



EL PASO COUNTY

*AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT
CORONAVIRUS STATE & LOCAL FISCAL RECOVERY FUNDS*

NONPROFIT ASSISTANCE FUNDS

*COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS FINDINGS
APRIL 2022*

***AS PREPARED BY DAVID PEREZ, BARRACUDA PUBLIC RELATIONS, &
PASO DEL NORTE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION***

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Introduction & Summary

El Paso County's (County) American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds distribution structure is designed to meet the County's needs and comply with federal regulations. As a result, El Paso County set aside \$9.7 million of these funds to support the County's nonprofit organizations. Before making funding decisions, the County contracted the Paso del Norte Community Foundation (Foundation) to research, review, and advise the County on best practices and funding recommendations. In turn, the PdNCF contracted Barracuda Public Relations (BPR) to coordinate community listening sessions.

With help from BPR, the County held community listening sessions in each of its four precincts to engage the public in identifying our community's high-priority needs and developing a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). This report identifies the data gathered from these sessions, which may help make better-informed decisions and to include the public in these decisions.

Methods

Between March 24 and April 18, 2022, community input was gathered through listening sessions and an online survey. These sessions and the survey were designed to listen to El Pasoans and use their input to help develop the NOFO. The listening sessions were open to the public and addressed specific topics relevant to the ARPA funds and El Paso County.

Topics and Themes Covered in Listening Sessions and Online Survey

Before the data collection, BPR and County representatives identified four topics and 4 themes within each topic. These topics and themes were used to create facilitator guides and questions, comment cards, and an online survey.

Topic 1: Health

Health encompassed all physical and mental health interventions that improve people's length and quality of life within El Paso County. Specific themes were: 1) maintaining a healthy lifestyle, 2) prevention and mitigation of COVID-19, 3) reducing morbidities, and 4) financing medical treatment.

Topic 2: Business Development

Business development encompassed services and programs improving the economic well-being and quality of life, including business retention and expansion programs, business support services, and long-term initiatives addressing the impact COVID-19 has had on the local economy. Specific themes were: 1) educational resources and training, 2) business assistance programs, 3) workforce development and placement, and 4) business retention and expansion.

Topic 3: Community Assistance

Community Assistance encompassed all interventions that support and/or improve community services within El Paso County. Specific themes were: 1) housing security, 2) food security, 3) child care, and 4) animal welfare programs.

Topic 4: Capital and Government Projects

Capital and Government Projects encompassed all topics regarding purchasing of buildings, land, plus construction, and other topics not covered explicitly at different tables. Specific themes were: 1) floodwater improvement, 2) broadband, 3) capital improvement projects, and 4) building acquisitions.

Listening Sessions

Listening sessions were held from March 24 through April 7, and all were between the hours of 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM. Locations were based on the precinct, availability, and ease of access.

Table 1. Listening Session Locations and Dates

Precinct	Location	Date
1	Montana Vista Fire Station	March 29 th , 2022
2	El Paso County Coliseum	March 24 th , 2022
3	San Elizario High School	March 30 th , 2022
4	Canutillo High School	April 7 th , 2022

With input from Mr. Perez (Foundation Consultant) and the Foundation, BPR determined that a "charrette" style would be most appropriate, where one topic at a time is covered in-depth, with a facilitator and note-taker leading groups of people as they rotate from one table/topic to the next. There was a total of 5 tables, where Table 1 was the "Welcome Station," and the remaining tables were dedicated discussion tables labeled 1) Health, 2) Business Development and Support, 3) Community Assistance, and 4) Capital and Government Projects.

Each community listening session started with participants signing in and receiving a name tag. Participants were free to sit at any of the four discussion tables. County staff, an elected official, and BPR staff opened each listening session with an overview of ARPA, how the County has already earmarked most ARPA funding, and the purpose of the listening session. The online survey was promoted at this time as well.

