. This year the annual rotary writing contest went from just teens to include adults and elementary students. Other than that, it is just adjusting things we were already doing. Such as board game night to be all ages vs just for adults, or sewing or herbal classes to include teens and elementary aged kids etc.”

Tech learning across generations was another theme in intergenerational programming. A medium library discussed how their adult services staff are working on “collaboration with our teen services department to create volunteer opportunities for teens to provide technology assistance to older adults/seniors,” concluding “we actually collaborate quite often with our youth services and teen services departments, and have plans to offer more inter-generational programming in the upcoming year.” Similarly, a small library “Hope[d] that some of our younger patrons would help the older patrons with computers.” Another small library said “we would like for the teens to help the older citizens with modern technology”

Finally, some talked about how offerings like crafts and art, lego clubs, and cooking programs tend not to specify ages, and thus sometimes became intergenerational, even if that wasn’t necessarily a stated outcome of the initiative. A small library said that “Last week, our IdeaLab programming (alternative energy sources) had a group with ages seven



to eighty, which was super cool to see!” A medium library said “We also collaborate [with youth services] on smaller programs such as a regular game night, an upcoming cooking program, and certain speaker events, which we think would appeal to both youths and adults.”

Finally, some libraries wrote about their desire to do more intergenerational programming. A small library said “I’d love to start a Reading Buddies program. We do gardening and crafting together.” While a tiny library stated “I love the concept of intergenerational programming. We do offer a community creates program once a month which is intergenerational where participants make a craft. Our holiday events have been the most successful when it comes to intergenerational. I would love to see other opportunities like gaming, crafts, and community engagement.”

## Discussion of what Colorado’s libraries offer and want to offer

Specific findings in this section include:

- Nearly all Colorado libraries support adult interests in literary and cultural pursuits, at least to some extent. Most large, medium, and small libraries also endeavor to support social and civic engagement, technology and digital literacy, health and wellness, and e-government programs or services. Far less is supported, in general, among tiny libraries, and a minority of Colorado’s libraries report supporting adult literacy & adult education, or the economy or workforce development.
- Nevertheless, all these topics are supported by at least some of Colorado’s public libraries, often through a wide range of particular types of programs and services. This fact suggests opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and sharing.
- Colorado’s libraries are particularly interested in becoming better able at supporting Technology assistance (1 on 1), healthy aging, patrons signing up for government services or programs, adult education, and support for patrons applying for jobs
- Across Colorado we do tend to see a wide variety of programs, services, and events that are bringing together different generations. Although some of these programs, services, and events bring together families that are already engaged with each other, in other cases we see richer intergenerational services, services that build connections across generations, uniting people who otherwise would not be united.

### Summary of implications

- Across Colorado, we see public libraries offer a huge array of programs for adults. It is unknown to what extent this variety of services is known or appreciated by the public, as well as by policy makers. It may be helpful for the Colorado State Library to create an infographic that displays all the ways Colorado’s public libraries

support adults through programming, with an eye to sparking more partnerships and advocacy. The model of the partnership with between the Colorado State Library and Colorado State Parks could be replicated for other sectors, such as the Colorado State Unit on Aging

- Alignment with other state agencies becomes more critical and pressing when one considers the things a majority of Colorado’s libraries identify as key priorities for their libraries: Technology assistance (1 on 1), Healthy aging, Support for patrons signing up for government services or programs, Adult Education, and Support for patrons applying for jobs. One of these priorities is explicitly about helping Colorado’s resident access government services and programs, and all of the others lend themselves to partnerships with other agencies, such as the Colorado Digital Access and Empowerment Initiative
- It is also notable that so many libraries reported supporting social connections. In the context of societal divisiveness and loneliness, that is a huge accomplishment that needs to be better understood and communicated as part of the work of advocating for public libraries.
- At the same time, we see tiny libraries consistently offering less than their counterparts. Figuring out how to enable and empower tiny libraries to offer a range of high-impact services without over-extending capacity is key.

## When and where are adults served by Colorado’s libraries?

This section focuses on when library programs are offered, and where library services and programs are offered, including a discussion of public access points where the public can engage with adult services staff, and when and where outreach and off-site services are offered to adults.

The survey asked respondents, when are programs for adults typically offered? A majority offered programs at all times asked: weekday, during the day (73%); weekday, during the evening (74%); and weekend (55%).

There was, however, a noticeable difference between tiny libraries and all other libraries. The larger the library, the more likely they are to offer adult programs at any of the times asked about. For instance, while 70% of large libraries reported weekend adult programs, only 27% of tiny libraries had such offerings, meaning that large libraries were nearly three times as likely as their tiny counterparts to offer weekend programming.

When your library offers adult programs, when are they offered?	Large (n=20)	Medium (n=32)	Small (n=31)	Tiny (n=26)	All (n=109)
Weekday, during the evening (5+)	80%	91%	61%	54%	74%
Weekday, during the day (e.g. 9-5)	80%	72%	77%	50%	73%
Weekend	70%	53%	65%	27%	55%
Average	77%	72%	68%	44%	68%

### Where adult services staff engage the public in the library

Shifting from the “when” to the “where,” across all libraries, a minority reported having a dedicated adult services space, but this type of space was especially rare in small and tiny libraries. Only 23% and 12% of small and tiny respondents, respectively, reported they had dedicated adult services space. In contrast, 45% of large and 56% of medium libraries reported dedicated adult services spaces where the public could go to engage adult services staff.

<b>Large</b>	
No	55%
Yes	45%
<b>Medium</b>	
No	41%
Not Applicable	3%

Yes	56%
<b>Small</b>	
No	68%
Not Applicable	10%
Yes	23%
<b>Tiny</b>	
No	73%
Not Applicable	12%
Yes	12%

Given that a minority of Colorado libraries have dedicated adult services spaces where the public can engage adult services staff, it is notable that 56 respondents provided additional information in open-ended comments about where adult services staff engage with the public at their libraries.

21 of those said adult services staff work at the circulation desk, 15 reported adult services staff working at a general service desk, and 7 reported adult services staff engage the public in a variety of locations throughout the library, with no fixed point. The remained reported a variety of locations, including: a tech perch (large library), the library’s meeting room (medium library), and an office space (one tiny and one large).

A few quotations provide illustration of some of these trends. A large library reported they have a “combined service desk: staff of all levels work the desk helping with circulation and attempting to do reference services.” A medium library reported “We have a main desk that serves all needs. We have been discussing adding office hours for our reference librarian who can help patrons with more detailed reference one or two days a week.”

Two tiny libraries pointed out that since they are so small there is no differentiation among staff. A medium library also wrote “all staff serve all ages,” implying no differentiation among staff.

One small library wrote “When we first built our new buildings, we did have dedicated service points: children's librarian, adult services, interlibrary loans, information services, etc. We found problems with this; the public would have to wait until person in charge of children's area was back in as well as the other access desks. The finances were way too expensive as well. We went back to everyone is trained, just as a one-room library has worked for us in all five of our branches. Library clerks, library associates, and branch managers all work together! We love it!”

## Where staff engage adults through outreach and offsite

In addition to serving adults through programming and as needed at fixed locations in the library, a majority (62%) of Colorado’s libraries also serve adults through outreach and offsite efforts.

Serving adults outside of the library is most common among medium libraries (81%) and least common among tiny (38%), with 60-65% of large and small libraries reporting this type of service or programming.

Have you offered outreach/outside adult services or programs in last 12 months?	Large (n=20)	Medium (n=32)	Small (n=31)	Tiny (n=26)	All (n=109)
Yes	60%	81%	65%	38%	62%

Thirty-seven libraries then provided in open-ended comments detailed information about what their library’s outreach and offsite services and programming entail. In general, outreach and offsite services and programs tend to focus on locations frequented by older adults and senior citizens. A majority of open-ended comments focused on the older adult demographic. Additional examples of outreach sites included: Parks, bookmobile locations, partner locations, community events and resource fairs, breweries and restaurants, and more.

All examples provided by respondents are as follows:

### **Large libraries**

- Lobby stop vehicle goes to senior living places to provide materials to check out, holds, programs
- Bookmobile, resource fairs, festivals
- I host a book club at a local brewery. I've also done outreach at an assisted living community and at a local day shelter.
- Our outdoor activity was tai chi in the park.
- We had visits with our local day program for adults with IDD that is ongoing, visit to local book groups to talk about library services, participated in Health & Safety Day for Older Adults.
- Health Fairs: we do not host them onsite, but do attend them as outreach in our community.

