



A New Urban Research-Practitioner Partnership: Career Pathways Programing for Lower-Skilled Adults and Immigrants in High-Need Cities



Esther Prins, Carol Clymer, and Blaire Willson Toso
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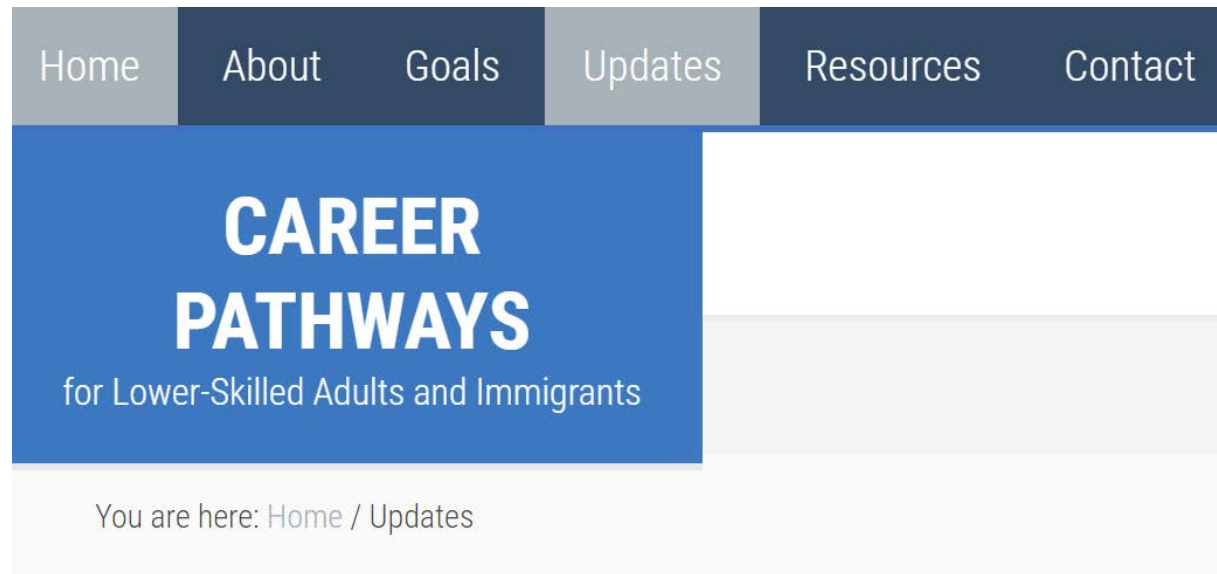
Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy (ISAL) at Penn State
 Chicago Citywide Literacy Coalition
 Houston Center for Literacy
 Miami-Dade County Public Schools

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# Who We Are

- Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy at Penn State
  - Dr. Esther Prins (Principal Investigator; Co-Director, ISAL)
  - Dr. Carol Clymer (Co-Director)
  - Dr. Blaire Willson Toso (Associate Director)
- Chicago Citywide Literacy Coalition
  - Becky Raymond (Executive Director)
  - Alex Ziskind (Program Associate)
- Houston Center for Literacy
  - Sheri Foreman Elder (President and CEO)
  - Martin Loa (Vice President of Program Services)
- Miami-Dade County Public Schools
  - Mark Needle (Educational Specialist)

# Aims, Rationale, & Methods

- What:
  - 2-year U.S. Department of Education researcher-practitioner partnership grant
- Aims
  - Understand how adult basic education & literacy (ABEL) providers in high-need cities are integrating career pathways (CP) components into their services – especially for low-skilled & immigrant adults.
  - Identify which student outcome measures are most extensively used & any metrics that are used within & across the cities.
  - Understand how successful programs design & implement CP.
- First study to map the landscape of adult education career pathways in Chicago, Houston, Miami.

# Aims, Rationale, & Methods

- What do we mean by career pathways?
  - This approach “connects progressive levels of basic skills and postsecondary education, training, and supportive services
  - in specific sectors or cross-sector occupations
  - in a way that optimizes the progress and success of individuals—including those with limited education, English, skills, and/or work experience—
  - in securing marketable credentials, family-supporting employment, and further education and employment opportunities.” (CLASP, 2012)

# Aims, Rationale, & Methods

- How:
  - Survey of all ABEL providers in Chicago, Houston, & Miami
  - Focus groups with 18 providers (5-7 per city)
    - Nominated by survey respondents & city partners; reported CP services & successful outcomes
  - Case studies of 6 exemplary programs (2 per city)

# Case Studies

- Guiding research question
  - How do adult education program that report the most promising student outcomes design and implement CP, and to what do they credit their success?

- Sampling rationale: diverse occupational sectors, lower education levels

| Program                             | Mfg. | Health | Educ.,<br>child<br>care | Transport. | Auto-<br>CAD | Bus. | Construc. | Tech/IT | Office<br>mgmt. | Food |
|-------------------------------------|------|--------|-------------------------|------------|--------------|------|-----------|---------|-----------------|------|
| Lindsey Hopkins                     |      | Yes    | X                       | Yes        | X            |      | X         |         |                 | Yes  |
| Miami Dade College – Hialeah        | Yes  | X      |                         |            |              | Yes  |           |         |                 |      |
| Jane Addams Resource Corp.          | Yes  |        |                         |            |              |      |           |         |                 |      |
| City Colleges of Chicago – MX       |      | Yes    |                         |            |              |      |           |         |                 |      |
| Alliance for Multicultural Progress | X    | Yes    | X                       | X          | Yes          |      |           |         |                 |      |
| Houston CC                          | X    | Yes    | X                       | X          | X            |      |           | X       | Yes             |      |



- Sampling rationale: organizational type

| Program                                                          | Comm. College | School District | CBO          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Lindsey Hopkins                                                  |               | X               |              |
| Miami Dade College – Hialeah                                     | X             |                 |              |
| Jane Addams Resource Corp.                                       |               |                 | X            |
| City Colleges of Chicago – Malcolm X                             | X             |                 |              |
| Alliance for Multicultural Progress                              |               |                 | X            |
| Houston Community College (Community-Based Job Training Program) | X             |                 | X (partners) |

- Sampling rationale: primary population(s) served, neighborhood

| Program                                                          | Immigrants | Refugees | U.S.-Born Minorities |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------|----------------------|
| Lindsey Hopkins                                                  | X          | X        | X                    |
| Miami Dade College – Hialeah                                     | X          | X        | X                    |
| Jane Addams Resource Corp.                                       | X          |          | X                    |
| City Colleges of Chicago – Malcolm X                             | X          |          | X                    |
| Alliance for Multicultural Progress                              |            | X        |                      |
| Houston Community College (Community-Based Job Training Program) | X          |          | X                    |

## ■ Methods

- 18 class observations (11 hours)
- 44 interviews with 56 people (31 hours)
  - Career-technical & basic skills teachers
  - Administrators
  - Key partners
  - Support staff (e.g., transition specialist, employment coach)
- 3 focus groups with 53 students (3 to 13 per site)
- Document analysis

## ■ Chicago

### ■ Jane Addams Resource Corporation (JARC)

#### ■ Primary CP components:

- Careers in manufacturing classes (computer numerical control [CNC], welding, press brake)
- Contextualized math bridge class (not integrated)
- Emphasis on women in manufacturing
- Many instructors = program graduates

#### ■ Support services

- Transportation, etc.
- Center for Working Families: wrap-around services (income supports, lifetime financial coaching)

#### ■ Outcomes: industry-recognized credentials (NIMS, National Institute for Metalworking Skills), manufacturing jobs

# Chicago Community Colleges – Malcolm X (health)

|                                                          | Career Foundations Class                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Career Bridge Program                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Gateway Program                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Locations:</b>                                        | <div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap; gap: 5px;"> <div style="background-color: #FFD700; padding: 2px;">DA</div> <div style="background-color: #DC143C; padding: 2px;">KK</div> <div style="background-color: #DC143C; padding: 2px;">MX</div> <div style="background-color: #483D8B; padding: 2px;">OH</div> <div style="background-color: #3CB371; padding: 2px;">TR</div> <div style="background-color: #8B4513; padding: 2px;">WR</div> </div> | <div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap; gap: 5px;"> <div style="background-color: #DC143C; padding: 2px;">KK</div> <div style="background-color: #DC143C; padding: 2px;">MX</div> <div style="background-color: #483D8B; padding: 2px;">OH</div> <div style="background-color: #3CB371; padding: 2px;">TR</div> <div style="background-color: #8B4513; padding: 2px;">WR</div> </div> | <div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap; gap: 5px;"> <div style="background-color: #FFD700; padding: 2px;">DA</div> <div style="background-color: #FF8C00; padding: 2px;">HW</div> <div style="background-color: #DC143C; padding: 2px;">KK</div> <div style="background-color: #DC143C; padding: 2px;">MX</div> <div style="background-color: #483D8B; padding: 2px;">OH</div> <div style="background-color: #3CB371; padding: 2px;">TR</div> <div style="background-color: #8B4513; padding: 2px;">WR</div> </div> |
| <b>Students who could benefit from this would be at:</b> | 3-5 <sup>th</sup> grade equivalency                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 6-8 <sup>th</sup> grade equivalency<br>(TABE Reading score of 6.0+ and TABE Math score of 5.0+)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 9 <sup>th</sup> grade equivalency and above<br>(TABE Reading score of 9.0+ and TABE Math score of 8.0+)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Overview</b>                                          | A course that helps Adult Education students identify their skills and interests and learn how they can get on the pathway to college and career success through the City Colleges of Chicago Career Bridge and Gateway programs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | The Bridge program offers students an opportunity to learn about a career of interest, while preparing to take the high school equivalency test/improve English language skills.                                                                                                                                                                                                          | The Gateway program offers students the opportunity to take college credit courses at a reduced cost, while preparing to take the high school equivalency test/improve English language skills.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Application process</b>                               | There is no application.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | There is an application process. Students meet with a Transition Specialist to learn more.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | There is an application process. Students meet with a Transition Specialist to learn more.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

- Primary CP components: health-contextualized math and language (GED) classes + credit course (2<sup>nd</sup> sem.) → transition to credit classes in health
- Support services: same as credit students (tutoring, disability services, wellness center, child care, etc.) + others (e.g., transition specialist)
- FY12-17: 78% of career bridge students took credit course at CCC

## ■ Houston

- Alliance for Multicultural Community Services
  - Refugee resettlement agency
- Primary CP components
  - ESL (if low test score)
  - Career/technical class + contextualized basic skills (not integrated)
    - CTE classes: community college instructors
    - CNA, AutoCAD, commercial truck driving (CDL), child development associate, pipe design, security guard
- Support services
  - Financial Opportunity Center (LISC)
    - Employment and career planning assistance (e.g., resume writing, job search skills)
    - Financial education and coaching
    - Access to income support services
  - Dress for Success/Career Gear
- Outcomes: eligible to take state CNA exam; certificate of CNA completion, AutoCAD professional user certification

## ■ Houston Community College

- Community-Based Job Training Program grant: partnership with CBOs
  - Our focus: CNA (Chinese Community Center) & GOSS (AVANCE)
  - HCC provides teacher & curriculum, CBO recruits, provides site & support services, etc.
- Key components:
  - Career/technical class + contextualized math & language support class (not integrated)
- Support services
  - Through HCC (e.g., job fairs, tutoring)
  - Through CBO
    - Dress for Success/Career Gear; CCC - Financial Opportunity Center; AVANCE - preschool & family strengthening programs, etc.
- Outcomes: eligible to take state CNA exam (highest pass rate), office skills certificate