Once the table discussion started, there were introductions and then three distinct phases, all facilitated by County staff with a BPR employee taking notes. In Phase 1, participants discussed the topic at hand with facilitators guiding each table to prompt discussion. Participants were able to provide input verbally and via written comments. In

Phase 2, participants completed a comment card to rank what they saw as priorities within the table topic. In Phase 3, at the end of the evening, participants completed a final comment card to rank their priorities for each of the four topics. The comment cards included an "Other" category, allowing participants to select a topic/theme not included in the charrette process. Note that the response scale was from "1" or "FIRST" being "THE MOST IMPORTANT" to 4 or "FOURTH" being the "THE LEAST IMPORTANT."

	FIRST	SECOND	THIRD	FOURTH
MAINTAIN A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
PREVENTION AND MITIGATION OF COVID-19.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
REDUCE COMORBIDITIES (DIABETES, HEART DISEASE, OBESITY, HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, ETC.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
FINANCING MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR INDIGENTS.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
OTHER _____ _____ _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>


1 BEING THE MOST IMPORTANT AND 4 BEING THE LEAST IMPORTANT

Figure 1. Comment Card Example


Data gathered from the listening sessions included butcher paper comments, facilitator and note-keeper notes, and comment card responses. Qualitative input (i.e., butcher paper written notes & facilitator notes taken from verbal comments) was analyzed using software that identified recurring words (e.g., "community" was mentioned six times), which were then populated in to a word cloud (a visual representation of text data). Comment card responses were managed and analyzed through Excel to produce the figures presented.

Online Survey

To increase community involvement, BPR released an online survey, which opened on the listening sessions' first day (i.e., March 24) and remained open until April 18. It was widely promoted on social media and hosted on the PdNCF's website. As an incentive to share their opinion, participants who completed the brief survey had the option to enter a raffle to win one of three \$100 Amazon gift cards. To foster consistency, the survey included the same questions and choices as those found in the individual and overall comment cards from the listening sessions and NOFO design-specific questions. As with the comment card responses, data was managed and analyzed via Excel.

* 13. Of the four topics mentioned above (Health, Business Development, Community Assistance, and Capital and Government Projects), which is the one that you believe should receive priority for ARPA funding? 

	1	2	3	4
Health	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business Development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community Assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Capital and Government Projects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

* 14. What type of organizations should be allowed to apply for these funds? 

- 501(c)3 only
- 501(c)3 and faith-based organizations providing social services to the broader community
- 501(c)3, faith-based organizations, and local government entities that support the broader community

Figure 2. Online Survey Snippet

Results

In total, **231** responses were collected from the comment cards and the online survey, and dozens of comments were noted from the listening sessions. To reiterate, the scale for the responses was from "1" or "FIRST" being "THE MOST IMPORTANT" to 4 or "FOURTH" being the "THE LEAST IMPORTANT."

Listening Sessions Quantitative Results

Listening sessions provided in-depth views of participants throughout the County, and over 100 people participated in these events. Data were gathered on the importance of each topic and for every theme within. These results reflect how people that attended the listening sessions ranked their choices on comment cards.

Table 2. Attendance of Listening Sessions

Location	Attendance
Precinct 1	16
Precinct 2	29
Precinct 3	23
Precinct 4	37
Total attendance	105

Overall Topic Rankings

Participants were asked to rank the four main topics from most to least important during the community listening sessions. There were 83 responses across all four precincts, with most responses coming from precincts 2 and 4. On average, participants saw Health as the most important topic, with 37 participants considering it the most important topic. Health was followed closely by Community Assistance. On average, capital and Government Projects and Business Development and Support were ranked substantially lower. For the latter, only 16 considered it the most important factor. All of the written in topics were included (or could be considered) under the other topics (e.g., housing falls under Community Assistance).