### **Medium libraries**

- "Rekindle the Classics" is a partnered, off-site book discussion series that features classic literature. We partner with Colorado State University English Department and a local cafe. We meet monthly from Sept - May.
- Cornhole Tournament, Technology Assistance at senior center

- Crafting class and tech 1-1 tutoring at 55+ congregate residences
- Healthy aging fair, PRIDE in the Park
- My specific library is collaborating with three older adult living centers in 2025 to do outreach with programs and services.
- Our homebound program and outreach specialist offers off site programming, usually a craft of some kind, at homes for our aging population
- Senior center bookclub and movie club
- Variety of crafts and activities at two assisted living homes nearby.
- We do senior outreach monthly to two facilities, with more staff time + budget, we could do more. We also tabled about 8 community events, including: Fort Lewis Colleges' Freshman Orientation, Durango Farmer's Markets, Trans Day of Visibility, and events put on by Companeros Immigrant Resource Center.
- We host a monthly pub trivia night at a local bar, and we also regularly bring library materials to several senior living facilities within the district.
- We offer craft programs at senior living facilities and special needs facilities. Also outreach fairs at schools and colleges.
- We support our outreach department in serving seniors in senior facilities. We have also hosted several offsite adult programs, including a Trivia night at a local eatery/drinkery, an art-focused book club in partnership with our local Center for the Arts, a plein aire painting workshop with a local conservation group, in the NCA area, and a ballot trivia and education program (in partnership with other organizations.)
- Weekly books at Meals on Wheels at the Community Center

#### ***Small libraries***

- Hikes/snowshoe events, book clubs at local restaurants, book tastings, speed book dating, as well as some events that occur at fire house (collaborate with fire departments when they are looking for volunteers)
- Fair attendance, partnerships with local agencies, attending meetings with these entities.
- Flower Identification walks, Birding, Yoga off site
- Crafting activities at community events and senior living facilities.
- Snowshoeing
- We had hiking programs (some were led by a Rocky Mountain National Park ranger), petting zoo, and a weekly snowshoeing meet up. At the senior programs we had a physical therapist do the best balancing exercises and a yoga instructor came and demonstrated chair yoga.
- We have attended a Senior Resource Fair.
- We have had chair yoga demonstrations by a local yoga teacher. A physical therapist came to show them how to do exercises for keeping your balance.
- We have had outreach tables at our homeless campsite, we provide outreach programming to a residential drug treatment center and we are working on getting into our senior centers

- We hold several summer classes in a town park - yoga, watercolor, and wood carving. We also host a movie night at the local drive-in theater to cap off our summer reading program and this regularly attracts over 400 people.

### ***Tiny libraries***

- Adult Book Fair at a brewery, booth at local Pride Fest, booth at local Earth Day event.
- I was taking a group of kids to the Rest Home to read to the senior citizens, it had to end when we went down a staff member.
- We deliver books to local Assisted Living residents and/or to individual homes.
- We have weekly IN-Town hours where our staff take books, computers, and other materials to the nearby town for residents to use our services without having to drive the 5 miles out of town to our library branch.

### **Discussion of when and where adults are served**

Most Colorado libraries offer adult programs at the library during the day on weekdays, weekday evenings, weekends, and also off-site. These robust offerings at multiple times and locations are most common in larger libraries, and less common in smaller libraries.

Colorado's libraries also tend **not** to have a single location where residents can count on going to if they wish to engage an adult services librarian. Instead, point-of-need engagement tends to occur through either a circulation desk or a multi-functional service/information desk.

When librarians leave the building, they tend to go most frequently to settings frequented by or inhabited by older adults and senior citizens, with less outreach to other spaces and settings. Many also reported attending festivals, events, and other large community happenings where adults would be present.

Given these findings, Colorado's libraries may benefit from more training and support in terms of how to develop and deliver effective outreach/off-site programs and services that would meet other adults "where they are," particularly for the priority populations of Adults with English as a second language, new adults (i.e. 18-25), neuro-diverse adults (e.g. Aspergers, autism), and adults with physical disabilities (differently abled adults). Partnerships with community colleges, for instance, could be effective on this front.

Given resource constraints, Colorado's libraries may also benefit from assistance figuring out the timing of adult programming: What times are the best times to offer different things?

## Why do libraries offer what they offer?

The survey asked respondents in an open-ended prompt, “What do you consider when deciding what program types or services to offer at your library?” Fully 100 (or all but 10) respondents provided answers to this prompt, revealing some important trends.

Based on an initial read of these responses, these open-ended responses were coded into the following categories “community interest,” “resource constraints,” and “other.”

What considerations go into adult services?	Large (n=19)	Medium (n=31)	Small (n=29)	Tiny (n=21)	All (n=100)
# of respondents	19	31	29	21	100
Community Interest	68%	48%	62%	52%	57%
Resource Constraints	47%	55%	38%	38%	45%
Other	37%	16%	14%	19%	20%

Based on this coding, “community interest” is the most prominent reason why libraries offer what they offer, followed closely by resource constraints, and other factors. Although community interest is the top consideration libraries use when deciding what to offer, all library sizes experience resource constraints that also shape adult services.

In terms of what enables libraries to determine what communities are interested in – that is, what constitutes ‘community interest’ – not all respondents provided this information, but some who did wrote that:

- **Demographics** – “We target communities that are generally underserved, focusing on affordable housing organizations, independent/assisted living and memory care facilities, as well as general stops in the community. I am excited for the new year, as we are partnering with Alternative Sentencing to support adults in their program with circulation services and potentially computer classes in the future.” – Medium library / “We also pay attention to our demographics. We have both large senior and young family populations in our area, and so we’ve created programs that cater to both groups” – Medium library
- **Suggestions** – “Comments from patrons” – Small library / “If a patron asks about a service, I work to see how/if we can implement it at our library.” – Tiny library / “We respond quickly and intently from patron requests” – Large library
- **Past participation** – “General appeal ... current areas of interest in the community, what has worked well in the past, things of historic interest in this area” – Tiny library / “What has had good attendance in the past” – small library
- **Surveys** – “We usually use survey sheets at the front desk asking: ‘What kind of programming are you interested in?’” – Small library / “I get many of my ideas from the program survey we have patrons fill out at the end of every existing program” – small library / “What patrons are asking for in the form of surveys” – Medium library



- **Input from other organizations** – “We confer with our local seniors program” Tiny library
- **Availability and interest of partners** – “Many patrons also approach us, desiring to partner or run their own activities through the library” – Small library

A number of these strategies come together in this remark by a large public library: “We do our best to understand the needs of our community, using community surveys and feedback from existing programs. We connect with partners who can also help us better understand community needs.”

Within these descriptions of what constitutes community interest, some remarked on the limitations of their existing knowledge of community interest. One small library reflected that, “Reaching people who don't ever use the library is a challenge.”

## Resource constraints and other factors shape adult services

Shifting to resource constraints, commonly listed were time, staff capacity, scheduling constraints, transportation challenges, and the availability of partners, presenters, or other local experts who deliver programs. Weaving many of these together, a large library wrote that, “Cost is also a big component, but also scheduling, timing, and sustainability” are factors or considerations. Other descriptions of resource constraints provided included:

- **Cost** – “If they are at no or low cost to use we make them happen” – Small library
- **Transportation** – We are “a somewhat inaccessible library for people with mobility issues” – Medium library
- **Availability of partners/presenters/experts** – “Can we partner with someone?” – Medium library / “the availability of partners to help plan and promote the program” – Medium library
- **Scheduling constraints** – “I would like to offer more evening programs for working adults, but the Library closes at 6 p.m. and isn't available for after-hours events. However, when we make exceptions and host an evening book club, for example, it's typically not well attended. Many people do not like to drive at night or in the (frequently) snowy conditions” – Small library
- **Staffing & space** – “staffing, and space availability are the most important criteria” – Medium library
- **Budget** – “2024 was the first year that we had set aside dedicated programming money for adult programs, especially older adults ages 60+. 2025 will be the first year that we do outreach to older adult living centers.” – Medium library

Other factors, beyond community interest and resource constraints, that go into adult services include **staff interests and competencies**. A large library wrote that “We consider community needs, but at times it's based on staff preferences and what staff

think the public wants.” Somewhat similarly, a medium library wrote that “if it is something the staff think would be fun, informative and/or interesting” is a factor taken into consideration. Furthermore, a large library wrote that “I will also try programs that I think our adult patrons will like, even if it's never been tried before, because you just don't always know if it's something people will want until you try.” This sentiment is echoed by a tiny library who wrote “I like to think of the library as a place where people can come and try something - we give them an opportunity to try something new, learn about something, or learn a new skill and then it's up to them to continue it if they'd like.” And in this quote by a small library: “I let folks put on programming they are passionate about and try not to get in the way of their brilliance.” Here the focus is less on what communities are interested in, and more on what staff are able to provide them.

