

## 2021 Resiliency Planning in Colorado Survey Report

---

In May 2021, the Colorado Resiliency Office (CRO) in the Department of Local Affairs Division of Local government conducted the 2021 Resiliency Planning in Colorado Survey. This survey is a follow-up to the [2019 Resilience Planning in Colorado's Local Governments Survey Report](#), which provides a baseline for understanding the resilience-related needs of municipalities and counties in Colorado.

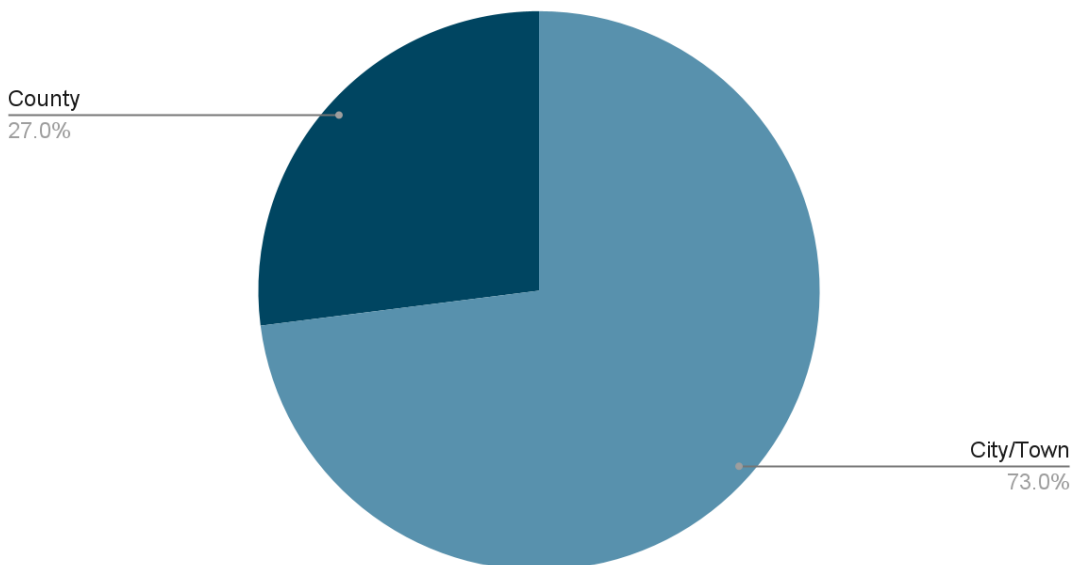
The CRO collects data every two years to better understand how communities continue to plan for and implement resiliency activities, so that the CRO can continue to develop and provide resources in response to changing local government needs and priorities.

### Respondents

#### *Response Rate*

The CRO shared the survey with 330 chief administrators for every county and municipality in Colorado and received 74 responses for a **response rate of 22%**. 54 respondents were from a city or town and 20 were from a county.

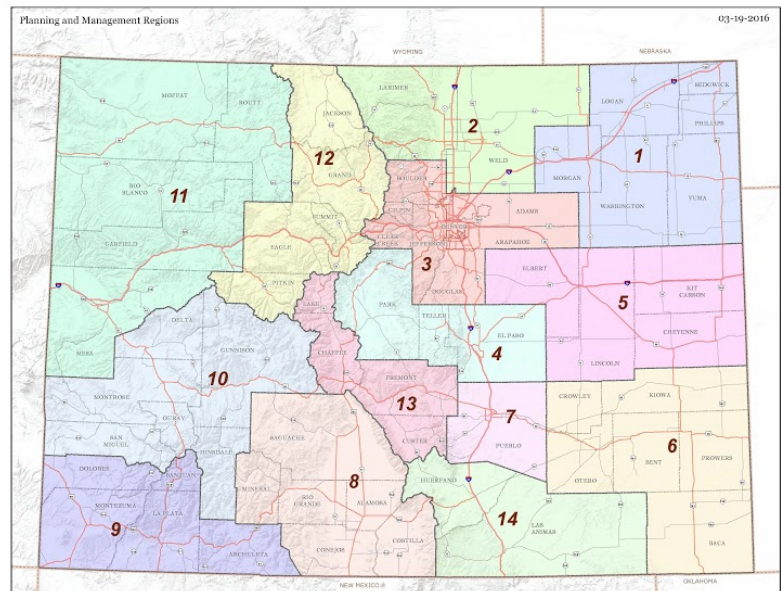
#### Organization Represented



### Location

Individuals representing a community from every DOLA Planning and Management Region in Colorado responded to the survey. The regions with the highest number of respondents follow.