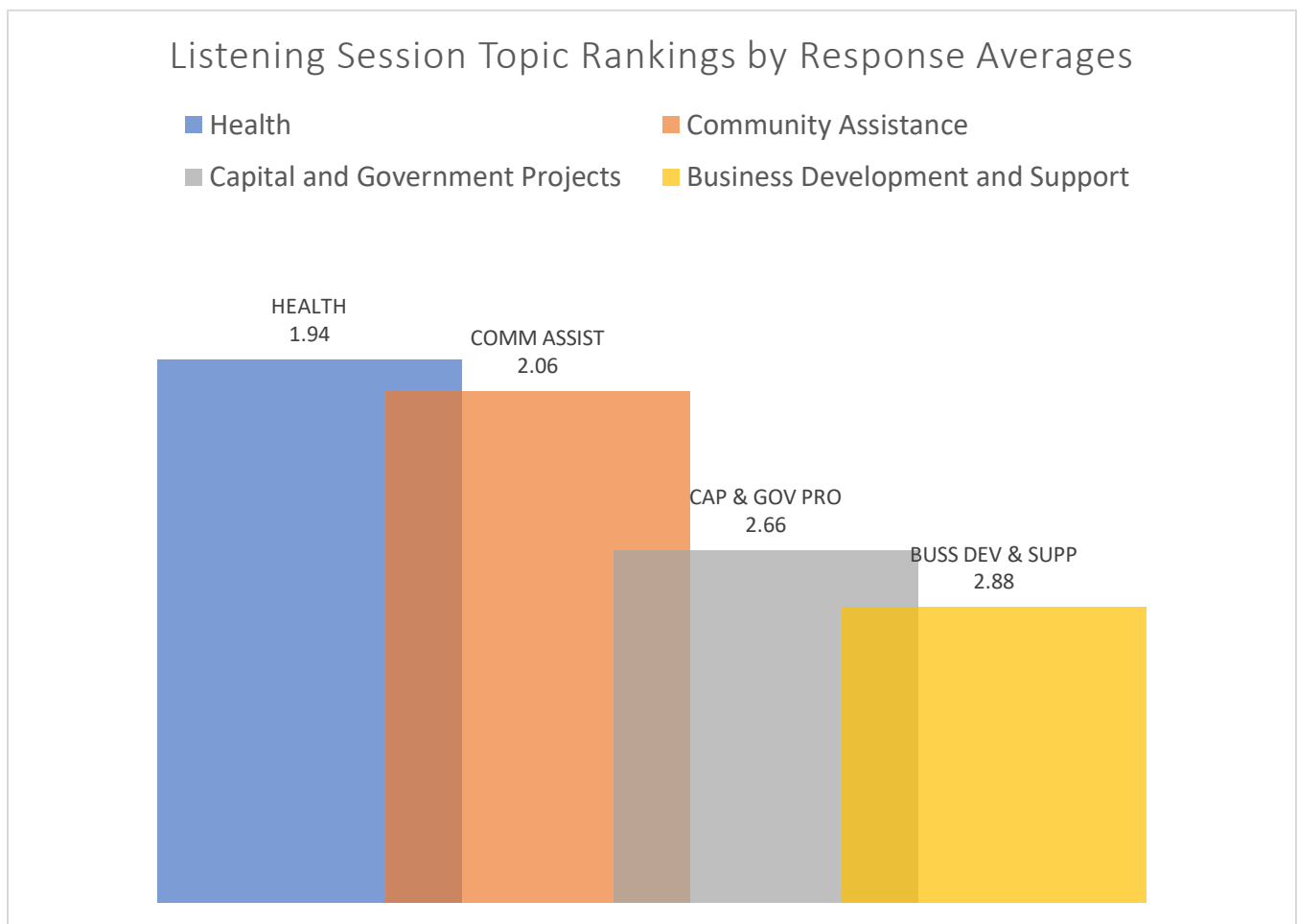


Figure 3. Rankings of importance across all four topics as gathered from comment cards in community listening sessions, ranked from First to Fourth, based on their level of importance. The importance value was the average across all responses.

Health

From the overall rankings, Health was considered the most important topic. There were 74 valid responses gathered from the community listening sessions. Of the four identified themes, "Reduce Comorbidities" was seen as the most important, with only seven people considering it the least important. "Maintain a Healthy Lifestyle" was the second most important. At the same time, people saw the "Prevention and Mitigation of COVID-19" as the least important, with only eight people seeing it as the most important topic. For written in responses that did not fall within the identified themes, mental health and substance abuse treatment came up several times.