Other considerations articulated by large libraries included: diversity equity and inclusion, general trends in libraries, gaps in services, is a similar program being offered by another organization, alignment with mission/vision/strategic plan, alignment with strategic initiatives, and what's in the news lately.

Other considerations articulated by medium libraries included the library's mission statement, if a service fills a community gap, and trending topics.

Other considerations articulated by small libraries included if the partner was easy to work with, and if the service would be useful for local residents. For instance, one small library differentiated between education and entertainment, writing “People in our community seem to be moving towards more educational programs than those providing entertainment.”

Other considerations articulated by tiny libraries included: if the service could be provided across a library district and the ability of the staff to run it.

Finally, only a few mentioned alignment with strategic plans and library missions, and those descriptions tended to come from medium and large libraries. One medium library wrote that they consider “alignment to our program plan, strategic plan, mission, vision, and core values” alongside “community feedback and needs; availability and affordability of presenters.” One small library did also say that they “reference our community needs assessment” when making adult service decisions.

## Discussion of decision-making and adult services

Community interest is the top reason why Colorado's libraries offer the services they provide to adults, but resource constraints also shape services across the state. Put simply, Colorado's libraries cannot be all things to all adults.

Given this finding, there is an opportunity to support Colorado’s libraries becoming even better at discerning what their communities want and need, as well as helping them figure out what will bring them to the library.

There is also an opportunity to support Colorado’s libraries become more nimble problem solvers when it comes to resource constraints. Not every resource constraint can be solved, but some can. Figuring out when constraints are solvable, when they are not, and plotting successful tactics to overcome obstacles would help Colorado’s libraries do more to support adults.

UNCORRECTED PROOF  
REVISIONS IN  
PROGRESS

## How do libraries serve adults?

Colorado’s libraries can serve adults through the provision of staff and money by the library and by other organizations and governmental entities. Financial and personnel resources are the engine of adult services. This section focuses on understanding this engine, before then taking a closer look at how intergenerational services are offered, including through the relationship between adult services and youth services staff.

### Staffing adult services

Across Colorado, most respondents said their libraries *did* have staff for whom adult services is a primary responsibility. However, there were clear difference among libraries. A minority of tiny and small libraries reported dedicated adult services staff, while a clear majority of large and medium libraries reported this staff.

Only 27% of tiny libraries reported having any staff who had adult services as a primary responsibility, 48% of small libraries reported having dedicated adult services staff, 75% of medium libraries had this staff, and 90% of large libraries had adult services staff. Furthermore, among large and medium library respondents, those who said they did not have dedicated adult services staff were almost **all** responding at the branch-level, rather than at the system-level. **The only medium or large library system that said their library had no adult services staff was the Elbert County Library District, the second smallest medium library in the sample, serving a population of 27,120.**

Does your library employ any staff for whom adult services is a primary responsibility?		
<b>Large</b>		
No		10%
Yes		90%
<b>Medium</b>		
No		25%
Yes		75%
<b>Small</b>		
No		52%
Yes		48%
<b>Tiny</b>		
No		73%
Yes		27%

This trend of differences in staffing based on community size continues when looking at the number of adult services staff. Among tiny libraries with adult services staff, the range

of staffing for adult services was from 0.5 to 1.5 Full Time Equivalent staff (or FTE's). Among small libraries with adult services staff, the range was 1-5 FTE. Among medium libraries with adult services staff, the range was 0.5-30. Among the large libraries reported adult services staff, the range was 0.5-40. Again, at medium and large libraries this includes both branch and system-level respondents.

Respondents were also asked if they had additional thoughts or information about how adult services is staffed at their libraries, and 20 chose to leave such feedback. Much of the feedback from small libraries centered on issues of transportation, and the staff time and other resources required to meet adults where they are. Feedback also foregrounded the importance of partnerships for filling in staffing gaps. In some libraries, there was more commentary related to the diverse nature of adulthood, and staffing for the range of interests in this large population.

In general terms, the two themes that emerge from these open-ended comments include:

- The need in medium and large libraries for coordination, not only among adult services librarians, but also between these librarians and other library workers who serve adults, as well as with other agencies engaged with this population
- The need in small and tiny libraries for supporting advocating for the staff needed to provide adult services

A tiny library wrote that “Staffing specifically [for adult services] is exceptionally difficult. We've been running short staffed since 2020, and all the regular events we tried have failed due to a lack of staffing. I can't read at the rest home and watch the front counter at the same time.” Thinking about staffing challenges, another tiny library wrote that “our biggest challenge is getting people to the library.” A third wrote that “with our small staff, our approach has been to fund outside presenters, facilitators for adult services. We encourage our staff to provide programming as well - and leave that up to them to find topics or activities that align with their individual passions and interests.”

Small libraries tended to note the absence of adult services staff. One noted that, “it would be nice to have a dedicated staff member for adult services.” Another wrote, “we have generalist staff sharing the role of adult programming, I wouldn't mind seeing a dedicated adult services librarian per branch.” A third wrote “Currently, there is no specified staffing for adult services or, for that matter, anything specific to detailed services at all. We do what we can with the available staff and community partners who want to work with us.” In this absence of dedicated adult services staff, a fourth small library noted “The staff on the front line (circulation desk) get the most feedback! We carry on conversations with them! These interactions help us plan programs.”

Other small libraries highlighted transportation issues and how those effected staffing challenges: “Our county is very spread out and barely uses the internet. It is easy to figure out what the community needs, just hard to get them to show up. We do not have a lot of

support from the county.” Another wrote: “My wish list would include a bookmobile type of service for the outlying areas and for those adults who cannot get to town.”

Finally, one small library reflected on how staffing challenges overlap with the diverse nature of the large adult demographic: “We have begun to view adult and senior citizen services as two distinct market segments. The general needs of these populations tend to be quite different.”

Medium libraries tended to focus on what their adult services staff needed, rather than on the need for adult services staff. One wrote “We need training on marketing and outreach strategies.” A second wrote “I would love to be part of a community for adult services managers. A creative space for learning and growing and for inspiration. I can't attend the Adult Services monthly Colorado Association of Libraries meeting because we have our Manager Meeting on that same Thursday.” A third wrote they needed support not only for their “two staff that focus only on adult services,” but also for the “eight other library tech's who run book clubs or other programs for adults.”

Large libraries tended to have the most nuanced discussions of staffing for adult services, and the need for coordination and strategic planning. One wrote “Adults are a large diverse population. Being able to meet specialized needs and general needs across a large service area requires additional coordination and leadership to be effective.” A second wrote that “The numbers [provided earlier in the survey] only include what will be the Adult Services department, they are not inclusive of people in our reference, books & borrowing, and other existing departments which primarily serve adults. We are moving toward a more centrally coordinated decision-making process.” A third wrote, “I think generally the person in my position [at other branches] is enough to do all the adult services programming, however sometimes as a Librarian I feel that I don't have enough off desk time (time off the floor working with the public) to do everything I need to do in a timely manner. Also, while I am in charge of adult programs (including planning, budgeting, finding presenters if needed, submitting program requests to our programming department, etc.) I do have help from our regular non-librarian staff to help with preparing for and hosting programs, especially the established monthly recurring programs.”

In addition to asking about the presence of adult services staff, the survey also about how staff make decisions about what adult services to offer, and how to offer them. This question was not answered by most respondents, so these results are presented as incomplete. Of the less than half of the respondents who did answer this question, most (30) said it was handled more by branch staff, while 17 said it was handled Equally by central administration and branch staff, and 12 said it was handled more centrally.

In addition, one respondent wrote that “We are in the process of developing some centralized programming via an Adult Services Program Committee which I facilitate monthly and all adult programmers and librarians participate in each month.”