- Region 3 (17 responses)
- Region 11 (9 responses)
- Region 12 (8 responses)
- Region 9 (7 responses)
- Region 2 (6 responses)
- Region 1 (5 responses)
- Region 6 (5 responses)
- Region 5 (4 responses)
- Region 10 (4 responses)
- Region 13 (3 responses)



### Local and State Resiliency

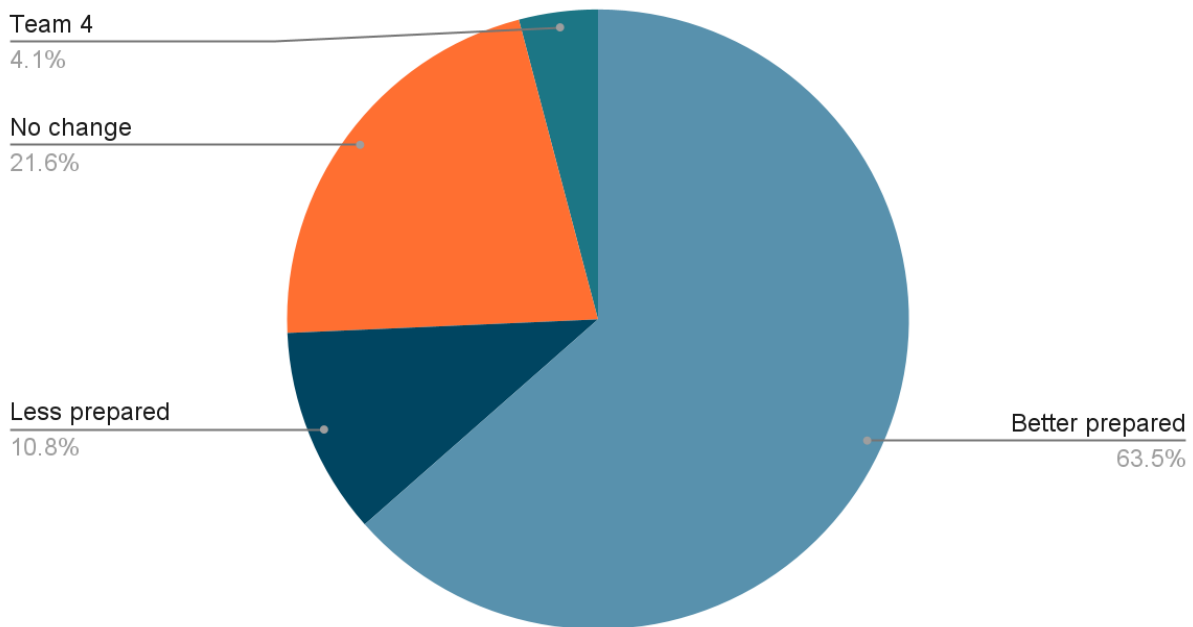
The CRO asked respondents to provide their thoughts on whether they feel their community and the state as a whole are better prepared to be resilient to a range of risks and vulnerabilities, less prepared, or the same (or no opinion) compared to two years ago.

#### Community Resiliency

**63.5%** of respondents felt that their community was better prepared; **10.8%** responded that they are less prepared; **21.6%** responded that there was no change in their community’s resiliency; and **4.1%** provided no opinion.

The COVID-19 pandemic unsurprisingly factored into the majority of responses for this question, both for those who thought their community is more resilient now than in 2019 and those that thought they are less resilient.