- Miami
  - Miami Dade College, Adult Education
    - Primary CP components: Florida Integrated Career & Academic Preparation System (FICAPS)
      - GED course (not contextualized) + FICAPS classes
        - TRAMCON (manufactured construction)
        - Business (college credit certificates – accounting, management, finance-banking)
        - Health certificates
    - Support services: Career readiness advisors, tutoring, financial aid, books & course materials (some), integrated as MDC student (support & resources)
    - Outcomes: industry-recognized credentials, TRAMCON job placement, transferrable credits to postsecondary, college credits



- Lindsey Hopkins Technical College (MDCPS)
  - Primary CP components
    - Our focus:
      - Health (nutrition & dietetic clerk)
      - Automotive service technology
      - Hospitality & tourism (commercial foods & culinary arts)
      - Many other occupational sectors
    - GED & ESL, but separate from CTE classes (no set progression)
    - Practicum (diet clerk)
  - Support services: case management, academic support, onsite child care, job placement
  - Outcomes: 18 stackable industry-recognized credentials, 3 licenses, apprenticeships & job placement, transferrable credits to post-secondary

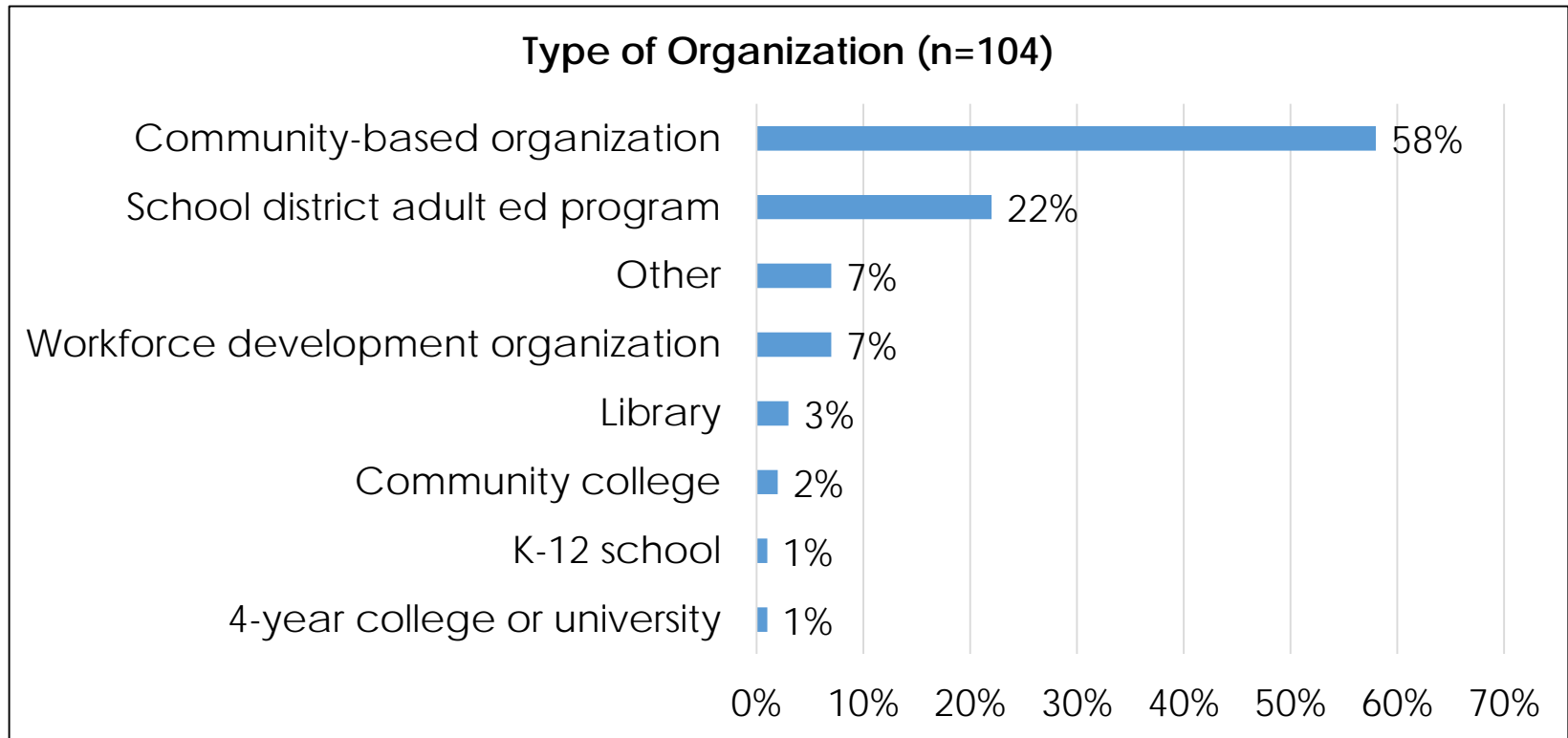
# Survey Methods

- Purpose: understand the landscape of adult education career pathways within & across cities
- Sample: all adult education providers in 3 cities (n=184)
  - 106 completed surveys = 72% response rate
- Sections
  - Background information on organization & CP services
  - Student characteristics
  - Program design & delivery
  - Data collection systems & outcomes tracked
  - Aggregate student outcomes
- Student characteristics & outcomes = rough estimates (data inaccuracies)