**If your library includes multiple branches, would you say adult services decisions are handled**

	#
Not applicable or not answered	51
More by branch staff	30
Equally by central administration and branch staff	17
More centrally	12
All	110

**How are adult services funded, and by what?**

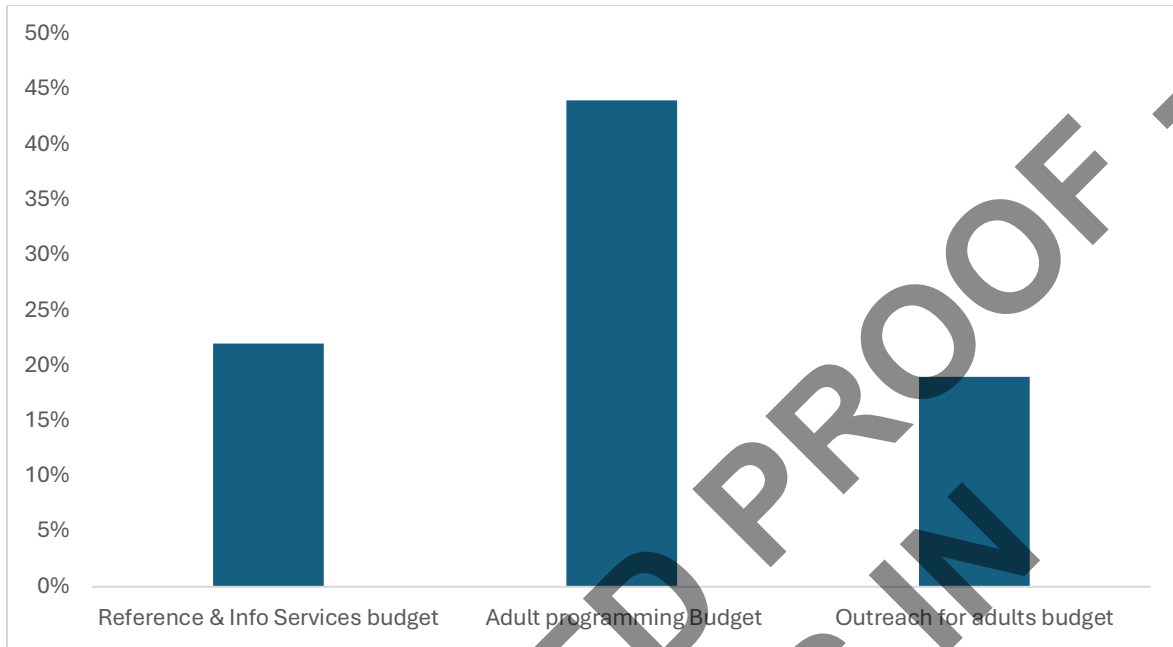
The three questions on budgeting for adult services in the survey caused some conflicting responses, who based on open-ended comments use different categories to allocate funds in support adult services. The survey asked how adult services were funded in three different questions, and those questions were answered in three different ways.

When asked where funds for adult services comes from, nearly all (96%) said the library's operating budget support adult services.

However, relatively few (29%) said that their libraries have **a separate line item in the budget for adult services**.

In the third question, when asked if their library has a budget for a) reference & information services for adults, b) adult programming, and/or c) outreach for adults, nearly 45% said they had a dedicated budget for adult programming, while 22% said they had a dedicated budget for reference & information services, and only 19% said they had an outreach budget for adults.

These results suggest that nearly all Colorado libraries do fund adult services with their operating budget, but how those funds are allocated look very different from place to place. Less than a third have a separate fund specifically for adult services **in general**, but nearly half do have a budget dedicated specifically for adult programming. Far fewer (19-22%) have budgets specifically dedicated to outreach or to reference & information services for adults. Regardless, no matter how the data is looked at, **less than half of Colorado's libraries have any funds specifically set aside for any type of adult services, and only about a quarter have lines dedicated exclusively to adult services.**



Among the 27 respondents who said that their libraries did have budgets exclusively set aside for adult services, the range of funds in this account ranged from a low of \$150 to a high of \$119,450, with 11 being \$5,000 or less, 7 ranging from \$5001 to \$10,000, and 9 having budgets for adult services from \$10,001 to \$119,450. In any case, about half said their budget for adult services were increasing, and about half said their budget for adult services were staying the same. No one said their budget for adult services was decreasing.

Open-ended responses to the prompt “Is there any additional information you'd like to provide about how your library budgets for adult services” help to explain some of these differences. Fully 51 respondents provided additional information about how their libraries allocate funding for adult services.

The most common response, reported by 26, is that their libraries have one budget for programming which makes no distinctions by age groups. However, others discussed how they had dedicated adult programming budgets, but the rest of adult services were budgeted through other units of the library. Still others talked about having only general budgets for their branches, which are allocated at the branch level in a discretionary fashion.

Other responses included:

- The Friends of the Library is the primary funder
- The library has a dedicated English as a Second Language or an English Language Learners budget, which includes adults
- There is a separate outreach budget



- There is a separate community enrichment budget
- Partnerships and volunteers provide the resources for adult services
- There is a special budget for older adults

Looking at different types of libraries, feedback from small and tiny libraries emphasized the very small amount of funding with which they were working, and thus the need for partnerships and volunteers (including library workers volunteering their time) to be able to offer adult services. One tiny library wrote that they are “Working on developing and growing our adult programming. Developing relationships with other organizations to help collaborate,” will be key. A small library wrote that the “County supports the library in the smallest capacity. Many of our staff work outside of our hours to provide programming and support for our patrons.” Another small library wrote that “Currently, all services are either volunteer or we collaborate with community partners such as the CSU ext., Public Health, Senior coalition, and Rocky Mountain Rural Health. Everything is based on free.”

Medium and large libraries – as well as one small library – discussed how their adult services budget is very complicated, and spread across multiple line items and library units. A small library wrote, “I have several line items which could potentially contribute to general Adult Services. For instance, adult acquisitions might be considered a part of the services umbrella. Programs and activities are another. In our larger branch, we divvy line items up between departments and/or market segments. For our smaller branch, we allot them total funds for activities and collections and services. They pick and choose how to utilize those funds in proportion to various market segments. Given this complex way of doing things, I'm not sure if I can adequately answer your question in regard to how much we spend on adult services alone.”

A medium library noted that “We have both an ‘Adult’ and ‘Older Adult’ budget line; the adult budget has \$2,000 and the older adult budget has \$4,000. We have a Homebound Services program that serves older adults. That budget is \$1,000; I wasn't sure if I should include that or not, but since it serves all adults, I added that as well. We also have an ESL Mentoring service that serves adults, however I am not the lead on that. There are several budget lines related to ESL Mentoring, which add up to \$6,500. Again, I wasn't sure whether or not to include that in the above total budget figure. If I did, it would be \$13,500 dedicated to adult services.”

Another medium library noted that, “2024 was the first year that we had set aside dedicated programming money for adult programs, especially older adults ages 60+. 2025 will be the first year that we do outreach to older adult living centers.” A third medium library wrote that their “Adult Programming budget is separated into program supplies and presenter fees. Separate shipping and printing line items for purchasing and marketing adult programs, too.” Finally, a large library noted that “This [branch] library has a general programming budget line. This is intentional in that some months we are heavy programs in children OR teens OR adults. This allows us to be flexible in our services.”

In general terms, then, open-ended comments reveal that in tiny and small libraries, creativity in terms of staffing – including through partnerships and volunteers – is key. In contrast, in medium and large libraries there are more complicated budgets with services for adults often spread across different units of the library without one unit overseeing all adult services funds.

## Where does funding for adult services come from?

Turning to what funding sources are used to support adult services, regardless of how those funds are then allocated, nearly all (96%) said the library’s operating budget supported these services. However, noticeable percentages of tiny (12%) and small (10%) did report that the library’s budget was **not** used to support adult services. The Friends of the Library was also a strong source of support – turned to by 49% of respondents - but less utilized in large (20%) and tiny (35%) libraries than in medium (59%) and small (55%) libraries. Beyond the library’s operating budget and the Friends of the Library, no source of financial support was reported by more than one-fifth of respondents.

### What funding sources are currently used to support adult services?

	Large	Medium	Small	Tiny	All
	20	32	31	26	109
<b>Library operating budget</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>96%</b>
<b>Friends of the Library</b>	20%	<b>59%</b>	<b>55%</b>	35%	49%
<b>Library foundation</b>	20%	13%	26%	8%	20%
<b>State Grants to Libraries (LSTA grants)</b>	5%	13%	29%	15%	19%
<b>Individual donors</b>	5%	6%	19%	23%	17%
<b>Community or local foundations</b>	15%	13%	10%	19%	17%
<b>Local service/ civic groups</b>	5%	3%	23%	8%	13%
<b>Corporate business/donors</b>	10%	9%	16%	0%	12%
<b>Other</b>	5%	6%	3%	12%	9%

Among lesser utilized sources of financial support, a quarter of small libraries rely on library foundations, and even more small libraries (29%) turn to LSTA funding. Tiny libraries, in turn, rely more on individual donors as well as community and local foundations, 23% and 19%, respectively. None of these other sources of support are extensively used in large or medium libraries, apart from the library foundation – used by 20% of large libraries.