## Community Resiliency and Preparedness Compared to 2019



Factors making communities more-resilient include:

- **Communities are seeing the interconnectedness of sectors.**
  - “The pandemic has given us visibility into the types of connected vulnerabilities our communities may face in the future, i.e., health crisis, economic crisis, climate crisis, social crisis, and how that impacts residents, businesses, and continuity of governmental services. Additionally, the wildfires experienced last year, and the associated health impacts from smoke have truly illustrated the very real climate impacts we will continue to experience.”
- **COVID-19 revealed opportunities for communities to act on to improve their resilience so that they can handle the next crisis/disaster.**
  - “Heat tempers steel” as one respondent wrote.
- **The pandemic forced creativity and collaboration on economic resilience that will continue on into the future.**
- **Governments adapted to continue providing services, for example by shifting to virtual/remote working.**
  - “We have learned much about technology and will be able to better leverage it in the future.”
  - “We have adopted policies on staffing and programs to deal with disruptions due to unusual circumstances.”
  - “Better prepared as we have proven our ability to continue operations during the pandemic by making significant changes to our work and service delivery.

We are building on the changes we made in technology, innovation and culture.”

- **Communities have taken action in the previous two years to be better prepared for disruptions.**
  - “We have done extensive work on wildfire mitigation, water quality and source water improvements, infrastructure and facility assessments, and added organizational capacity.”

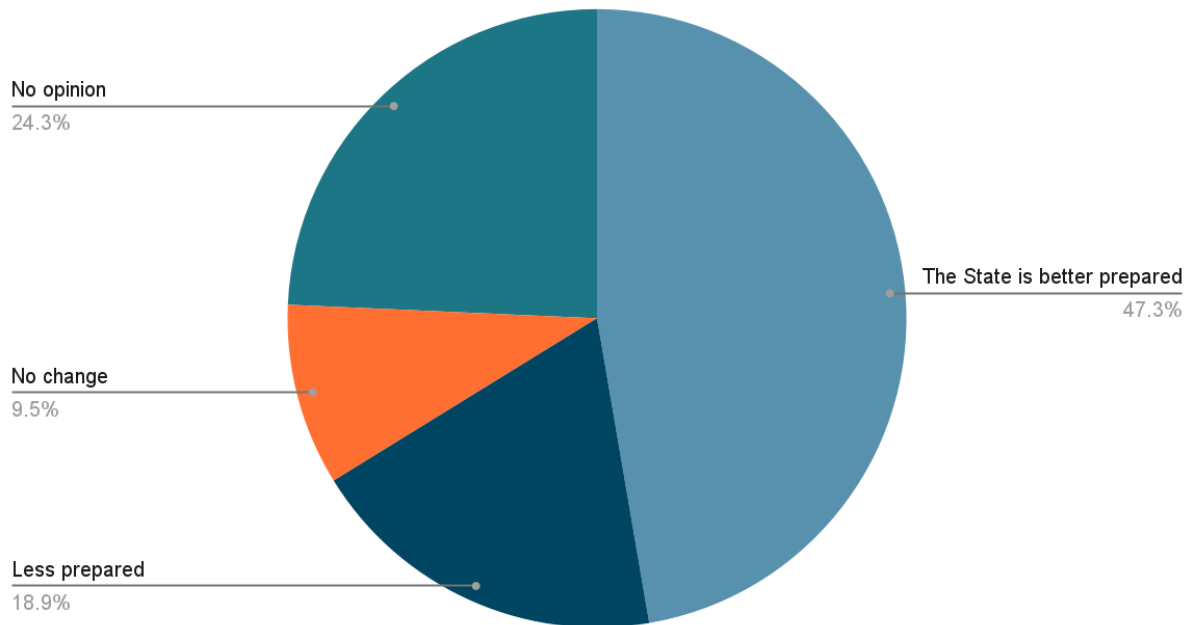
Factors making communities less-resilient:

- **Communities highly-dependent on limited economic bases reported struggling financially during the pandemic, having to cut budgets and furlough staff.**
  - “COVID also demonstrated that [we are] highly dependent on the casinos as an economic base, with limited other tourism opportunities. Increasing the economic diversity of the county must be done to help the county become more resilient to future economic downturns.”
- **Tourism was crippled last year.**
- **Smaller communities responded feeling that they were already struggling economically before the pandemic and that they weren’t as equipped to make quick changes compared to larger communities in the state.**
  - “small staff, strapped for cash and personnel”
- **Buyers from outside the community are purchasing housing, resulting in little housing to buy or rent that’s affordable.**
  - “The housing shortage is causing housing costs to increase beyond what the Town’s population from two years ago can afford.”
- **Drought has devastated agriculture in the southwest.**

### *State Resiliency*

Compared to how they felt about their community’s resiliency, respondents were less certain about the State’s level of resiliency compared to two years ago. **47.3%** believed the State is better prepared to be resilient to a range of risks and vulnerabilities; **18.9%** responded the State is less prepared; **9.5%** responded there’s no change; and **24.3%** had no opinion on the question.