# Survey Findings: Institutional & Program Characteristics

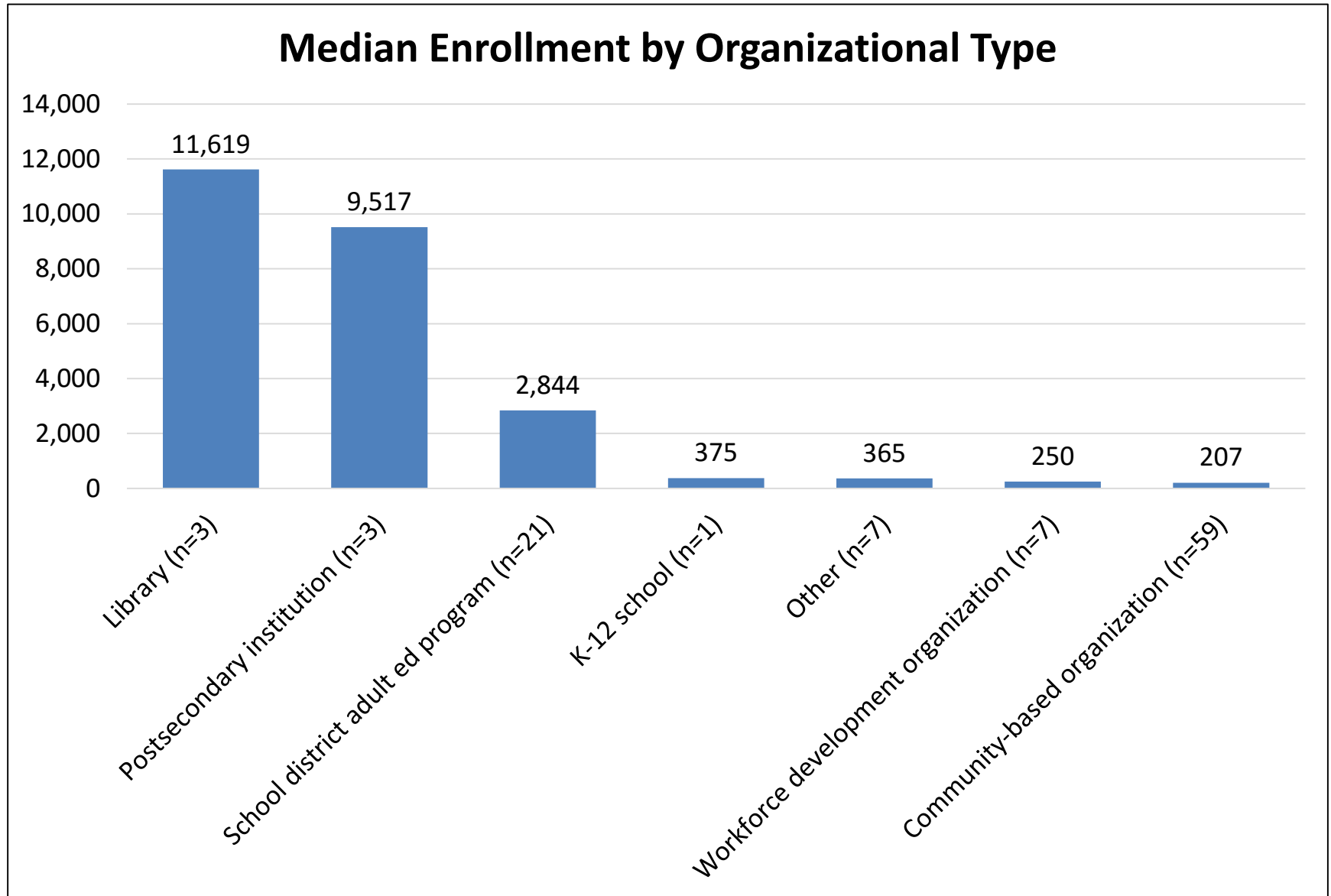
- Most common agency type\*: CBO



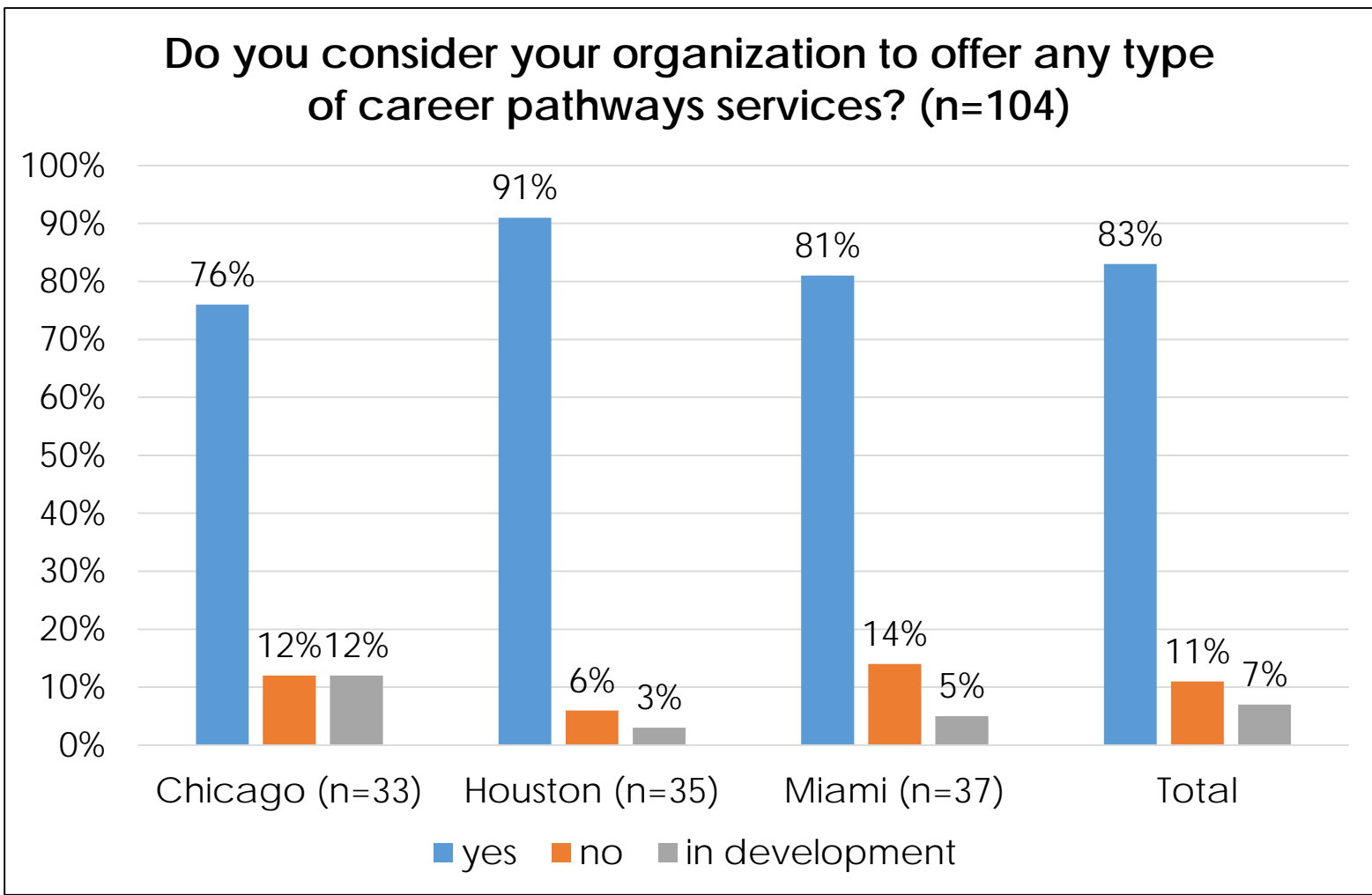
\*Chicago City Colleges submitted 1 survey for all campuses

- Other: homeless shelters, correctional facilities, etc.
- CBOs disproportionately located in Chicago (48% of CBOs in survey)
- 100% of school district adult ed programs located in Miami

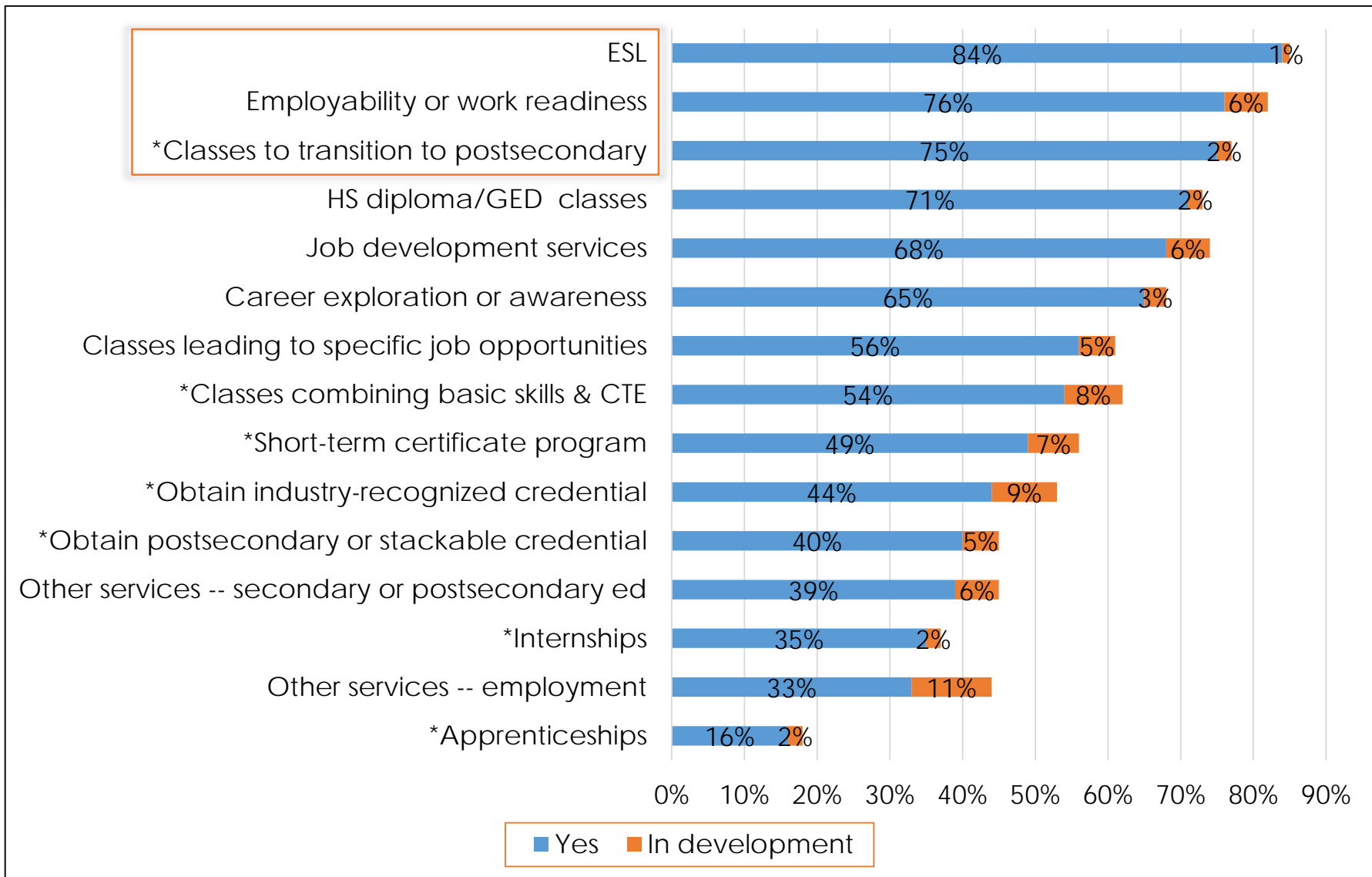
- Libraries and postsecondary institutions enrolled the largest number of adult learners, and CBOs the fewest



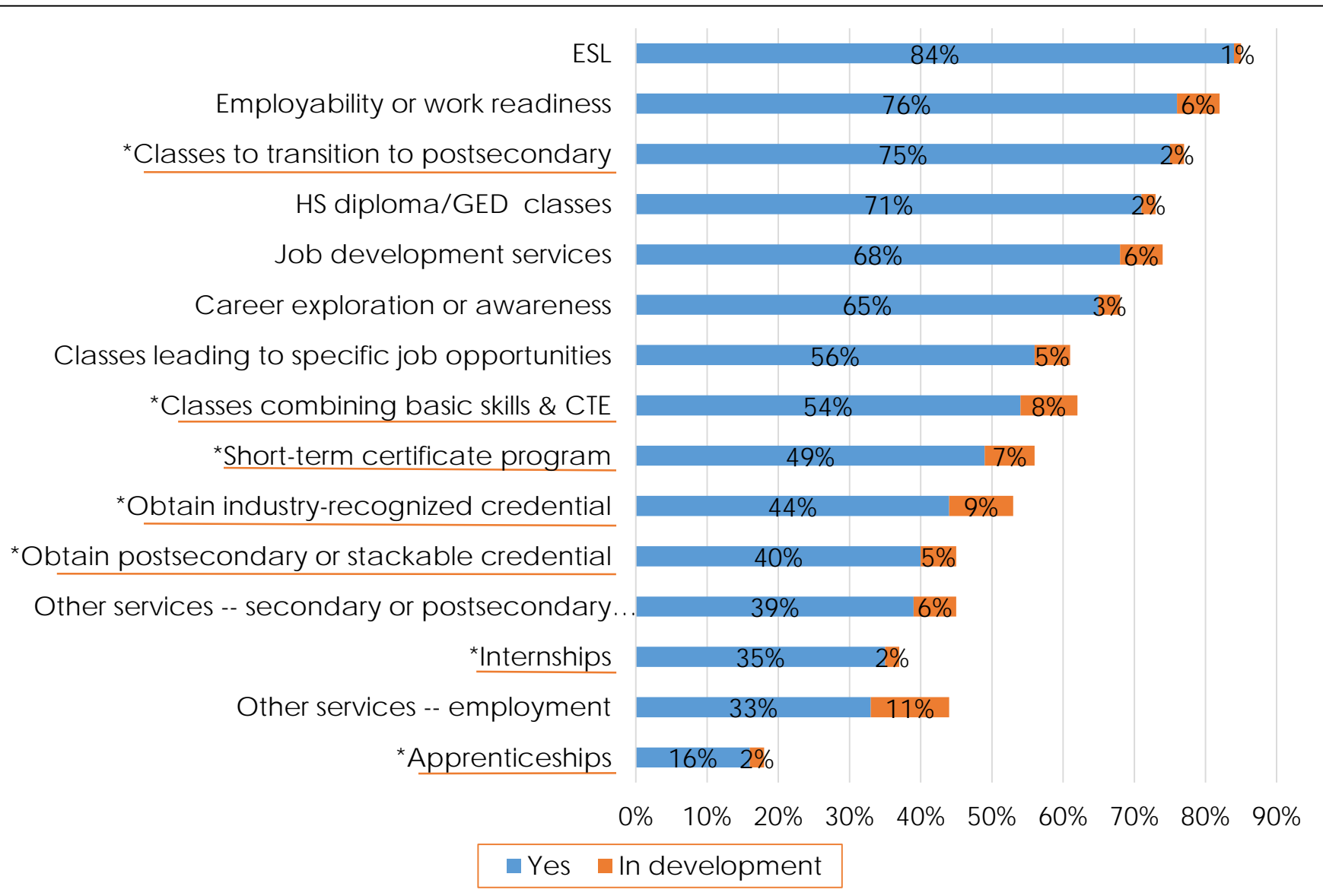
- 83% said they provided CP services, per CLASP definition
- No significant differences by city



- Types of CP classes, services, & activities (n = 80 to 103)
  - Average = 7 types of classes