One notable fact is that as many large libraries rely on their library foundation as rely on the Friends of the Library as a financial source of support for adult services (20%). In contrast, **the Friends of the Library is a much more important funder of adult services in all other libraries.**

Other sources of support reported included:

- A large library wrote “We sometimes get money from grants for DEI programs. It’s offered to us by our DEI department if they have funds available and they’re usually specific, like money for a Black History Month program, for example.”
- A medium library reported receiving financial sponsorships for adult services
- A small library said “Health Department Collaborations” provide financial support
- A tiny library said “we often partner with other organizations or business” implying in-kind contributions

## How are intergenerational services structured and offered?

In addition to questions about the staffing and funding of adult services, the survey also asked questions related to the staffing and the “how” of intergenerational services.

The survey asked who typically leads intergenerational services. Youth services, adult services, both equally, or something else. Only a minority (30%) said intergenerational services were led either by adult services (14%) or youth services (16%). Much more common was the idea of both equally co-leading (44%). In open-ended responses, 11% indicated at their libraries there is no distinction between youth and adult services, at least in terms of intergenerational services. **No large libraries reported the absence of staff differentiation between youth and adult services.** In 10% of libraries – exclusively in small and tiny libraries – intergenerational programming and services was led either by a branch manager or a library director.

**If yes, your library offers intergenerational programs or services, who primarily leads them?**  
 {Note question only asked of those who indicated their library offers intergenerational services}

	Large (n=15)	Medium (n=24)	Small (n=19)	Tiny (n=12)	All (n=70)
<b>Both equally</b>	47%	42%	<b>53%</b>	33%	44%
<b>Youth Services</b>	27%	17%	11%	8%	16%
<b>Adult services</b>	20%	21%	5%	8%	14%
<b>No differentiation</b>	0%	17%	5%	25%	11%
<b>Branch Manager or Library director</b>	0%	0%	26%	17%	10%
<b>Other</b>	7%	4%	0%	8%	4%

In large and medium libraries, intergenerational efforts tended to be run by some combination of adult services, youth services, and generalist programming staff, while in small and tiny libraries there is a greater tendency for this programming to be run by generalist staff who are not based in a particular department of the library, including sometimes library directors themselves. In large libraries, nearly 50% of intergenerational

programming was led by one department or the other, while in medium libraries nearly 40% was run by one department or the other. In contrast, in tiny and small libraries, only about 16% of respondents reported this sort of staffing for intergenerational services.

Three respondents also provided “other” answers, including:

- Large library: “One of our branch supervisors partnered with an organization aimed at partnering young adults with older adults for tech help.”
- Small library: “Our Tech Clerk runs a trivia night that is for all ages. We have grandparents, parents and kids attend the event.”
- Tiny library: “Library Friends group” runs intergenerational programming

The survey also asked about the general state of the relationship between youth services and adult services. Most libraries see the relationship between youth services and adult services to be very good, with a minority labelling it only as “good” (19%) or “adequate” (9%). Nevertheless, there is room for improvement, especially in large libraries, as well as in a scattered number of specific medium, small, and tiny libraries.

**How would you characterize the relationship between youth services and adult services?**

	Large (n=20)	Medium (n=30)	Small (n=28)	Tiny (n=23)	All (n=101)
<b>Very good</b>	55%	73%	79%	74%	71%
<b>Good</b>	35%	17%	7%	22%	19%
<b>Adequate</b>	10%	10%	11%	4%	9%
<b>Poor</b>	0%	0%	4%	0%	1%

Many libraries (n=73) also provided additional open-ended feedback about how intergenerational programs and services are staffed, as well as challenges therein.

On the side of challenges, some talked about how staff hierarchies between youth and adult services stood in the way of intergenerational programming. A large library noted that “I would like to offer more intergenerational programs, but often wonder where to put the program attendance numbers after the program is over. And, who pays for it?” A medium library said “folks on both teams seem to offer intergenerational programming, but not together that much, it often comes from one person who is passionate about it - it is challenging.” A small library said, “I feel like the teen/adult services specialist doesn't even acknowledge programs for other ages. He doesn't volunteer or help with library-wide programs. He was taxed with both teen and adult services but it definitely isn't a good fit as he relates more to the adult population.”

Another medium library implied that previously the relationship was not stellar, but that now “Both AS and YS departments have very new supervisors! We are working towards being more mindful of each other and ways to collaborate, while getting to know one another. We are currently working together on our library's new Strategic Plan to shape the future of programming and outreach efforts.”

A different perspective on how to facilitate effective working relationships across youth and adult services appeared in this quotation from a small library: “Specialization in libraries can be effective and necessary to a certain extent. However, by and large, I find that specialization is more of a detriment to shared knowledge, collaboration, and team strength. Therefore, I predominantly create generalist positions with which staff members rotate between circulation, kids, teen, adult, and maker service areas. Everyone on our staff wears as many hats as is practical, including the management/leadership team. Since no one expects to be exclusively under one service umbrella or another, collaboration is simply part and parcel to what we do. Everyone, on every level, may contribute ideas and innovations that more effectively serve our myriad market segments. We, as a district, provide them with an environment and culture that empowers and enables the pursuit of their passions, talents, and knowledge. Collaboration becomes natural through that provision.”

This sentiment of “all hands on deck” expressed above appeared repeatedly in feedback from small and tiny libraries (as well as from one medium library). However, no large and few medium libraries implied that there is this arrangement. For example:

- We are a small staff. Everyone works together to support the needs of each position. – M
- We all work together. We all have to pitch in and our staff work as TEAM! – S
- Our library is small, only three of us between two libraries. Each of us does what is requested of us to provide services to children or adults.– S
- Our two very rural libraries always focus on multi-generational programming because it works. The other two branches have more staff and can separate programs to be more age-specific. – S
- They are the same person. We only have one librarian on staff who provides all programming. – S
- We do not have staff specifically dedicated to any programming. It mostly is the branch manager and subs that want to help out. – S
- I have the same people do both. When I tried to separate them, staff ended up resenting it and then only stuck with their age group. The Adult Services person believed he didn't have to do anything with children, and then believed he didn't have to do any work at all. It was a huge nightmare and one of the worst experiences I've ever had at a library. – T
- Our libraries only employ 1 person and are very small so adult programming and children service are all planned by the same person and usually kept separate due to space issues. – T

- The director and staff work together to plan activities/ services for the community as a whole. - T
- We are a smaller staff of 7, so we all support each other. The YA staff member who developed our bingo card for teens was able to create and make one for the adults. The person who does craft time for kids also hosts the art shows every other month. – T
- We are so small that library staff covers both adult & children's services with the exception being our weekly Storytime presenter - T
- We only employ 2.5 people. They are the same people doing both. We have budgeted in the new year to hire another part-time person and that person will also work in both fields.

## Discussion of how libraries serve adults

This survey found that nearly all libraries across Colorado fund and support adult services at least in part through the library's operating revenue, with those funds supplemented to a greater or lesser extent by Friends of the Library, Library Foundations, grants, donors, and in-kind contributions from partners.

Those funds are then allocated in myriad ways across the state, with most large and medium libraries having dedicated adult services staff, and a minority of small and tiny libraries having such personnel. Beyond staffing, a minority of libraries have dedicated budget lines for adult services, but slightly more have dedicated funding sources for adult programming.

Inter-generational programs and services are offered across the state, but in different ways in different communities. In larger libraries, they tend to emerge from youth services staff working with adult services staff, while in smaller libraries they tend to work from an "all-hands-on-deck" approach where everyone pitches in to serve multiple generations.

The survey also found a lack of precision about how Colorado's libraries define "inter-generational services," with most seeing it as synonymous with family or all ages programming, as distinct from efforts to connect individuals who may not know each other across generations.

There are many opportunities based on these findings, including:

- As library operating revenue may be stagnant or declining, seeking ancillary funding raises in importance. Helping libraries – and in particular small and tiny libraries – access these non-library funding sources takes on increasing importance.
- The myriad ways that adult services are budgeted and staffed across the state creates an opportunity for peer-to-peer sharing in which different libraries share how and why they allocate resources to support adults, with an ideal webinar featuring two libraries that take very different approaches to this topic (e.g. one

library that gives branches a lump sum that they can divvy up as they see fit and one library that has dedicated, earmarked funds specifically for adult services).