## State Resiliency and Preparedness Compared to 2019



Again, the COVID-19 pandemic shaped the majority of responses to this question.

Factors making the State more-resilient:

- **Having a resiliency office is an advantage for the State**
  - “The work of the CRO has been integral to advancing resilience in Colorado. COVID-19 was a setback for every single community in this state to varying degrees, and the CRO proved its purpose by bringing us together as peers to share information and resources and through its staff providing technical assistance along the way. The update to the CRF also demonstrates that we are better prepared for the work, but it doesn’t diminish how much is left to accomplish for Colorado.”
  - “Funding is critical and the CRO has been working on resiliency which is helpful.”
- **The State has adapted to the pandemic to continue providing key services to communities.**
  - “Our state has practiced distant learning and working from home, along with precautionary measures taken to avoid the spread of germs and disease.”
  - “More practiced and better at communicating with local gov compared to the start of COVID 19.”
- **Stimulus funding has helped make needed investments in Colorado.**

- “The influx of federal and state funding has helped a lot and will be put to good use by the state and will help us invest in things that will better prepare us for future catastrophes, one hopes.”
- **The State is planning for disruptions from natural disasters and understanding their impacts better.**
  - “I think our state has a better understanding of vulnerabilities that once felt slow moving and hypothetical. The real impacts from our state’s wildfires, and the risks posed to our most vulnerable populations have provided an opportunity to think more strategically about our resilience approach at the state level.”
  - “Investment in wildfire equipment.”

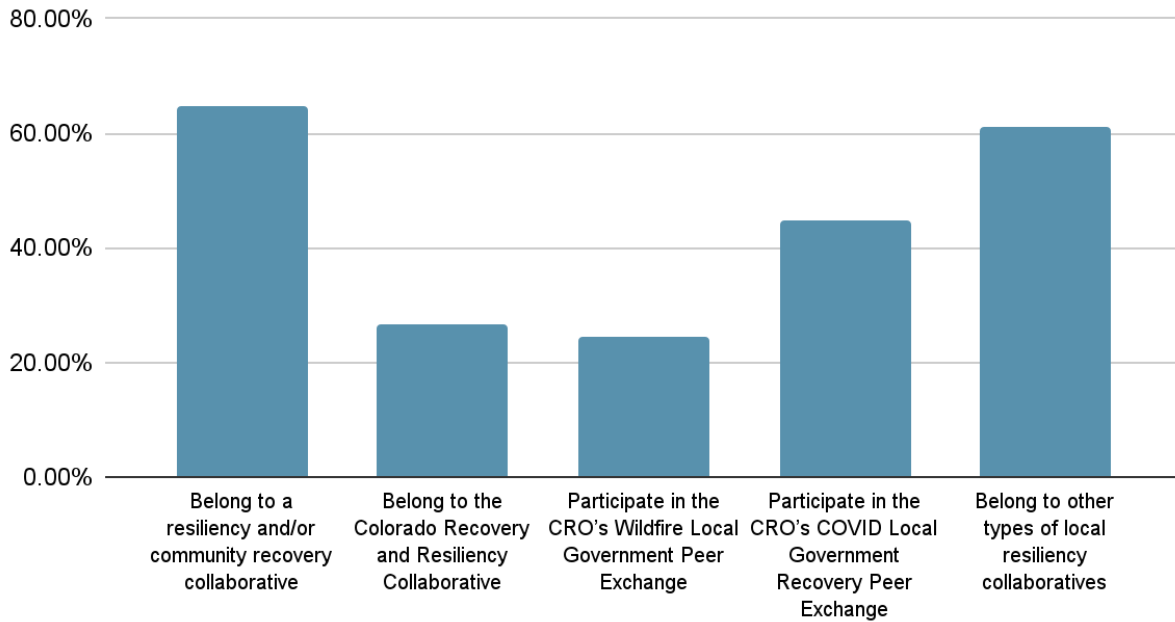
#### Factors making the State less-resilient:

- **The majority of responses about why the State is less-resilient compared to two years ago center around the amount of economic impacts of COVID and navigating increased state and federal relief and recovery funding.**
  - “The state is too quick to provide short term fixes and stimulus without long term planning of consequences.”
  - “I think the state may have overreacted and now with State and Federal funds being offered up in all kinds of ways we as a City can’t keep up let alone understand how to get the relief funds.”

#### Resiliency Partnerships

- **48** of the respondents, representing **64.9%** of the response group, indicated that they or other representatives of their community belong to a resiliency and/or community recovery collaborative.
- **61.2%** responded that they belong to other types of local resiliency collaboratives including the Resiliency Cities Network, Colorado Communities for Climate Action (CC4CA), Urban Sustainability Directors Network, and ICLEI.
- **44.9%** responded that they participate in the CRO’s COVID Local Government Recovery Peer Exchange, and **24.5%** indicated that they participate in the CRO’s Wildfire Local Government Peer Exchange, and **44.9%** responded that they participate in the CRO’s COVID Local Government Recovery Peer Exchange.
- **26.5%** belong to the Colorado Recovery and Resiliency Collaborative, which was created following the 2013 flood event to learn lessons from the disaster and to find ways to improve disaster preparedness and recovery throughout the state.

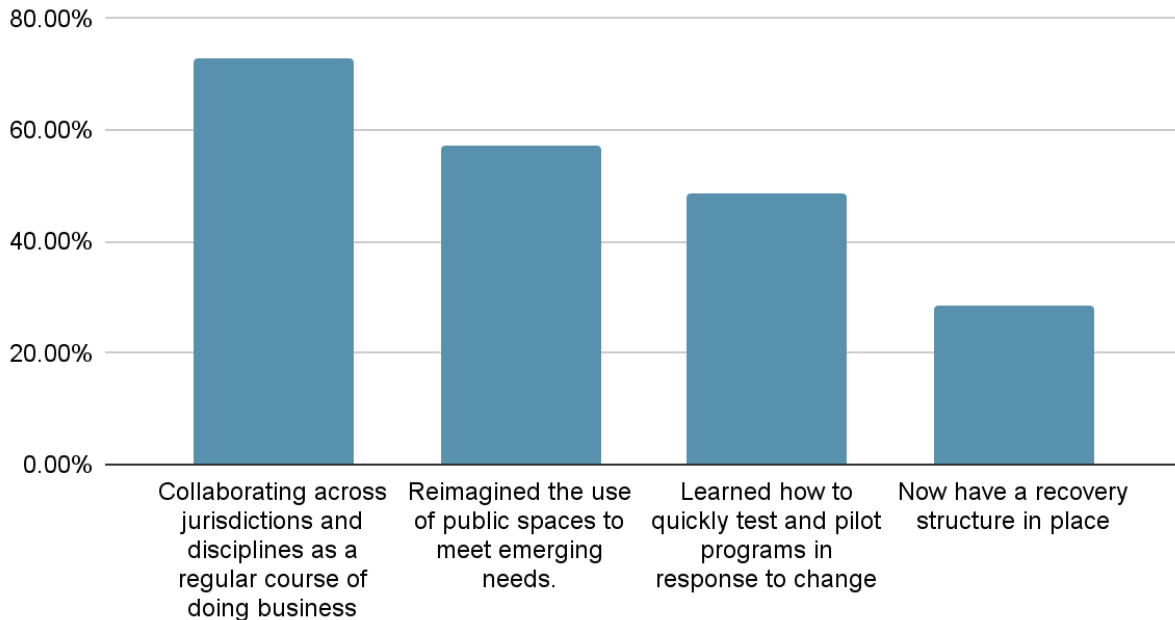
## Resiliency Partnerships



## Resiliency in Response to COVID-19

- **72.9%** responded that they are collaborating across jurisdictions and disciplines as a regular course of doing business.
- **57.1%** have reimagined the use of public spaces to meet emerging needs.
- **48.6%** stated that they have learned how to quickly test and pilot programs in response to change.
- **28.6%** of respondents indicated that they now have a recovery structure in place.