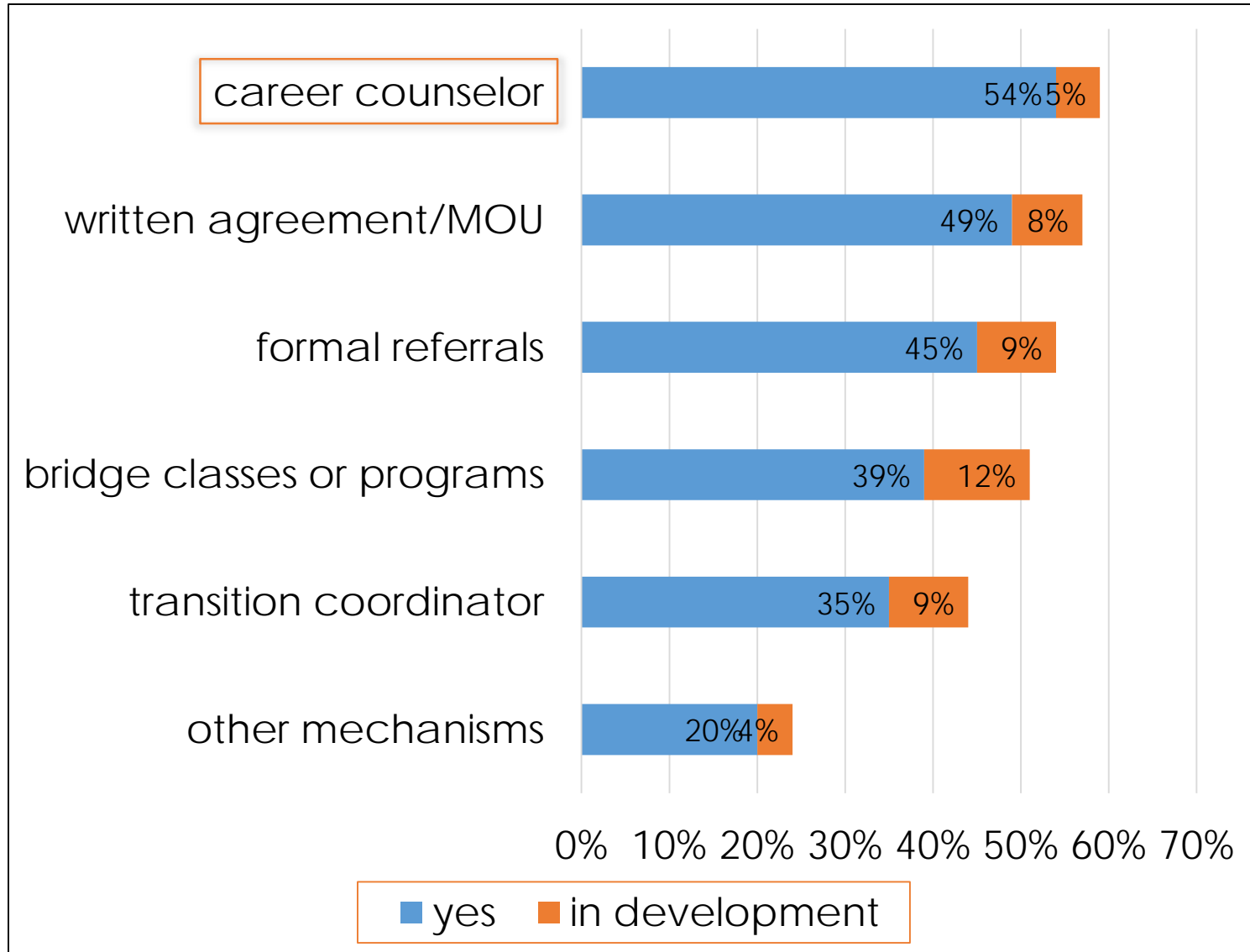


- Overall, "core" CP services were much less common

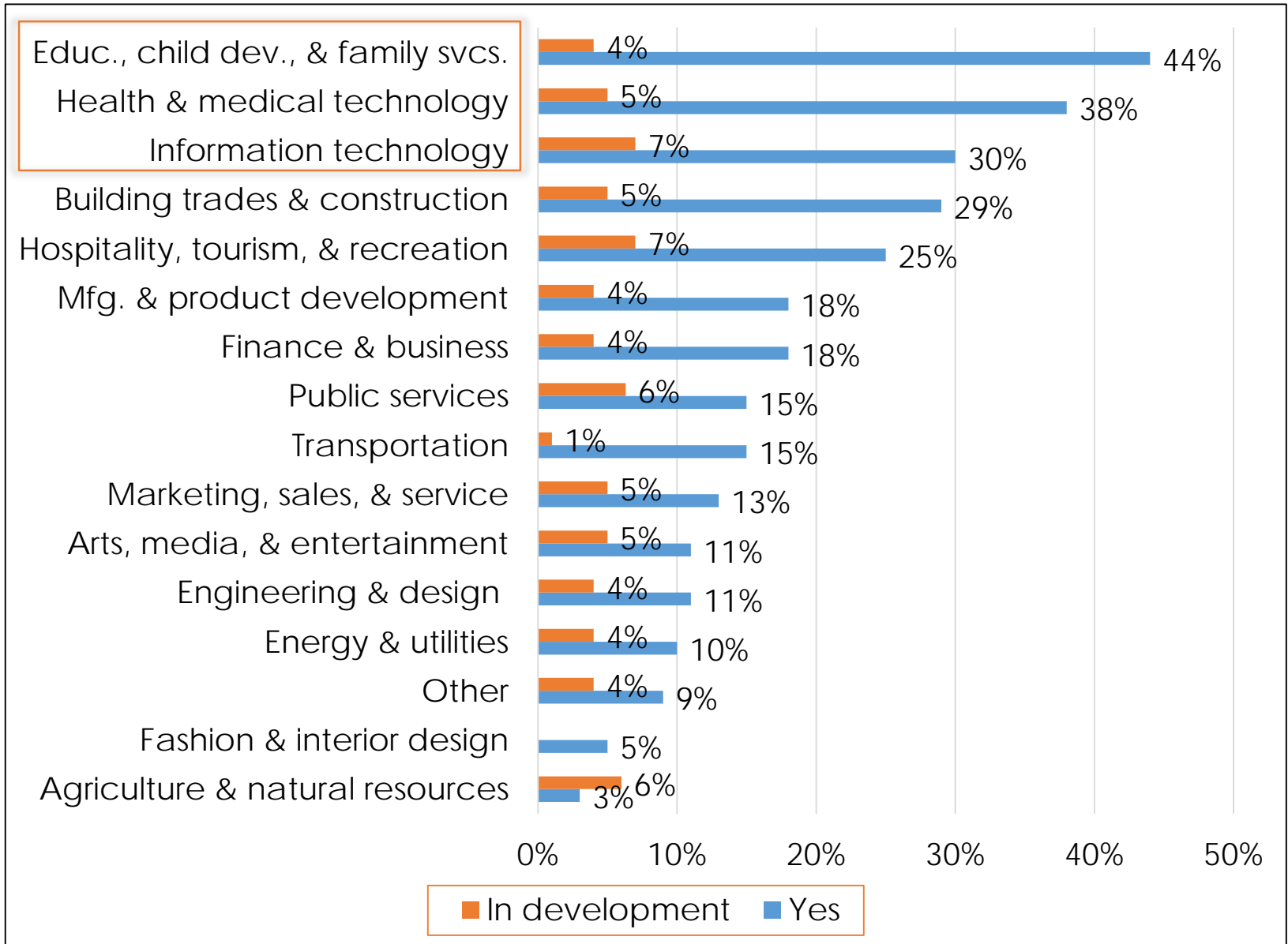




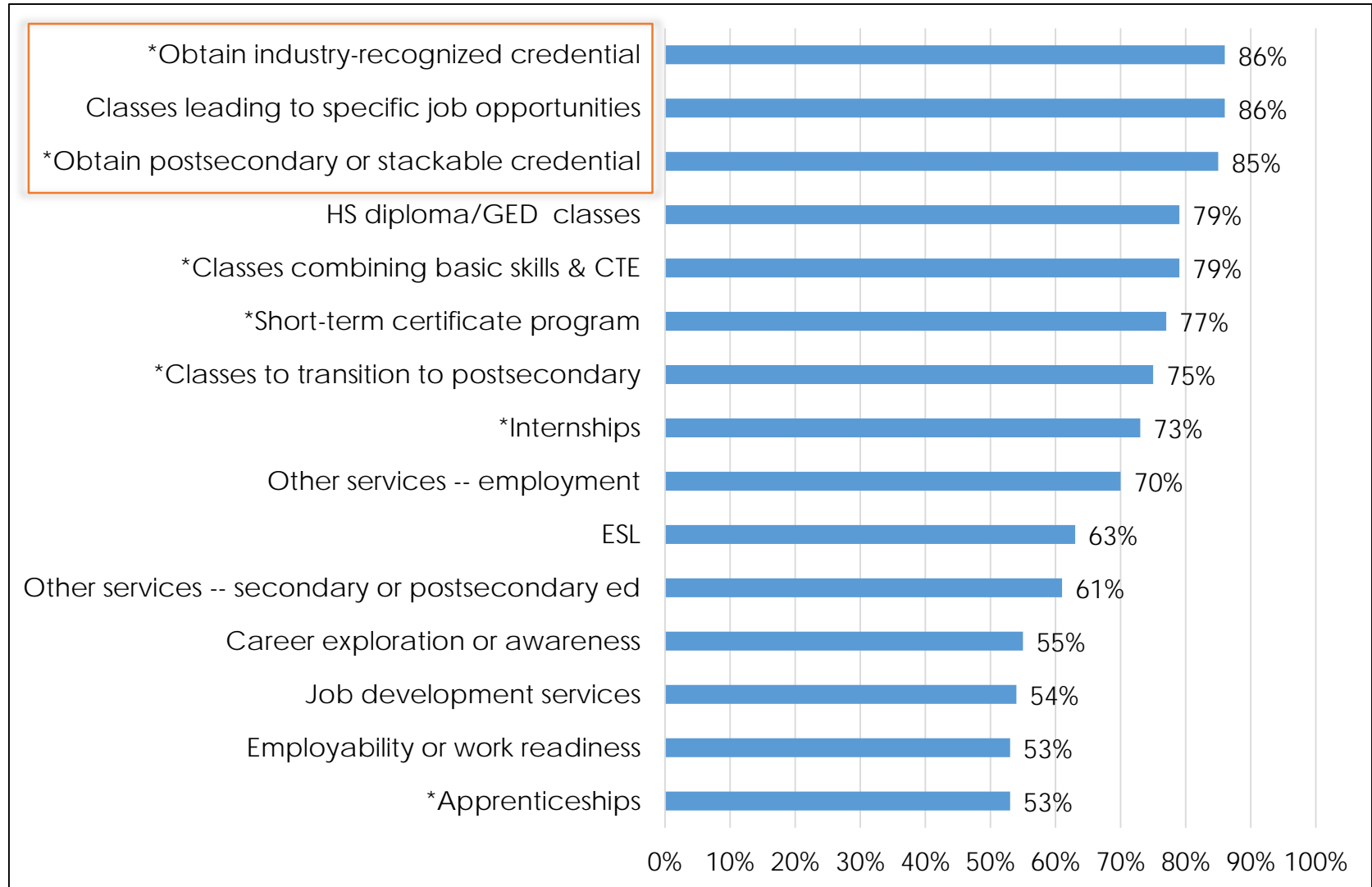
- Mechanisms for transitioning students to next step in their career pathway (n = 51 to 99)



- Targeted employment sectors (n = 47 to 100)



- More than 50% of each service have threshold grade-level, test score, or language requirements (n = 15 to 83)