- There are also opportunities to share behind-the-scenes tips and trades, especially among larger libraries, around the topics of internal power sharing and partnerships. In multi-branch systems, the data suggest most adult services decisions are made at the branch level, suggesting an opportunity for more branch-to-branch collaboration. There are also more opportunities to share success and struggles working across the youth/adult services divide, particularly around intergenerational programs and services.
- These topics would be of less interest in tiny libraries, where the survey suggests there is a greater interest in figuring out how to robustly support adults with limited staff. Partnerships appear to be more crucial to success in this domain.

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## What do libraries need to do more?

<b>Given limited time, what is most needed to support adult services at your library?</b>	<b>Large (20)</b>	<b>Medium (32)</b>	<b>Small (31)</b>	<b>Tiny (26)</b>	<b>Total (109)</b>
Assistance in determining community need/interest in adult services	<b>70%</b>	<b>59%</b>	42%	<b>54%</b>	<b>57%</b>
Program speaker/presenter referral system/recommendations	<b>60%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>71%</b>	35%	<b>57%</b>
Training in how to develop adult services	<b>50%</b>	44%	29%	38%	42%
Training on specific types of adult services	<b>60%</b>	31%	42%	35%	42%
Assistance in evaluating/assessing impact of adult services	<b>50%</b>	<b>56%</b>	35%	19%	42%
Newsletter on adult services taking place in Colorado	40%	38%	39%	38%	40%
Information on funding sources and opportunities	15%	25%	<b>52%</b>	38%	37%
Listserv or online group for people interested in adult services	25%	41%	29%	27%	33%
Mentoring opportunities with others who work in adult services	25%	31%	26%	19%	28%
Assistance in developing and sustaining relationships with community collaborators	40%	44%	16%	4%	28%
Source(s) for professionally-produced publicity materials	10%	19%	35%	19%	24%
Training in how to advocate for adult services	35%	16%	26%	8%	22%
Consulting/technical assistance on developing adult services	10%	9%	39%	4%	18%

Having now considered the who, what, when, where, why, and how and adult services across Colorado, this report now turns to what is most needed to enable adult services to flourish and thrive across the state. The two most requested items – each selected by 57% of respondents – are “assistance in determining community need/interest in adult services,” and “program speaker/presenter referral system/recommendations.” One way of reading these results is that Colorado’s public libraries want help knowing what adults



need and want, and they need help figuring how who is available to meet those needs and desire. Every other topic was requested by less than 50% of respondents.

There are, however, differences in the data related to the size of the library’s service area. Tiny libraries were the least likely to select **any** options. On average, tiny libraries only selected 26% of the options. Small, medium, and large libraries selected more options, with small libraries on average requesting 37% of the provided options, medium libraries requesting 36% of the provided options, and large libraries requesting 38% of the provided options.

Looking closer at the needs of tiny libraries, only one option was requested by a majority of respondents: “assistance in determining community need/interest in adult services” (54%). Among small libraries, the items requested by a majority were “program speaker/presenter referral system/recommendations” (71%) and “information on funding resources and opportunities” (52%). Among medium libraries, the items requested by a majority were: “assistance in determining community need/interest in adult services” (59%), “assistance in evaluating/assessing impact of adult services” (56%), and “program speaker/presenter referral system/recommendations” (53%). Finally, among large libraries, a majority requested “assistance in determining community need/interest in adult services” (70%), “program speaker/presenter referral system/recommendations” (60%), and “training on specific types of adult services” (60%).

**Training needs requested by a majority (51%+) of respondents, by library type**

	<b>Tiny (26)</b>	<b>Small (31)</b>	<b>Medium (32)</b>	<b>Large (20)</b>	<b>All (109)</b>
<b>Assistance in determining community need/interest in adult services</b>	54%		59%	70%	57%
<b>Program speaker/presenter referral system/recommendations</b>		71%	53%	60%	57%
<b>Training on specific types of adult services</b>				60%	
<b>Training in how to develop adult services</b>				50%	
<b>Assistance in evaluating/assessing impact of adult services</b>			56%	50%	
<b>Information on funding sources and opportunities</b>		52%			

There were notable differences on other topics as well. While 56% of medium and 50% of large libraries requested “assistance in evaluating/assessing impact of adult services,” only 19% of tiny libraries expressed a desire for this support. In contrast, 52% of small and 38% of tiny libraries requested “Information on funding sources and opportunities” while only 15% of large and 25% of medium libraries requested this support.

**All libraries want help determining community need, and figuring out how to meet those needs. Medium and large libraries want help evaluating impact, while small and tiny libraries need help finding funding.**

Shifting to the training **least** desired, less than 25% of all respondents requested “source(s) for professionally-produced publicity materials” (24%), “training in how to advocate for adult services” (22%), and “consulting/technical assistance on developing adult services” (18%). Still, though, these results also mean that between one-fifth and one-quarter of all respondents did want these forms of support, so there is an audience for them.

Finally, three libraries said they had other needs, and in open-ended responses they wrote that they wanted help:

- Reaching/working with Spanish Speaking adults
- I'm already on so many listservs and seem to get countless newsletters and referrals. I end up ignoring most of what comes across my inbox anyway. We try to take any assistance that comes our way. Funding opportunities are great if you can get them and then find ways to keep something sustainable when the funding is gone.
- Training on how to stay up-to-date on the latest trends and developments would be great!

### **What are the current challenges?**

<b>What current challenges does your library have in terms of adult services?</b>	<b>Large (20)</b>	<b>Medium (32)</b>	<b>Small (31)</b>	<b>Tiny (26)</b>	<b>Total (109)</b>
Marketing the program/getting the word out	<b>80%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>75%</b>
Not enough space	40%	<b>53%</b>	48%	27%	<b>56%</b>
Aligning with community needs	<b>50%</b>	47%	13%	<b>50%</b>	43%
Not enough financial resources	40%	31%	39%	38%	41%
Ensuring accessibility for all adults	35%	34%	23%	12%	30%
Unclear where to start	10%	9%	0%	15%	13%

Shifting now to current challenges, there was much more convergence among libraries, with only small differences between what libraries of different types reported as challenges. For instance, all library types reported “marketing the program/getting the

word out” as a challenge. In general, that emerged clearly as the largest challenge across Colorado’s libraries.

Respondents were also invited to share other challenges, and 27 chose to do so. In general, most of these responses centered around the theme of marketing and ensuring an audience for programs and services offered. A second theme focused on the lack of staffing to offer adult services.

Other challenges reported by large libraries included:

- Because adults span a large age group, it is often difficult to find the appropriate time to present the program so that all ages can attend.
- Adulthood has many varying phases - adding that to diverse demographics - it can be overwhelming. Need vs. interest and bringing customers in for the need/resource-based programming can be a challenge, but many people (staff and customers) expect it from the library. Art and culture programming has more participants. Another challenge is a ticketing/registration challenge. We may have waitlists, but then 25-30% of the participants won't show.

Other challenges reported by medium libraries included:

- Weather and traffic impacting people’s mobility
- We work really hard to get the word out and have started doing more strategic marketing and outreach. Programs sometimes feel like a risk, but in 2025 we hope to take some targeted approaches that will result in a good turn out.
- We market, have funding and space for programming. We also usually have a good turnout for adult programming. I think the main challenge is those who do not look online at our website and don't come into the library often enough to see what we offer. I think more could be done to ensure those affected by digital divide are more aware of what we offer.
- Overall, the biggest challenge is effective marketing and getting people to programs, especially in Outreach. Further, we often get program requests from folks like resident life managers or service coordinators, however their residents don't always show up or aren't as interested as perhaps their support staff thinks they are.
- Not enough staff to plan and facilitate adult programs. Currently going through an organizational change, integrating the Adult Public Service (reference desk) and the Adult Programming divisions to be ONE department. This poses a challenge to find TIME to train, evaluate, and pursue new services/programs/opportunities.
- Not enough available time when adults are able to attend, i.e, evenings and weekends.

- Marketing is good. Responses are positive but sometimes the patron attendance isn't what we expect.
- Low attendance
- Attracting participation (in person). People are busy. Once people attend a program, though, they are almost always happy they made the effort. Sometimes they'll spread the work to family and friends and bring them to future programs. People enjoy meeting new people f2f and sharing crafts or art. Loneliness is a concern. Reference assistance for adults does not seem to be in high demand except for digital resources help, which library staff provides as a part of everyday information assistance and in some special programs, e.g. "Excel Basics". We partner with community groups to provide services and information in specific areas of need or interest such as tax filing (VITA) voting (County Elections), cooking (contractor), driving and biking (City transportation and sustainability), music (local chorale) and post-natal parent health (County Health).

