



*Child Welfare Reform Considerations and
Strategic Financing Opportunities
July, 2012*



Introduction

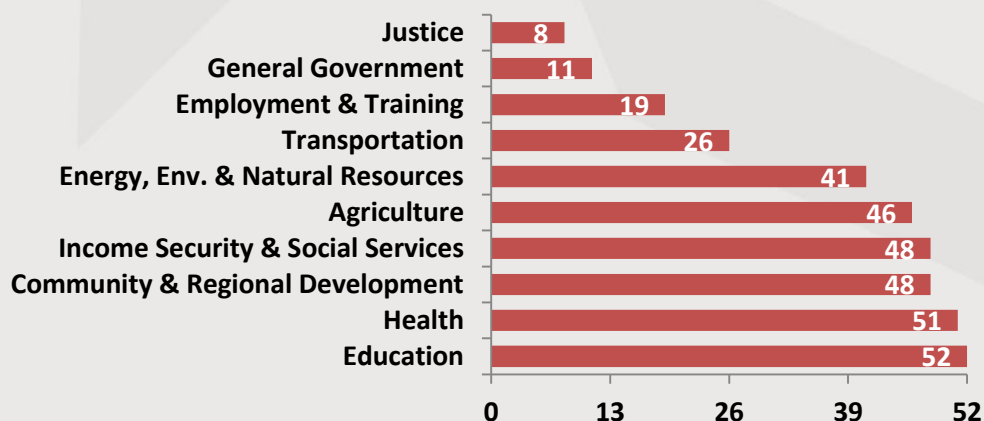
The purpose of this report is to call to light the factors that are fundamental to implement strategic child welfare system reform in Southern Nevada. It is a well-known and undisputed fact that Nevada routinely ranks among the lowest in the country across nearly all social service sectors, including child welfare and the majority of youth and family serving sectors and supports.

Sampling of Community Wellness Indicators Nevada Ranking Compared to All States


| Sector | Indicator | Nevada Indicator Rank | Percent / Rate | US Average |
|-----------------|--|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Child Welfare | Children 0 to 17 in foster care (rate per 1,000) | 37 | 7.00 | 6.00 |
| Education | Children aged 3-5 not in preschool (percent) | 49 | 56% | 40% |
| Education | High school graduation rate | 52 | 56% | 76% |
| Education | Teens aged 16-19 not in school, not working (percent) | 50 | 15% | 9% |
| Education | Young adults ages 18 to 24 enrolled in or completed college (percent) | 49 | 33% | 48% |
| Health | Children (0-17) receiving medical & dental preventive care in the past 12 months | 50 | 61% | 72% |
| Health | Children aged 10 - 17 who are Overweight or Obese (percent) | 41 | 34% | 32% |
| Health | Children Immunized Aged 19-35 Months (percent) | 48 | 67% | 75% |
| Health | Children under 18 without health insurance (percent) | 48 | 17% | 10% |
| Risky Behaviors | Adults who Smoke (percent) | 43 | 21% | 17% |
| Risky Behaviors | Suicide Deaths per 100,000 Population (rate) | 47 | 18.30 | 11.30 |
| Risky Behaviors | Teen births aged 15-19 (rate per 1,000) | 37 | 47.40 | 39.10 |
| Risky Behaviors | Violent Crime Offenses (rate per 100,000 inhabitants) | 50 | 660.60 | 403.60 |

These statistics are not surprising when paired with a view of Nevada's level of federal investment by major grant program. The chart that follows illustrates Nevada's per capita rank of federal spending compared to the rest of the country. The Silver State spends more than most other states in categories such as corrections, general government spending, employment and training, and transportation. Nevada ranks among the last in the country when it comes to federal spending for social services, community development, healthcare, and education. On an aggregate basis, Nevada receives the lowest amount of per capita federal funding than any other state or territory in the nation.ⁱ

FY 2010 Per Capita Federal Spending by Category Nevada Ranking Compared to All States



Source: Federal Funds Information for States, Budget Brief 11-09, May 26, 2011



Some of the proposed excuses for our state's poor performance are plainly linked to a lack of state investment – federal funds typically require matching state funds and if Nevada continues to offer income taxes at or near zero percent, investment in public resources will naturally be restricted. While Accelerate Nevada does not express an opinion on the appropriate level of tax revenue, we do maintain that **more can and MUST be done with existing resources and infrastructure** across all social service sectors.

Securing adequate investments to support the child welfare system is particularly challenging given ongoing tight economic conditions and budgetary shortfalls. The services and supports needed to detect and treat the effects of trauma and crisis are not supported by one particular funding stream, but by several funding sources administered by a variety of federal, state, and local public agencies as well as private funding resources. The issue of child welfare itself is a complex and multi-faceted issue, oftentimes spanning several social problems. It is assumed for the purposes of this report that the intended reader is already in possession of a fundamental understanding of Southern Nevada's child welfare system and how it functions. For more information about this topic, including Nevada specific data, please refer to The Community We Will Business Caseⁱⁱ.