## ■ Entry Requirements

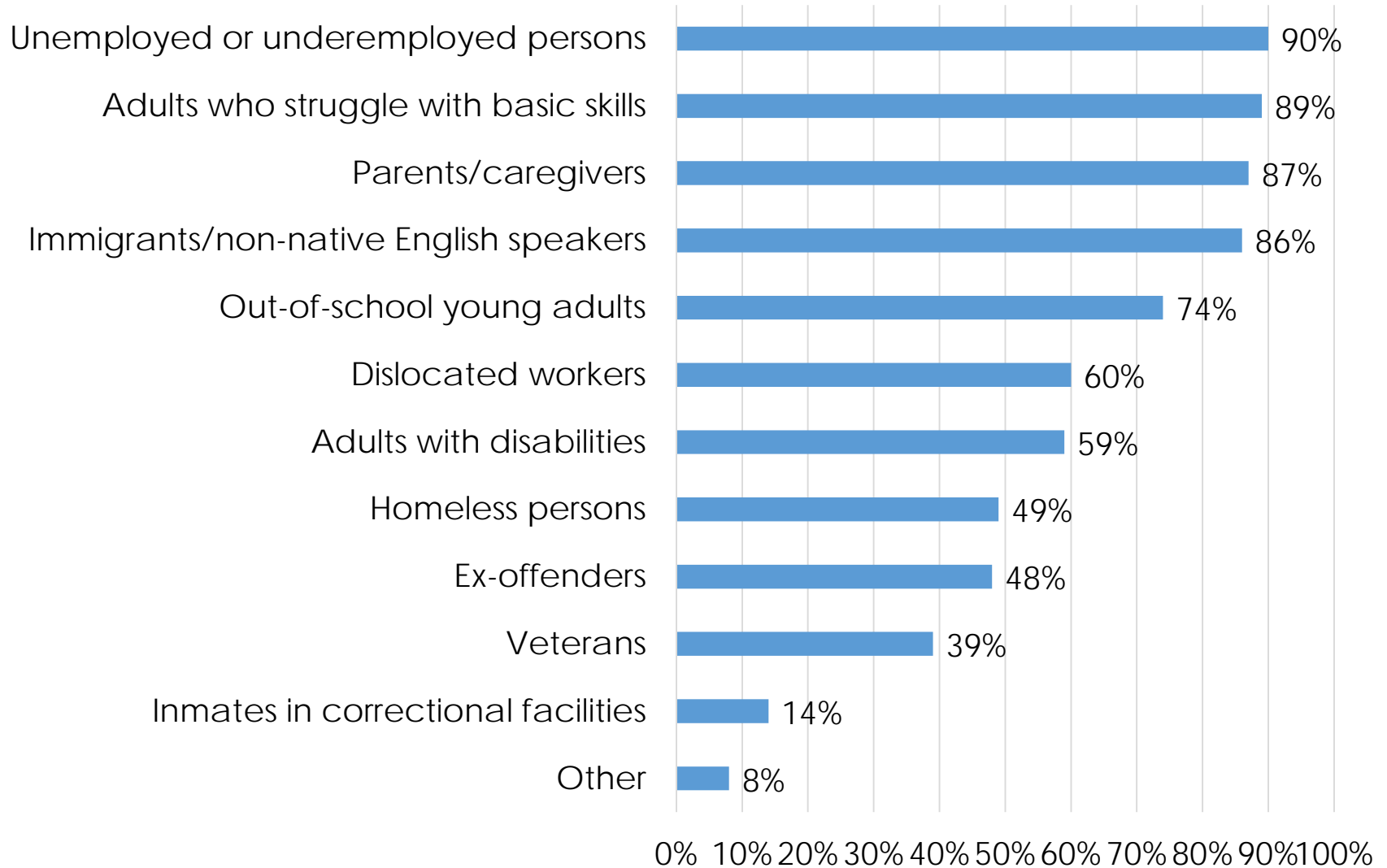
- Adults with the greatest barriers to education and employment are least able to access CP classes.
- If no HS/GED required, minimum TABE = 5.0 to 9.0

|                           | JARC                                                                                         | Malcolm X                                                                                                                                       | Alliance                                                                         | Houston Comm. College                                           | Lindsey Hopkins                                                                                                                          | Miami Dade College                                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| HS/GED Diploma Required   | No                                                                                           | No                                                                                                                                              | Yes                                                                              | Yes                                                             | No                                                                                                                                       | No (Business)                                           |
| Minimum Test Score (TABE) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bridge: 5.0</li> <li>• Other: 7.0 or 9.0</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career Fdns.: 3.0</li> <li>• Bridge: 6.0 (R), 5.0 (M)</li> <li>• Gateway : 9.0 (R), 8.0 (M)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6.0 (R &amp; M); 4.0 (lang.)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6.0 to 11.9</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CASAS Level 3</li> <li>• Exit: TABE 9 or 10; pass GED or 2 industry-recognized cert.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9.0</li> </ul> |

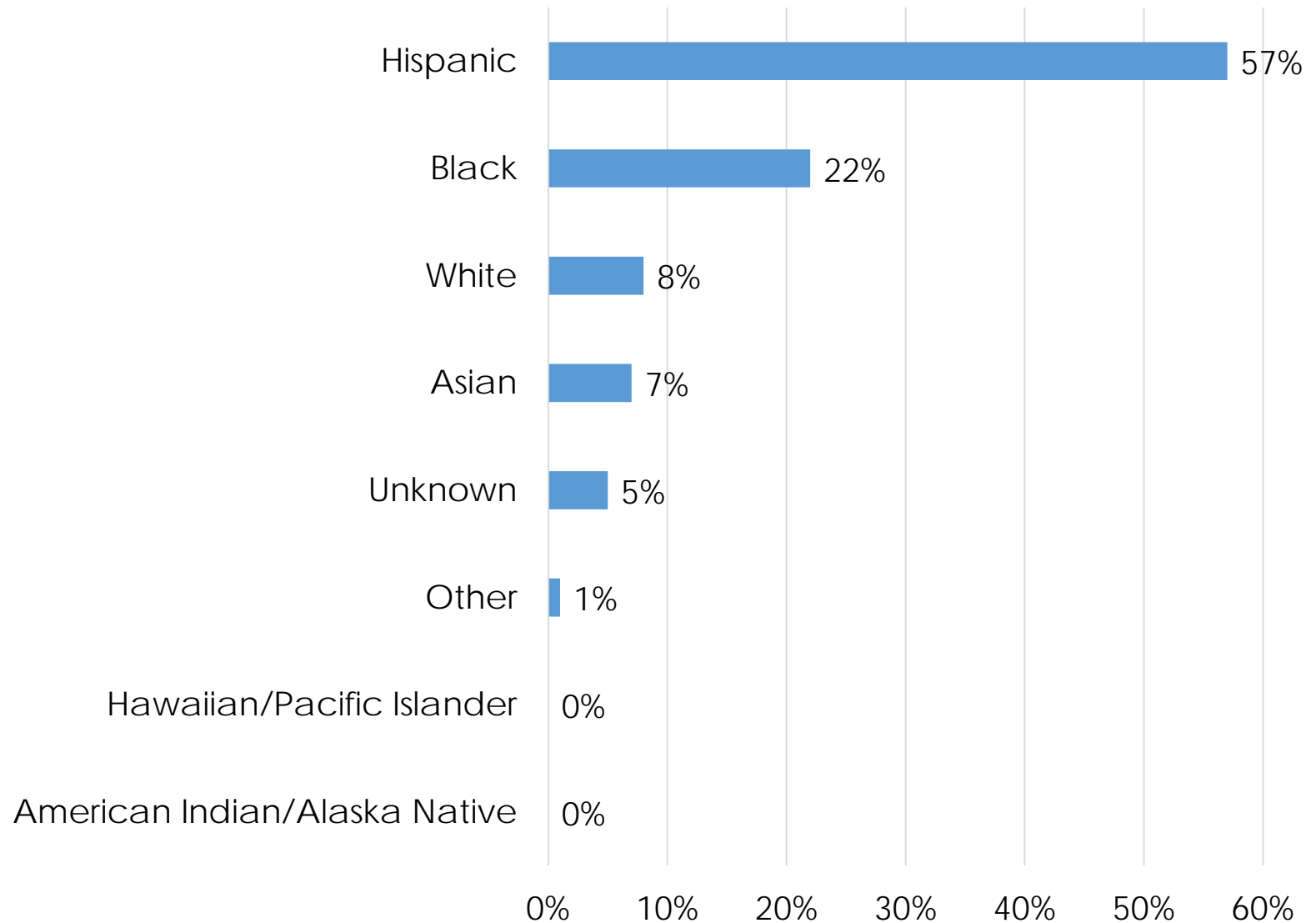


# Survey Findings: Student Characteristics

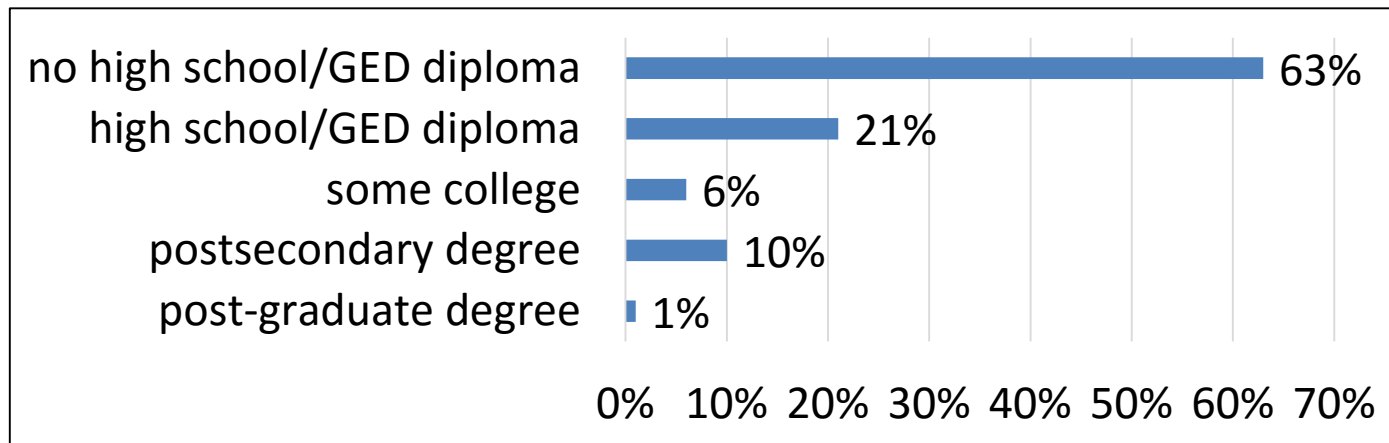
## Types of Students Served (n=36 to 104)



## Race/Ethnicity of U.S.-Born CP Students



- ~67% foreign-born
- ~59% women
- Economic vulnerability:
  - ~45% unemployed
  - ~44% receiving public assistance
- Educational attainment