Other challenges reported by small libraries included:

- We plan, we have marketing help from the district office! Posters around town and word of mouth seems to give us the best outcomes. It is a lot of physical work and time-consuming but worth it! It seems like listening to the public about what they'd like to see for programs is the best policy.
- We do not have enough space to hold 30 seniors for lunch, but we are fortunate that our location is in the town square and the we're able to use our community house for free, so no one is left out.
- We are not allotted the hours. We have no full-time staff and basically operate on subs and a branch manager.
- Staff time to make all the programs happen. We have very successful adult programs, especially art and craft classes, and there is high community demand for more. But the Library has only one meeting room to meet the needs of youth, teen, and adult programming.
- Liability insurance
- Insurance liability for programs.
- Community needs/desires have changed since COVID

Other challenges reported by tiny libraries included:

- Very poor Attendance, staffing, financial support
- Since Covid it has been almost a complete rebuild to get folks to come out. Some are still not going into situations with other people. Previously we always had amazing attendance for programs. In the past few months it has picked up a little, but it's still frustrating to plan a great program and only have a handful of people.

We collaborate well with the community, and currently with the Mancos School of the West and the Creative District. They too have been experiencing lower numbers.

- Not overworking the staff to offer more than we have time for. Making sure we offer quality versus quantity.
- Not enough staff
- Getting patrons interested in participating
- Adults simply don't show up to events. Our Annie Oakley presenter brought in one person. Authors have brought in one or two family members. Ageless Grace has resonated with kids more than adults. It also depends on what you are referring to as "Adult Services." I have stepped away from offering specific events/programs for adults, but most of my job is helping adults checkout out books, or adults print, or adults use the computers. At least 50% (and that's a conservative estimate) of our book budget goes directly to adult books. Most of my day is spent helping adults.

## Additional thoughts on adult services in Colorado's libraries

At the end of the survey, respondents were given the space to share any additional thoughts on adult services in their libraries, and 34 chose to do so: With an almost even divide among large, medium, small, and tiny libraries. This report concludes by giving Colorado's library workers the final words on this topic. Reading these responses, we once again hear how Colorado's libraries are preoccupied with issues of attendance and engagement, emphasizing again that this is a top priority for the future of adult services in Colorado libraries. Others talked about how adult services are neglected, and need more robust support.

### Large libraries (8)

- Any insight on timing of adult programs would be helpful!
- Dementia Together, Phone Safety, Gardening, Author talks, Bingo and Painting classes are our most well-attended programs
- I feel like Adult Services has been a bit neglected the last few years. We have gaps in our services. No one is in charge of training for reference services which in the past was handled by Adult Services.
- I just want to point out that your survey asked about Parenting/Caregiving programs and services in many of your questions. These types of programs and services are actually handled by the Kids & Families Librarian, not by me. So if I didn't include these in my answers it's because it doesn't fall under my position, not because we don't have them. We do have programs for this group. The Technology classes for

adults are handled either by our T&I department or our Creative Technology department. Programs and services for immigrants/refugees and people who have English as a second language are mostly handled by our DEI department.

- It is the most difficult group to do create successful programming for. The span of ages and interests plus available time makes it challenging.
- More outreach is needed for this population.
- Thoughts I have as a department director who came to libraries as a children's librarian. Wonder, awe and play are so essential to all humans, but not always a priority for adult services. How to understand and target different "developmental phases" of adulthood in a more similar and formal way intrigues me. Building community and spaces for adults is another priority that I would love to see more training and discussion.
- While it is a work in progress, we are working really hard to focus on creating better programs for all adults.

#### **Medium libraries (8)**

- Adult programs have been a struggle for the past few years.
- I am eager to have our PR librarian position filled again, because we will be better equipped to promote our programs
- I know we can do more and do better - I love learning and would be excited to see what might be possible.
- I think we do a great job, especially with older adults. I want to try and serve the "New Adult" population more, but usually it comes down to choosing populations that have demonstrated more need historically, such as older adults, retired adults, or folks living in assisted living/memory care.
- I work with an amazing team, that's still relatively new. [Library] didn't really have an AS department until the previous supervisor set one up about 7.5 years ago. We have accomplished a lot in that time. The biggest challenge I have is trying to balance out employee ideas with capacity.
- I'm still pretty new at this and I'm still finding my footing and what the community wants from their local library.
- We are excited to expand outreach to adults in 2025!
- Wish we could do more

#### **Small libraries (8)**

- For a small rural library, I think we do a fantastic job of serving our community with a vast array of activities and clubs open to everyone at every age

- I believe our team supports and encourages each other very well, in suggesting programs, recruiting people to attend programs and assisting in any additional needs I may have.
- I think that adult services is too broad a category, and libraries could gain more use through some intentional focus on various market segments within that huge population.
- I think we could benefit by having more funding so we could pay or hire speakers. Our small budget is used mostly for refreshments. Our Library District does not allow the budget to pay facilitators in our separate branches. Once a year we do pay for a special author for "One Grand Book" program. Socialization is what we have found that our adults enjoy as key to our programming.
- Our library has a good pulse on community interests yet we always strive to understand new areas of needs and/or gaps in services. We have been responsive to changing community needs and continue to cover areas of services that may have been shifted or lack from other social services.
- The majority of the population served in our jurisdiction are adults - specifically seniors. We would love to have the funds to accommodate their needs more proficiently and efficiently.
- This survey seems to be geared for larger library systems, not ones that have a single person performing all library functions.
- Usually if there is a need, we try to fill it.

#### **Tiny libraries (10)**

- Based on overall program numbers, our adult program attendance is good. However, in past years, we have tried some things that have not gone over too well, such as adult education services and partnerships with social services.
- I am always looking for new and innovative ways to serve the community. Oral History is a big one and has been underway for a while, programs on health and wellness, and I would like to focus on some support programs for caregivers in the coming year. I also connect on line once a month with other A.S. Librarians.
- I think adult services and programs are a great idea. They are needed, but I think I am in a unique situation where people just don't show up. Doesn't seem to matter what we try, people are not interested. I think the library world has lost a lot of credibility. In my conversations outside the library, I'm straight up told that people refuse to use their library because they don't want the political message thrown in their face every time. Adults are wildly opposed the extreme agenda that the library

world has decided to embrace. Until the library is ready to steer back to the middle, I think we are going to continue to alienate more and more people.

- I would hold programming for adults if I knew what they wanted and could get a consistent attendance.
- Personally, I would like to see more adult services offered at our libraries but staffing and presenters are a financial burden for us.
- We do plan to put more of a focus on adult services in 2025. This came about because the local Area Agency on Aging serves 6 counties with only 2 staff members and we were feeling a need to pick up where they were leaving off.
- We have a great team of staff members and with many of our youth programs established we are definitely working on offering more adult programming. Often in smaller libraries it's important to work with other community organizations and volunteers who want to offer their services, such as sewing, technology..
- We have an excellent Senior Center in town that offers almost all of the adult services for our county. They play board games and card games. They have bi-monthly potluck dinners, sewing/quilting/knitting/crochet programs. They have a computer technician that helps with all of their technology issues. They also have a fulltime advocate that helps them navigate any government programs via the computer. The parking lot at the Senior Center is much more handicap accessible than the street in front of our library. We did have one very famous author do an author talk in our community that the library hosted. It was held at the community building at the fairgrounds that could accommodate 200 people.
- We must offer more diverse programming to attract community members who don't typically use the library. I would like to attract more ranching community members through adult programming.
- We serve a very small community and usually do things for the community as a whole.

## Discussion of what libraries need to do more

In terms of what Colorado's public libraries need to more effectively served adults, the main discoveries made were that:

- Most libraries said they need support figuring out what local adults need and are interested in, combined with how to get the word out about existing services.
- Some libraries have offered services that they **think** are what adults need, but the adults have not come. This finding suggests that it is not enough to fill a need, it is also necessary to figure out how to engage adults in a way that “meets them where



they are,” either physically through outreach or symbolically programs and services that are engaging and drive participation and attendance.

- Most libraries also said they would love to share information and resources with their colleagues across the state about presenters and partners: Suggesting an opportunity for peer-to-peer learning and sharing.
- Not having enough resources also emerged as a challenge, and open-ended responses illustrate that advocacy and communication about adult services and their importance is also a pressing priority. Colorado’s libraries also need help consistently and concisely “making the case” for adult services.
- There are also some different needs in different sized communities. Larger libraries expressed more of a need for training on evaluation and assessment, while smaller libraries expressed more of a need for finding funding and resources.