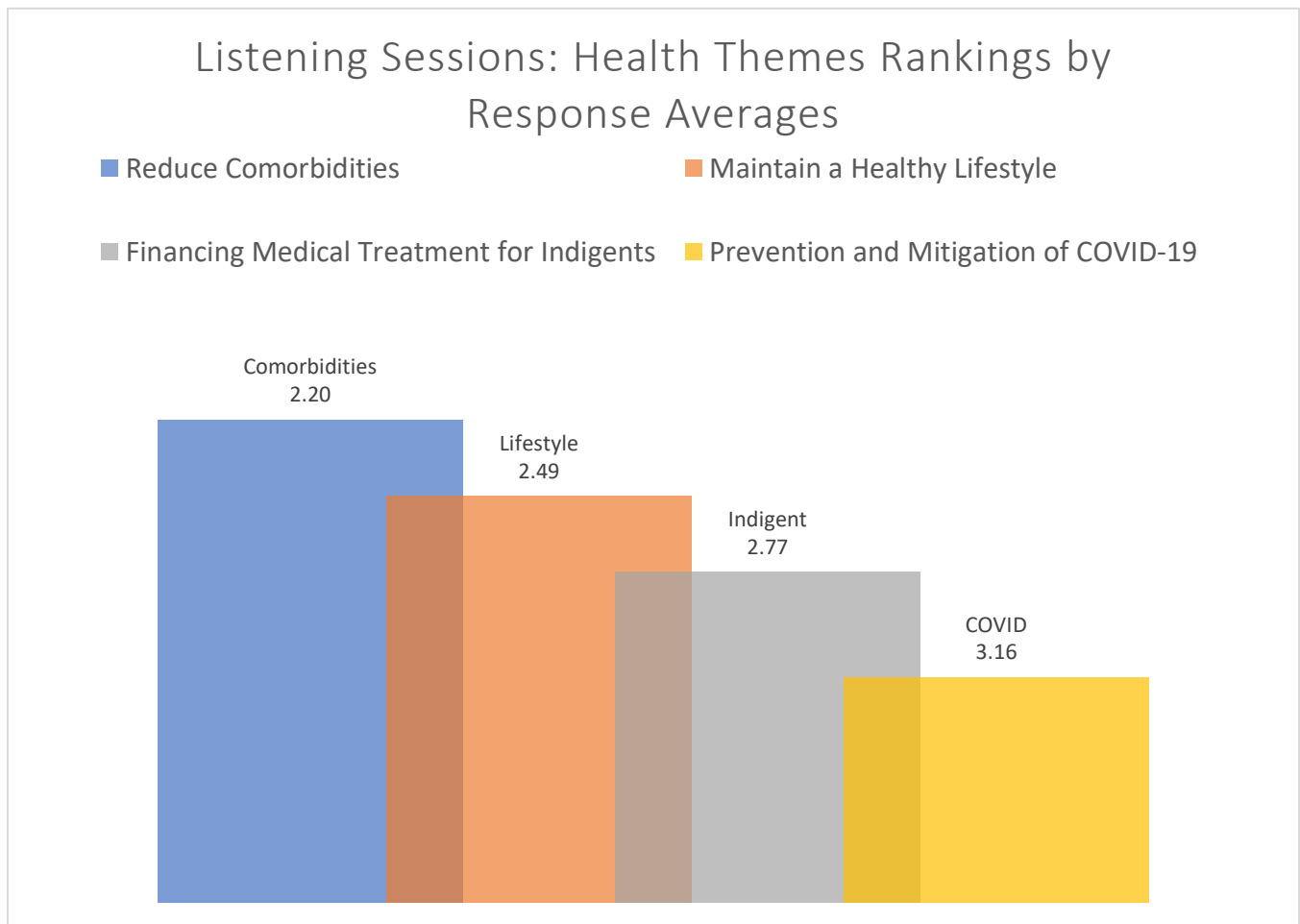


Figure 4. Rankings of importance across identified Health themes as gathered from comment cards in community listening sessions.

Community Assistance

Community Assistance was also highly ranked. There were 77 valid responses gathered from the community listening sessions for this topic. Of the four identified themes, "Food Security" and "Housing Security" were essentially seen the same as the most important topic. "Animal Welfare Programs" was seen as the least important theme, with only three people seeing this as the most important. Most of the written in options could be considered across multiple topics (e.g., diabetes education, water and waste, and building improvements).