## Actions in Response to COVID-19



### Thoughts on actions taken in response to COVID-19:

- “We were able to use CARES funding for community benefit by providing meals, setting up wifi lift zones, setting up COVID testing and vaccination sites, homeless shelter, and business economic relief.”
- “We have learned a lot about better including people of color and other minority populations in our planning processes. Our Recovery Collaborative includes a team focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The plans we’ve done, such as our comprehensive Unmet Needs Study reflect this broader focus.”
- “Temporarily closing two local streets in the downtown to create 160 social distanced, safe spaces for customers of local businesses throughout the city to bring their “to-go” food and beverages to consume rather than individualized spaces. Also funding outdoor classrooms and food banks.”
- “The Town launched a number of community grant opportunities to help businesses adapt to the capacity restrictions set by Covid, an outdoor heating assistance grant, marketing assistance, and restaurant assistance. However, the most unique idea was the refurbishment of gondola cars into individual dining pods.”

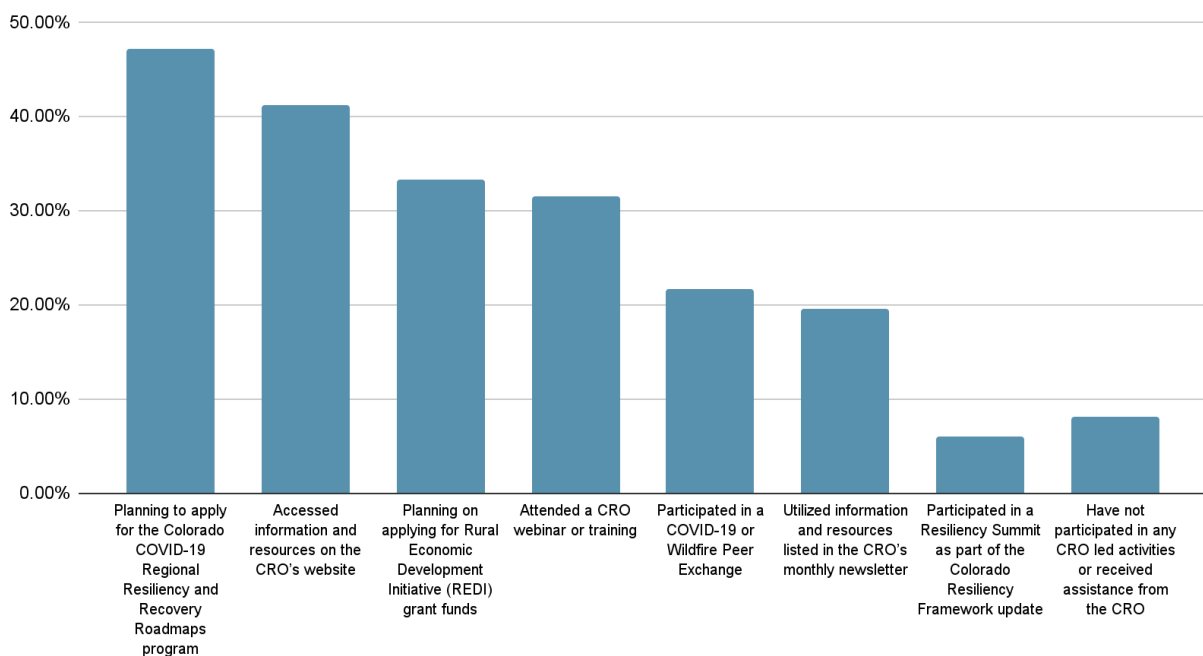
### Participation in CRO Activities

- **47.1%** were planning to apply for the Colorado COVID-19 Regional Resiliency and Recovery Roadmaps program.
- **41.2%** accessed information and resources on the CRO’s website.