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## Who responded to this survey, and how was it put together?

The survey was set up by the Colorado State Library in Fall 2024, in collaboration with Dr. Noah Lenstra of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. The survey instrument was very loosely inspired by the survey instrument used in a similar study of Adult programming in North Carolina undertaken by the State Library of North Carolina in 2019-2020 (Lenstra, 2020). In addition to expanding the survey’s focus from adult programming to all adult services – except for collections – Dr. Lenstra and Colorado State Library staff also extensively re-wrote questions and re-organized the survey to tailor it to the unique needs and opportunities present in Colorado.

The survey was disseminated by the Colorado State Library in December 2024, and it was open through the middle of January 2025. Respondents from both library systems and from library branches were asked to fill out the survey, indicating if they were filling out the survey on behalf of their library system or library branch. In total, the survey received 110 responses, but only 109 of those had a specific library associated with the response: One respondent inadvertently selected the wrong library and the researchers were unable to determine what library this response came from.

What level of the library is respondent answering at?	Large	Medium	Small	Tiny	Not known	All
Library jurisdiction/system	30%	44%	74%	100%	100%	64%
Single branch location	70%	56%	26%			36%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>110</b>

After reviewing the data, it was decided to analyze branch-level respondents as analogous to system-level respondents. The reason for this decision is that most respondents answering on behalf of a single branch came from large or medium libraries, while relatively few small (and on tiny) library respondents were answering on behalf of single branch locations.

Furthermore, comparing large library systems to tiny library systems is in some ways like comparing apples to orange. It is more like comparing apples to apples to compare single large library system branches to small and tiny libraries, as they operating at more closely matched levels of scale and funding. In any case, that is the analytical assumption behind the decision to analyze all respondents together.

The survey also collected some basic information on the individuals responding to the survey, reported below. The most common responses were either a library director or a branch manager, or equivalent, which represented 61 of the 110 responses (55%). An additional 21 respondents (19%) had the word “Adult” in their title, with no additional titles

appended to that role: Others also had the titles of “Adult & Technology Services” or “Adult Services + Circulation Supervisor” or “Adult Services and Materials Management Supervisor.”

<b>What is your job title?</b>	
Director/Library director/Executive Director	41
Branch manager/Library manager	20
Adult Services/Programming Librarian/Coordinator/Head/Manager	21
Assistant Director	2
Librarian	2
Activities Service Guide	1
Administrative Director	1
Adult & Technology Services	1
Adult Services + Circulation Supervisor	1
Adult Services and Materials Management Supervisor	1
Assistant Director/Librarian	1
Associate Director of Public Services	1
Director of Customer Experience	1
Director of Service Design and Coordination	1
General support and Adult Services	1
Head of Information Services	1
Library Associate	1
Library Clerk	1
Manager	1
Outreach and Operations Specialist	1
Outreach Librarian - Adult and Teen Services	1
Outreach/ Adult Services Librarian	1
Program and Outreach Specialist	1
Programs Coordinator	1
Public Services Department Manager	1
Reference and Adult Programming Librarian	1
Senior Librarian	1
Tri Director	1
Youth Services Coordinator/Assistant Director	1
Total	110

There were then a wide range of other job titles provided by survey respondents, including everything from “Head of Information Services” to “Outreach and Operations Specialist.”

The survey asked all respondents to express, as a percentage, how much of their own work time is dedicated to adult services on a weekly basis. 12 did not answer this question, and others gave a wide range of responses, spanning from 3% of one's time a week to 98% of one's time a week. 42 (38%) said they allocated more than half of their week to adult services, while 56 (51%) said they allocated less than half of their week to adult services. The remainder did not answer.

**Expressed as a percentage, how much of your work is in adult services?**

<b>0-100% of the week spent on adult services</b>	Number of respondents giving this answer
Not answered	12
100%	8
90-99	7
80-89	8
70-79	6
60-69	6
50-59	7
40-49	7
30-39	12
20-29	21
10-19	10
0-9	6

Below one can read the full list of respondents, organized by size of the library's service area. This list shows that in general this survey achieved its goal of capturing data from across Colorado's libraries. Representatives from all but one large library system, all but four medium library systems, all but 31 small library systems, and all but three tiny library systems completed the survey. These results show that where the data is most incomplete is in small libraries. In all other types of libraries, the number of responses came very close to the number of library systems.

**Large Libraries [There are 8 large library systems in Colorado]**

1. Pikes Peak Library District
2. Denver Public Library
3. Rangeview Library District
4. Arapahoe Library District
5. Aurora Public Library
6. High Plains Library District
  - a. Entire System
  - b. Eaton Public Library
  - c. Centennial Park Library
  - d. Farr Regional Library

- e. Member - Glenn A. Jones M.D. Memorial Library
  - f. Platteville Public Library
  - g. Nantes
  - h. Riverside Library and Cultural Center
7. Jefferson County Public Library
- a. Lakewood
  - b. Columbine Library
  - c. Evergreen & Conifer Libraries
  - d. Belmar
  - e. Golden
  - f. Standley Lake Library
  - g. Edgewater Library

**Medium Libraries [There are 22 medium library systems in Colorado]**

1. Berthoud Community Library District
2. Boulder Public Library
  - a. Entire system
  - b. Reynolds Library
  - c. Meadows
3. Broomfield/Eisenhower Public Library
4. Clearview Library District
5. Durango Public Libraries
6. Eagle Valley Library District
  - a. Gypsum & Eagle branches
  - b. Avon
7. Elbert County Library District
  - a. Entire system
  - b. Simla
  - c. Kiowa and Elbert Branches
8. Englewood Public Library
9. Garfield County Public Library District
10. Longmont Public Library
11. Louisville Public Library
12. Mesa County Public Library District – Fruita Branch ONLY
13. Montrose Regional Library District - Montrose (Main Branch) ONLY
14. Poudre River Public Library District
  - a. Entire system
  - b. Harmony Library
  - c. Council Tree Library
  - d. Community Outreach
  - e. Old Town Library
15. Pueblo City-County Library District
  - a. Greenhorn Valley Library
  - b. Barkman

- c. Lamb Library
  - d. Giodone
  - e. Pueblo West
  - f. Rawlings Library Branch
16. Security Public Library
  17. Summit County Library
  18. Westminster Public Library

**Small libraries [There are 54 small library systems in Colorado]**

1. Alamosa Public Library
2. Basalt Regional Library District
3. Canon City Public Library
4. Clear Creek County Library District
5. Combined Community Library
6. Conejos County Library District
  - a. Entire system
  - b. Conejos County Library Maria DeHerrera Branch
7. East Morgan County Library
8. East Routt Library District
9. Gilpin County Library District
10. Grand County Library District
  - a. Juniper Branch in Grand Lake
  - b. Fraser Valley Library
  - c. Granby
  - d. Entire system
11. Gunnison County Library District
12. Ignacio Community Library District
13. John C. Fremont Library District
14. La Junta/Woodruff Memorial Library
15. Lamar Public Library
16. Northern Chaffee County Library District
17. Park County Public Library
  - a. Entire system
  - b. Guffey
  - c. Fairplay
18. Rampart Regional Library District
19. San Miguel Library District #1 / Wilkinson Public Library
20. Southern Chaffee County Regional Library
21. Southern Teller County School/Public Library District
22. Trinidad Carnegie Public Library
23. Upper San Juan Library District
  - a. Entire system
  - b. Ruby Sisson Library

**Tiny libraries [There are 28 tiny library systems in Colorado]**

1. Aguilar Public Library
2. Baca County Library
3. Boulder County Nederland Community Library District
4. Burlington Public Library
5. East Cheyenne County Library District
6. Hinsdale Library District
7. Hugo Public Library
8. Jackson County Public Library
9. Julesburg Public Library
10. Kiowa County Public Library District
11. Limon Memorial Library
12. Lone Cone Library District
13. Lyons Regional Library District / Lyons Community Library
14. Mancos Library District
15. Northern Saguache County Library District
16. Ouray Library District
17. Penrose Community Library District
18. Ridgway Public Library District / Ridgway Public Library
19. Silverton Public Library
20. South Routt Library District
21. Vail Public Library
22. West Custer County Library District / West Custer County Library
23. Wetmore Community Library
24. Wray Public Library
25. Yuma Public Library (2)