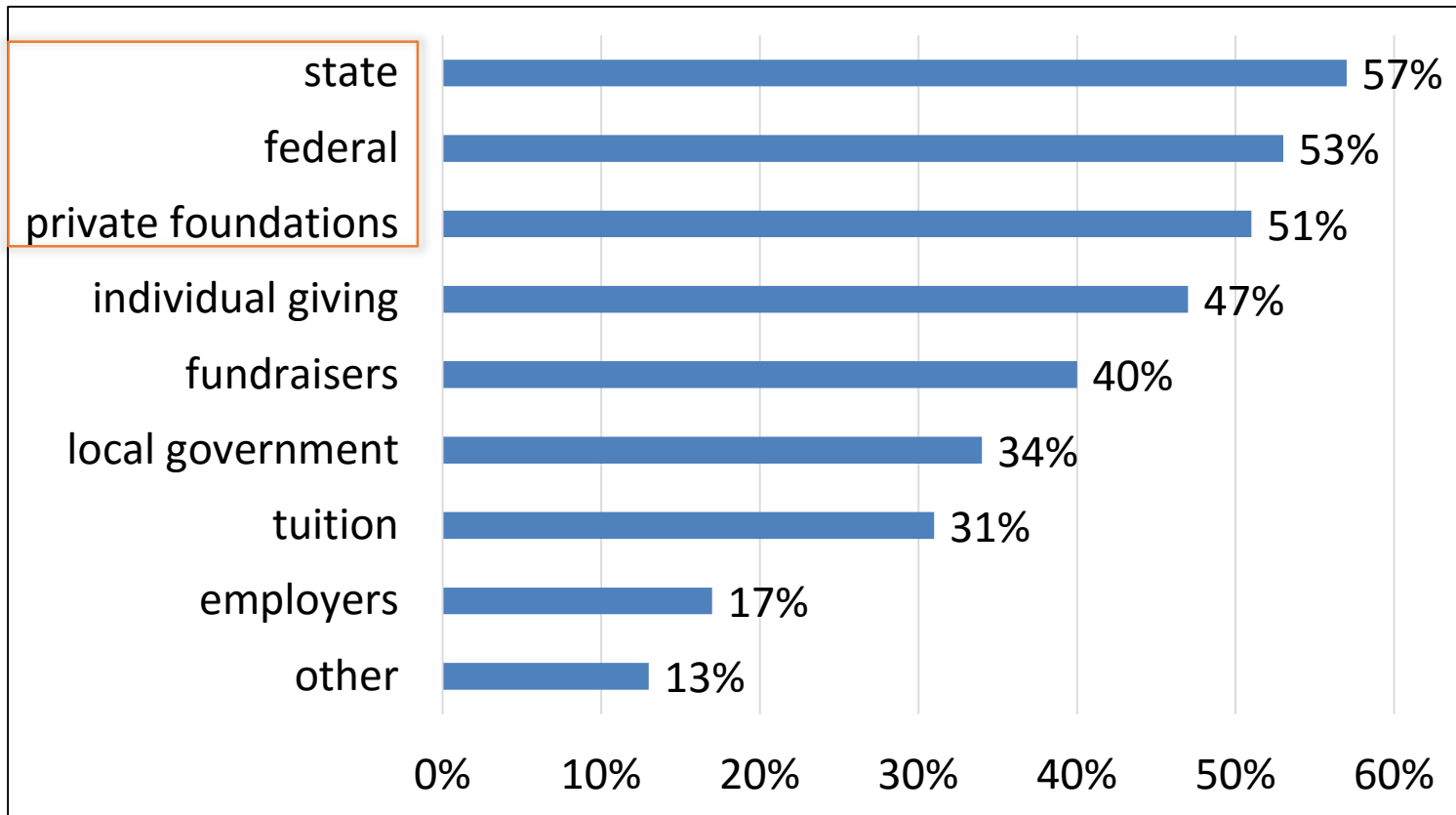
- NRS level: ~69% beginning to low intermediate (ESL or ABE)
- Median enrollment = 128 hours, 14.6 weeks





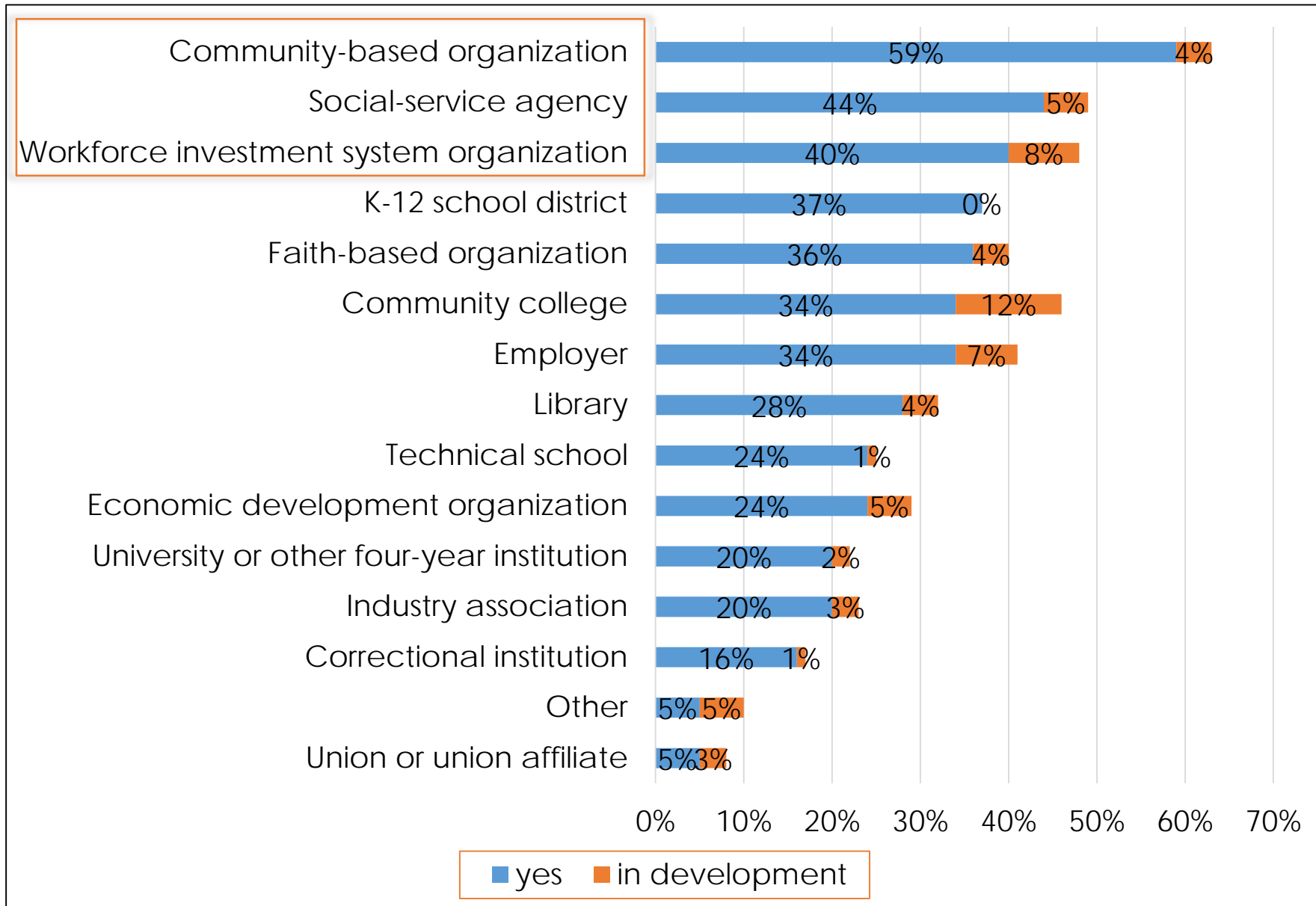
# Survey Findings: Program Design & Delivery

- Funding sources (n=40 to 101); median = 3 sources

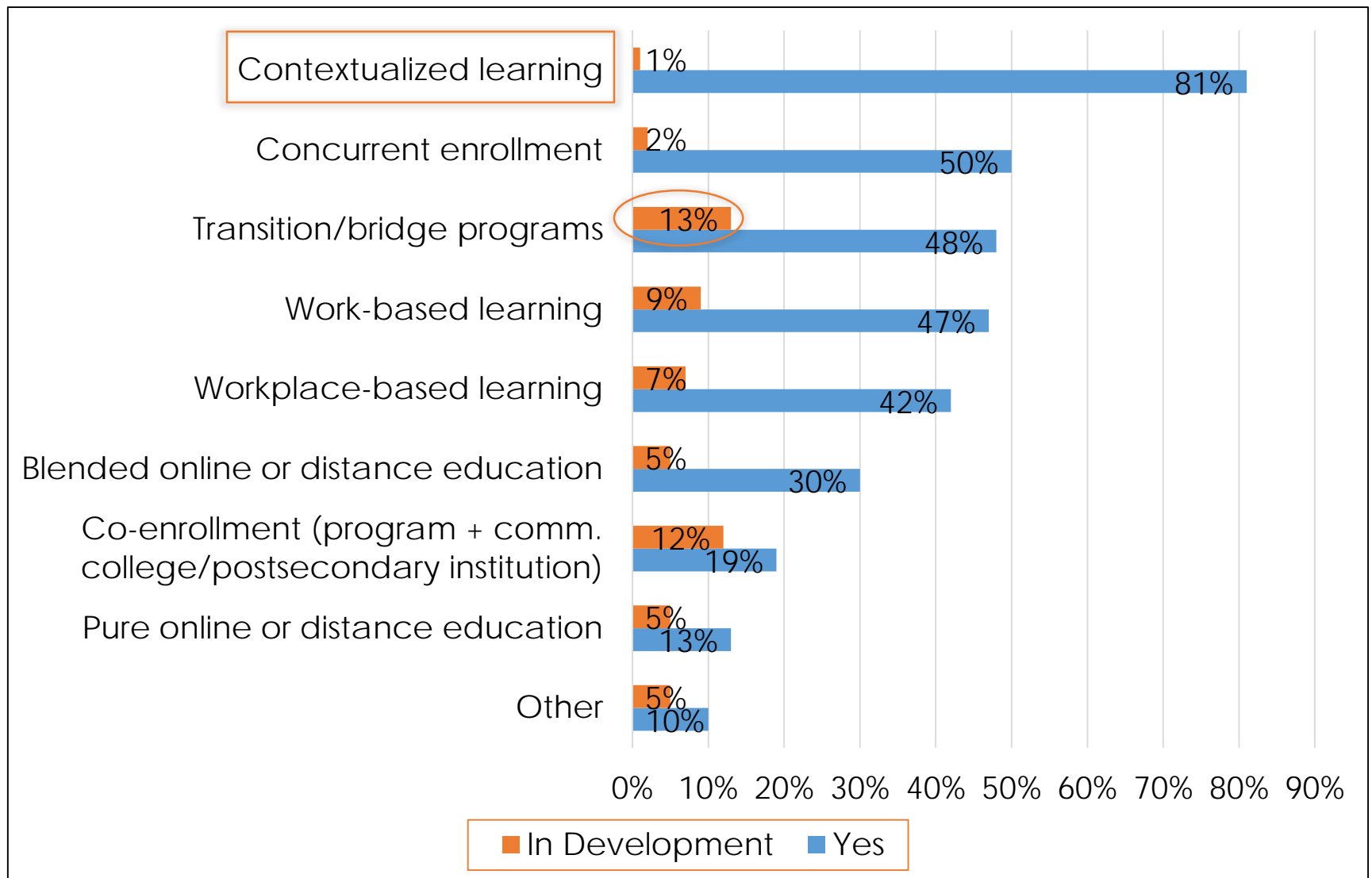


- Chicago: significantly more likely to have funding from federal & state government, foundations, fundraisers, & individual giving