- **33.3%** were planning on applying for Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) grant funds.
- **31.4%** of respondents have attended a CRO webinar or training.
- **21.6%** have participated in a COVID-19 or Wildfire Peer Exchange.
- **19.6%** utilized information and resources listed in the CRO’s monthly newsletter.
- **5.9%** participated in a Resiliency Summit as part of the Colorado Resiliency Framework update.
- **8%** responded that they have not participated in any CRO led activities or received assistance from the CRO.

Participation in CRO Activities



Thoughts on experiences working with the CRO and outcomes:

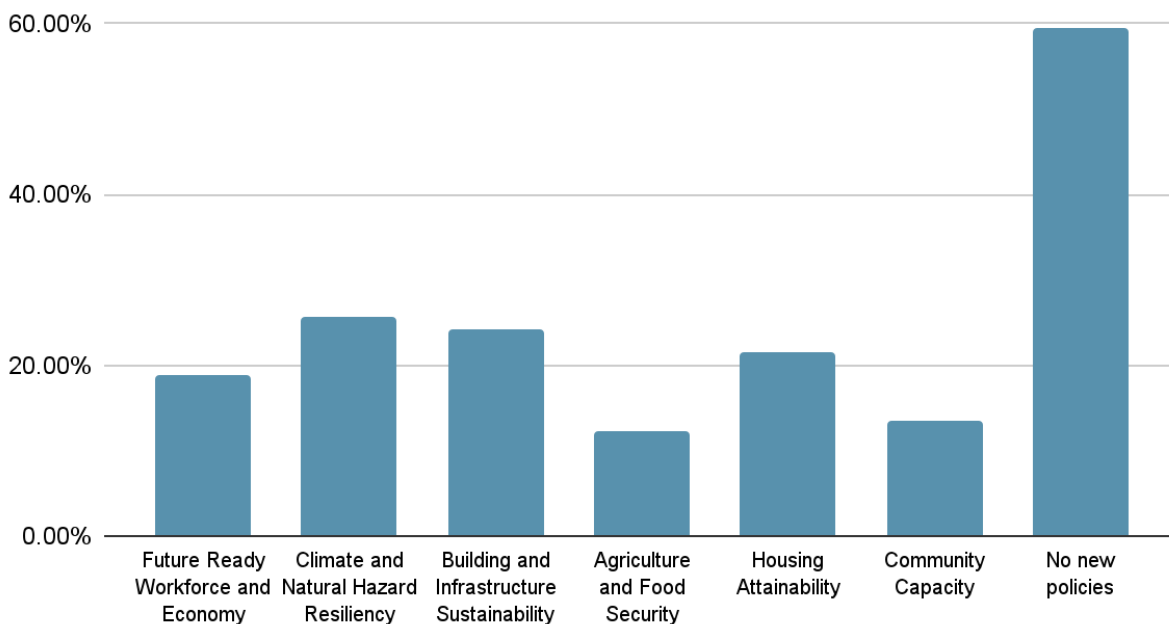
- “The peer exchange has been an invaluable resource as we navigate this ever-changing event across jurisdictional lines and prepare for additional hazards (wildfire, flood, etc).”
- “The town was able to hire a part-time economic development coordinator which was a recommendation of the strategy. Although the coordinator was hired just as the pandemic shut downs hit, it was indeed helpful to have a person in this role, helping businesses navigate during this uncertain time.”
- “I have shared the lessons from the peer exchange internally. It has sparked ideas for us as a community and organization for how we are responding to COVID-19.”
- “CRO's funding from REDI up to 2020 has created over 1 million in direct investment.”
- “We are hopeful that we will be able to participate in the recovery and resiliency planning, as we feel we can address some regional issues through this process.”

- “We continue to look at how to transition positive/successful things that we have done as a response to the pandemic into normal operations.”

### Colorado Resiliency Framework

Communities have adopted policies and programs in the past two years that align with priority focus areas from the Colorado Resiliency Framework.

#### Policies aligning with CRF



### Additional Thoughts

- We appreciate the helpful partnership we enjoy with the State in so many ways. Collaboration with DOLA, DHSEM, CDPHE, and other departments is critical to our success. Thank you!