The Community We Will, a local advocacy partnership representing leaders across a broad spectrum of the child welfare community, including Clark County Department of Family Services, presents an invaluable opportunity to capitalize on the information presented within this report. The Southern Nevada community has already demonstrated its willingness to support child welfare reform. Since 1997, the Children's Advocacy Alliance (CAA) has been a leading advocate on behalf of abused and neglected children in Southern Nevada. Recently, CAA has joined forces with the Community We Will (CWW), a community-held initiative working to ensure the safety and well-being of children and families in Southern Nevada. By formally merging the two organizations under the banner of the CAA, they can now work together to meet the common goals of safely reducing the number of children in foster care, and establishing an independent voice for children in our community. There has never been a better time for Southern Nevada to fund and invest in systems and solutions – the drivers of real and quantifiable change.

Accelerate Nevada-

Accelerate Nevada, in partnership with the Ritter Charitable Trust, is putting forth this research and plan to advance our community's ability of to compete for federal funds and high quality national private foundation funding. We are also arguing that in order to be successful as we compete for funding, we need to be focused on seeding and scaling the right projects- those that are anchored in best practices and informed by nationally and locally successful models.

To be sure, Southern Nevada has experienced pockets of success. That said, as a community we need to ask what will it take to actually “move the dial” on the critical social indicators of community health. If money alone does not drive progress, what will?

The answer, based on the success of national organizations like the National Alliance to End Homelessness and highly entrepreneurial ventures, such as Tom Siebel and The Meth Project lies in **funding the right things**. The



ability to correctly marshal resources to address every link in the ‘causal chain’, as Howard Buffet calls it, is the key and it is more often than not, the place where Southern Nevada falls apart.

Many local leaders have routinely asked, “How do we identify high quality and sustainable resources, integrate funding, link resources and draw in larger institutions to invest in Nevada to have the impact we all want to have?” This is precisely what Accelerate Nevada, the research and development arm of the Nevada Community Foundation, was created to do.

***To mobilize people and communities around funding the right things
at the right level to have sustained impact.***


The Accelerate Nevada Impact Model is based on three key components:

1. *A data driven understanding of the problem:* What are the real issues and what are the consequences and impacts of the problem?
2. *Identification of the real drivers of change:* What proven programs, approaches and strategies actually solve the problem, getting to the root of the issue?
3. *Strategic financing plan:* What high quality funds exist to implement the right solutions to address the problems? What types of funding sources create the conditions for impact and sustainability? What will it take for us to successfully compete?

The strategies discussed herein are designed to serve as a conversation starting point to answer the ultimate question – how can our community efficiently and effectively direct limited resources to positively impact children and families in Southern Nevada? This report attempts to assist readers to think about local solutions to child welfare by formulating initial answers to the following questions, understanding that ongoing research and evaluation is necessary:

- What federal funding streams are not being accessed in Nevada and how can we prepare our community to increase its share of federal dollars to positively impact child welfare?
- What federal funding streams are not being accessed to their full potential when compared to other more successful communities?
- What well-researched programs and policies work to reduce the likelihood that children will enter and/or remain in the child welfare system? Of these, which programs and policies are currently in Southern Nevada?
- How do we bring evidence-based programs to scale? What are the common characteristics of successful programs?

Accelerate Nevada has chosen to look at potential solutions from a **systems perspective** –the factors that bring children into the child welfare system are complex and multi-faceted and solutions will require real effort from multiple systems and services, including education, early childhood, family support, mental health, physical healthcare, basic needs, economic security, and child safety, to name some examples. Real child welfare reform



requires funding the drivers of change, bringing proven programs to scale, and directing resources to fund solutions.

Child welfare services and supports are not supported by one particular funding stream, but by several funding sources administered by a variety of federal, state, and local public agencies as well as private funding resources. This requires program developers and community leaders to cobble together funding, each with different eligibility and service criteria and different administrative and reporting requirements.

For the purposes of this report, only federal funding streams will be discussed. The reason for this is twofold: first, current and continuing state budget constraints have diminished the likelihood of increasing state or local funding opportunities anytime in the near future, and second, because Nevada receives the lowest amount of per capita federal funding compared to any other state or territory in the nation, focusing on increased **federal** funding presents a natural opportunity for improvement. These funding opportunities already exist – Nevada simply needs to compete for them.

Financing and sustaining effective child welfare services will require that program leaders engage in a variety of financing strategies to mobilize the resources necessary to support their efforts over time. Accelerate Nevada's principal recommendations include three distinct but interdependent strategies: **increasing federal revenue, bringing evidence-based programs to scale, and building partnerships to accomplish radical change.** Nevada's child welfare system can and must increase access to federal funds either directly or in partnership with stakeholders at the state, community, and private sectors. This report provides a roadmap for Nevada to begin to address all three of these priorities.