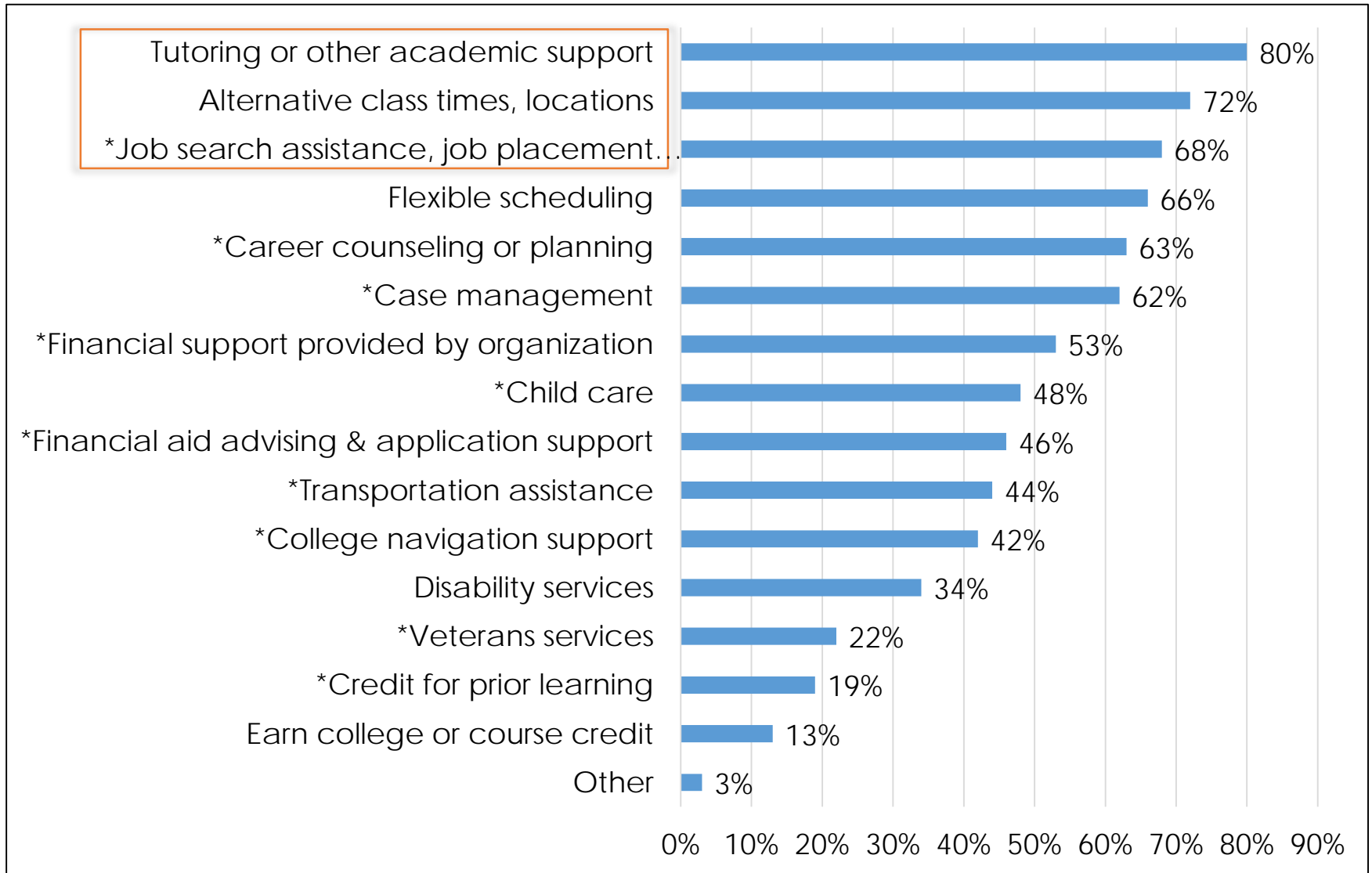
- CP partners (n = 43 to 97); median = 3 partners



■ Instructional approaches (n = 41 to 98)



■ Support services (n = 33 to 101); median = 7 services

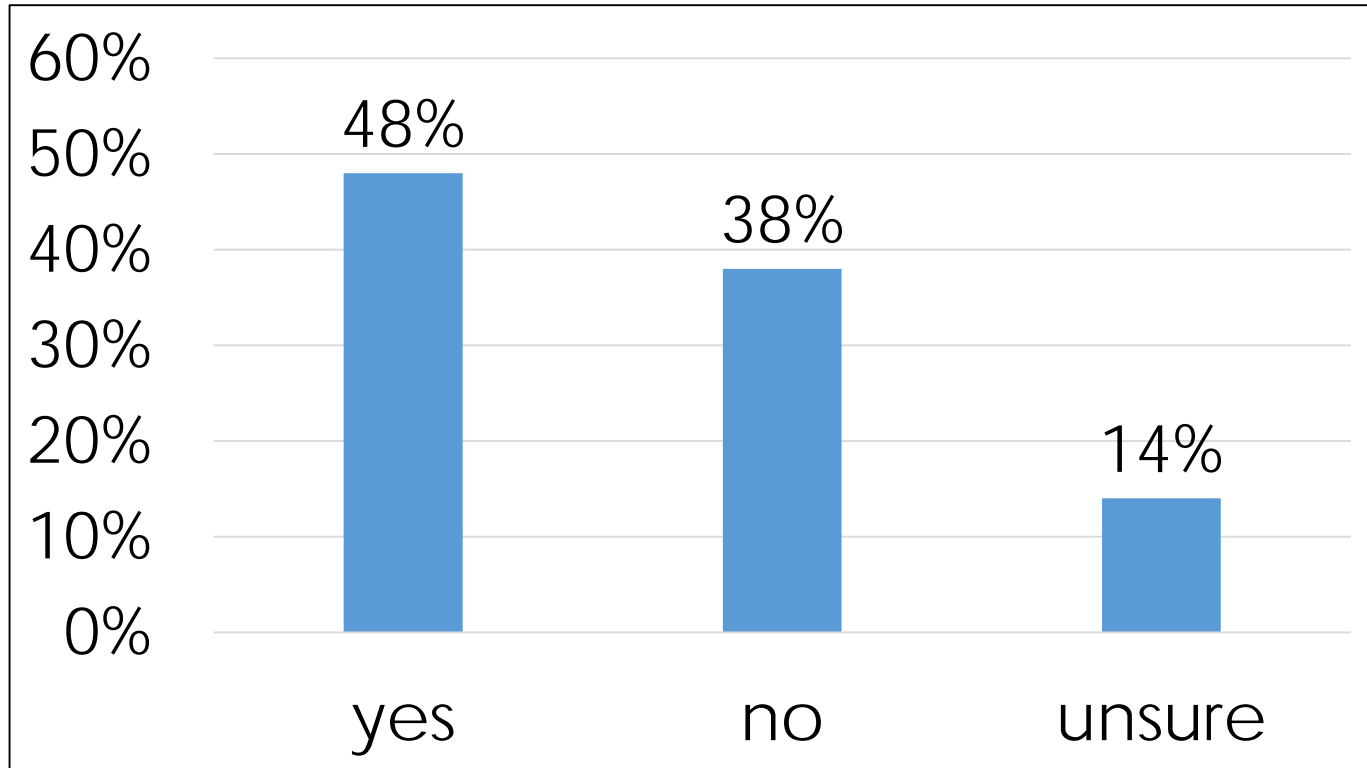


\*significantly more likely at agencies that said they provide CP

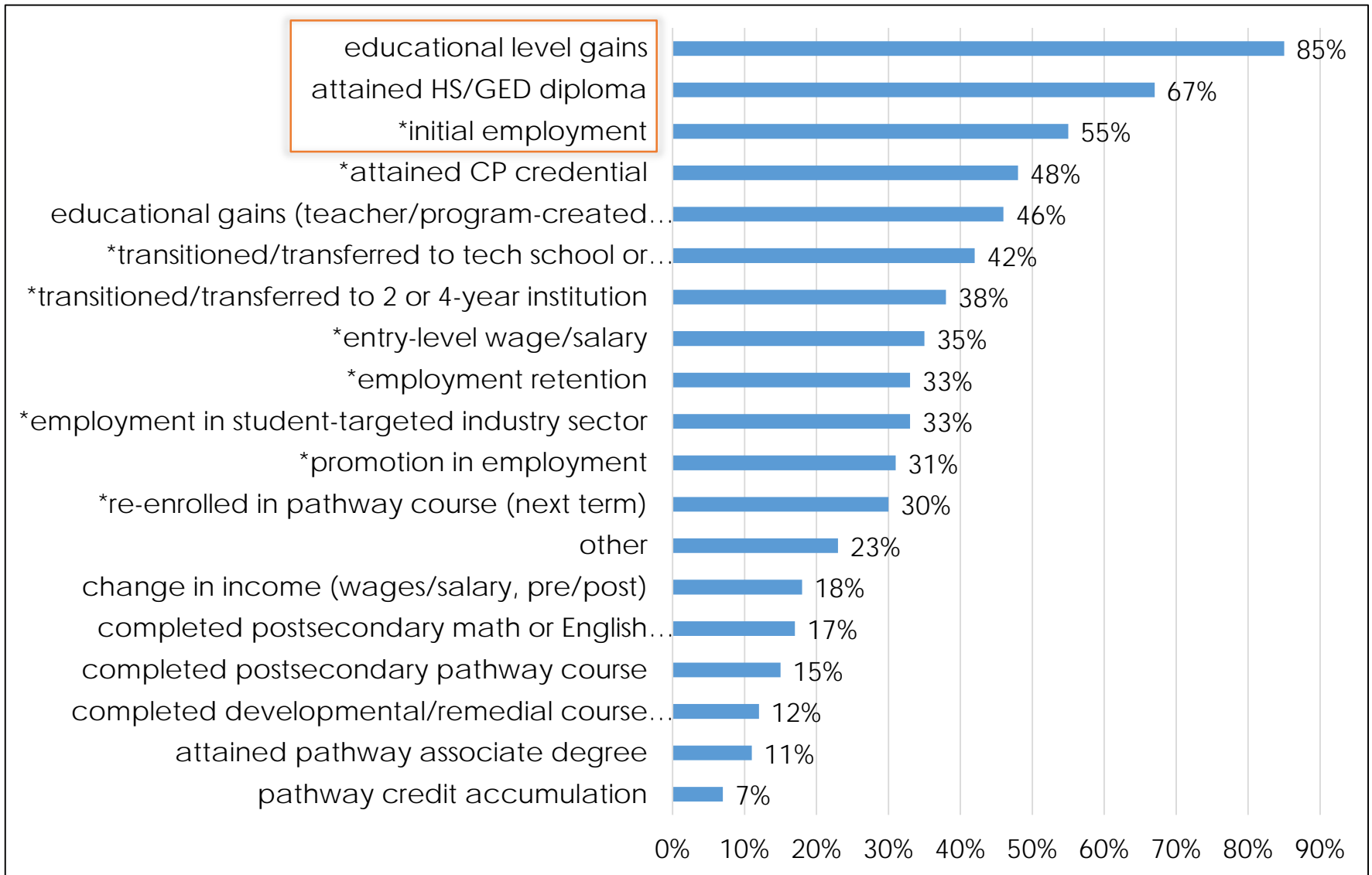


# Survey Findings: Data Collection Systems & Outcome Measures

- Among agencies that offer CP, fewer than ½ track data specifically on CP students (n=84)



- No single measure was used by all agencies (n=33 to 100)

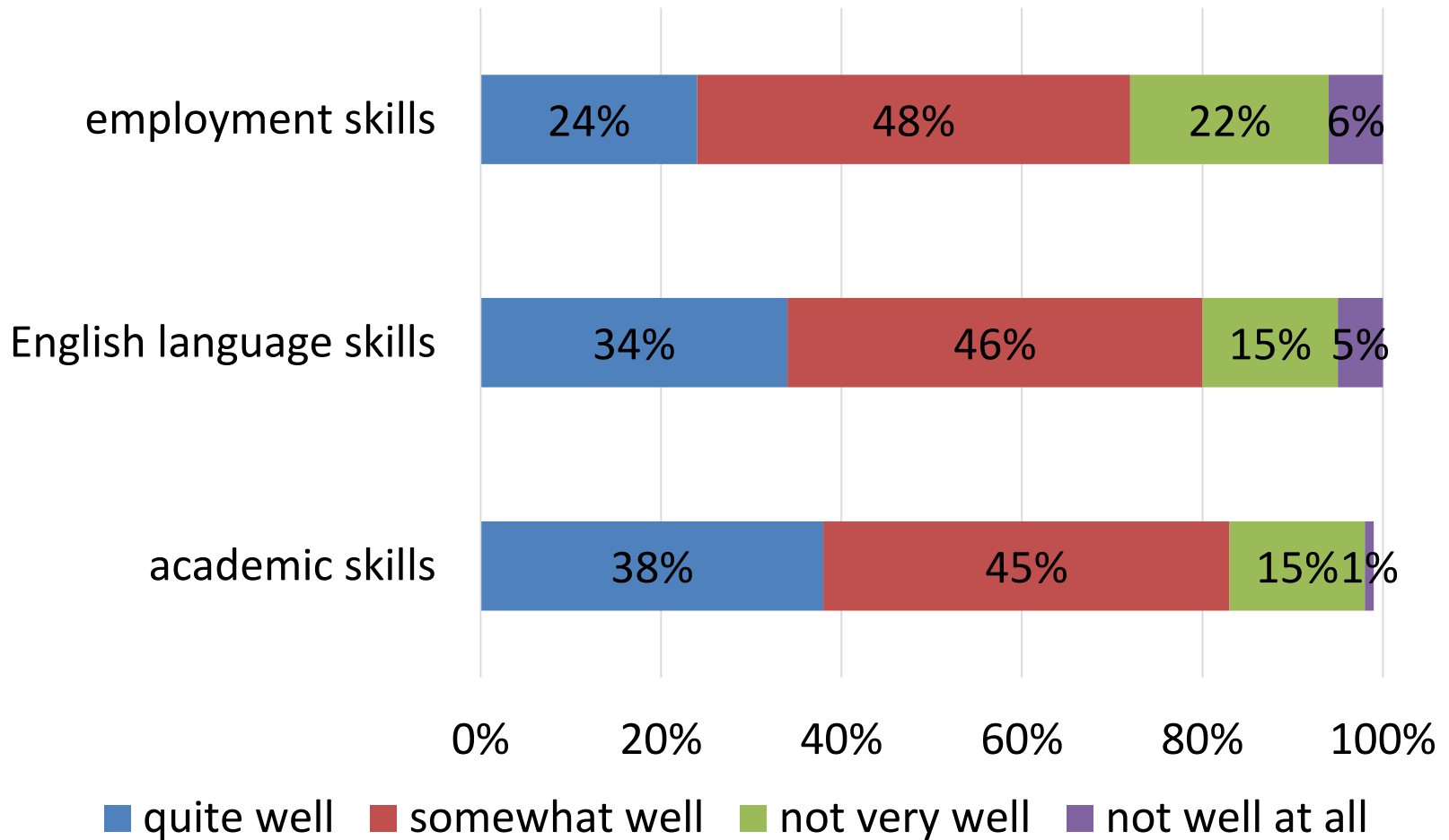


\* significantly more likely at agencies that said they provide CP



- Perceptions of outcome measures (n=85 to 86)

How well do measures you use captures the gains and achievements of students with the weakest...



# Focus Groups

- Guiding research question
  - Within each city, which policies and practices shape CP programming for under-educated and immigrant adults, and coordination across providers and systems?

- Participants (18 agencies)

| <b>Chicago</b>                | <b>Houston</b>                                | <b>Miami</b>                                                    |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| City Colleges of Chicago      | Alliance for Multicultural Community Services | American Adult and Community Education Center (school district) |
| Erie Neighborhood House       | Harris County Dept. of Education              | D.A. Dorsey Technical College (school district)                 |
| Greater West Town Partnership | Houston Center for Literacy                   | Lindsey Hopkins Technical College (school district)             |
| Heartland Alliance            | Memorial Assistance Ministries                | Miami Dade College                                              |
| Instituto del Progreso Latino | Neighborhood Centers                          | Miami-Dade Department of Corrections                            |
| Jane Addams Resource Corp.    |                                               | OIC of South Florida                                            |
|                               |                                               | South Dade Technical College (school district)                  |

# Insights into Policies

- Dedicated resources for CP have been helpful
  - Funder investment in CP system can generate interest by other funders (Shifting Gears, Joyce Foundation)
  - Florida Integrated Career and Academic Preparation Program (FICAPS) has helped FL adult ed agencies develop CP
  - Texas Innovative Adult Career Education grant

# Insights into Policies: Challenges

- Differing funder requirements can complicate cross-program referrals
  - Staff are unsure if individuals will meet the eligibility requirements → reluctant to refer
- Defining CP narrowly or not at all has implications:
  - CP program design differs based on funder: workforce versus academic orientation → drives who can be served
  - IL agencies required to have bridge programs, but wanted clearer definitions and support structures

# Insights into Policies: Challenges

- Defining CP narrowly or not at all has implications:
  - In TX, CP programs were required and aimed at recognized certificates in high-demand occupations
    - ESL students who got other jobs as a first step didn't count toward job growth target
    - Unintended consequence → pressure to recruit higher-level, highly skilled ESL students (hard to find)

# Insights into Policies: Challenges

- Issues with enrollment (examples)
  - Rapidly increasing enrollment targets on short notice
  - Choose between meeting enrollment target versus providing CP (time-intensive, expensive)
  - High schools in FL penalized for withdrawing potential dropouts into adult ed programs

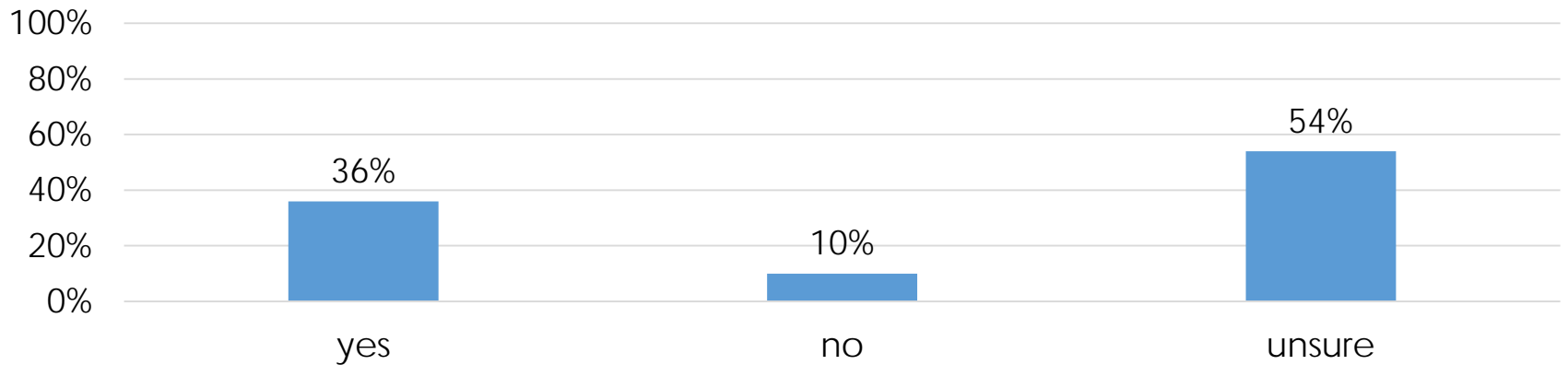
# Insights into Citywide Coordination

- Agencies are coordinating on CP more at the micro and meso levels than the macro level.
  - Micro: individual relationships across organizations; coordination within some large systems (community college, school district)
    - Coordination is often more personal than institutional
  - Meso: organization-to-organization partnerships and small sub-sets of organizations such as funder networks
    - Some coordination if programs work in a consortium or have the same funder
  - Macro: city-wide mechanisms in which many organizations participate and coordinate across institutions and funding streams – rare

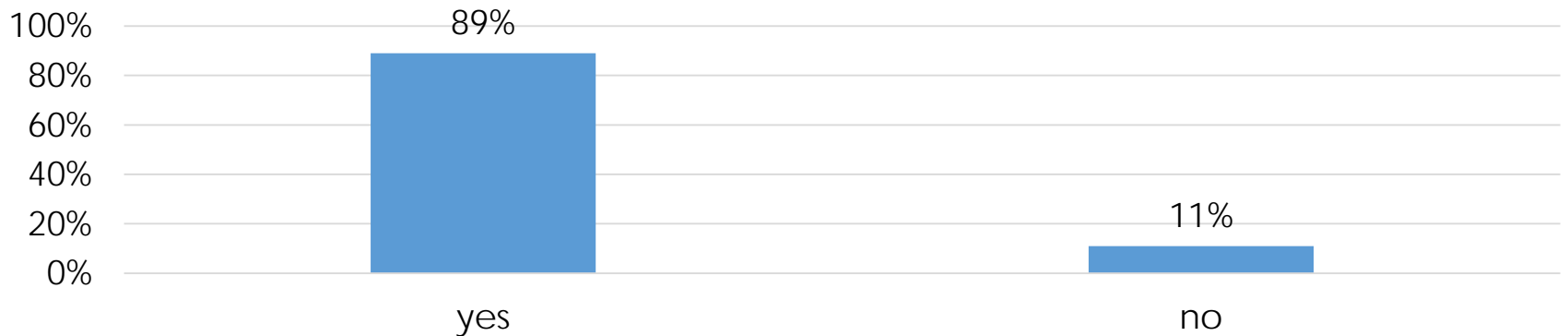


- Career pathways coordination

Are there any mechanisms for CP coordination & planning across organizations in your city? (n = 102)



If "yes": Does your organization currently participate in CP planning & coordination across organizations? (n = 37)



# Insights into Citywide Coordination

- Limited resources for CP cause competition, which may affect coordination across providers
- Coordination within community college CP is emerging
  - E.g., communication & coordination between career/technical teachers and adult ed/support teachers

# Discuss

- How do the survey findings compare to your experience with career pathways in PA?
- Which findings...
  - are surprising?
  - confirm what you already knew or suspected?
  - are encouraging?
  - are concerning?
- What kinds of topics should we research on adult education career pathways for the future?

# For More Information...

- Visit our project website & view the presentation slides:
  - <http://adultpathways.psu.edu/> (for slides: click on “updates” tab)
- Visit the Institute of Education Sciences website:  
<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/grantsearch/details.asp?ID=1642>
- Contact the PI, Dr. Esther Prins
  - [esp150@psu.edu](mailto:esp150@psu.edu); 814-865-0597
- These are tentative, preliminary findings. Please do not quote or cite without permission from the PI.
- Acknowledgements:
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