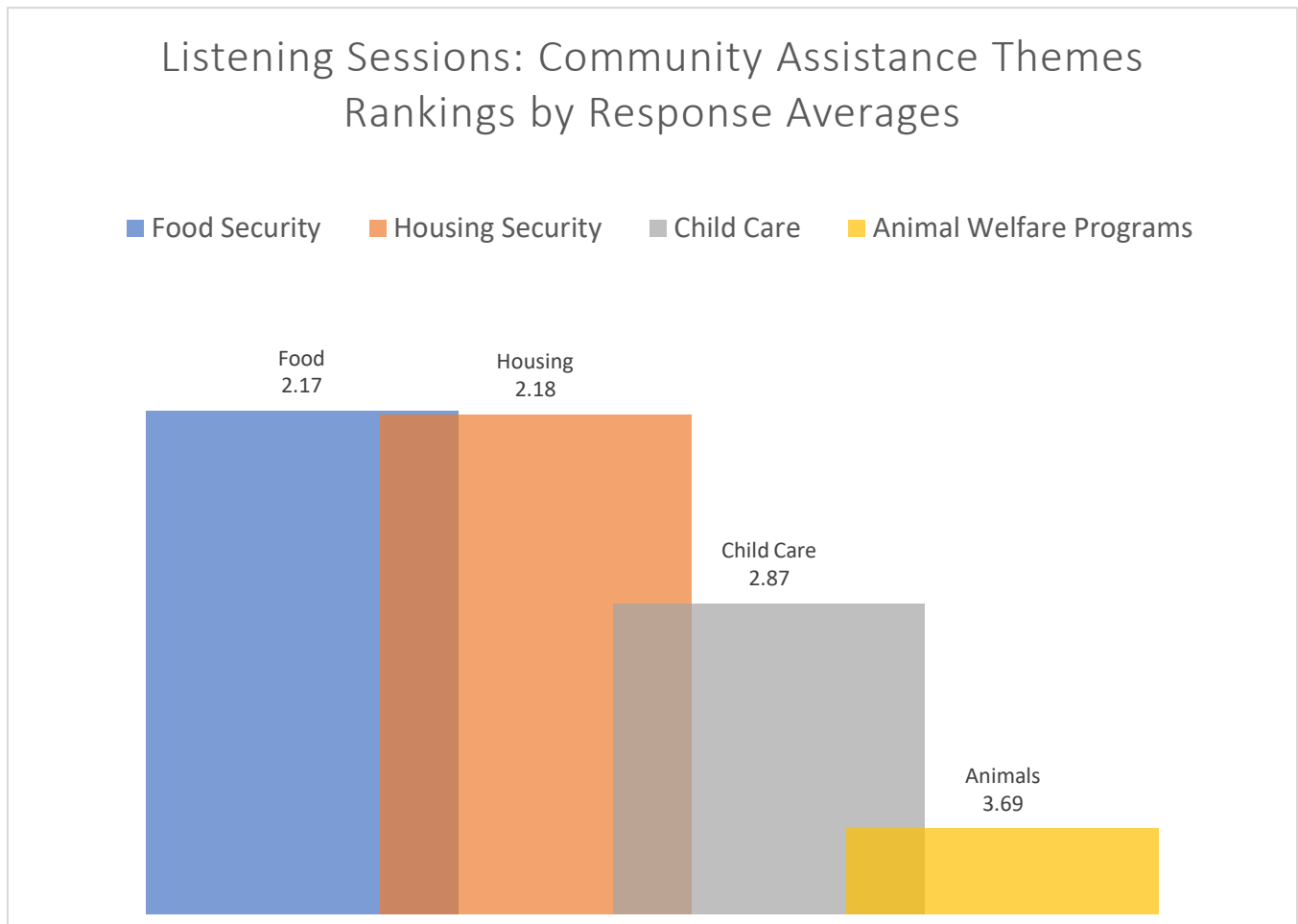


Figure 5. Rankings of importance across identified Community Assistance themes as gathered from comment cards in community listening sessions.

Capital and Government Projects

While the Capital and Government Projects category was not ranked as highly as the prior two, there was some interest in the community, especially for the "Capital Improvement Projects" theme; approximately 37% of people saw this theme as the most important. "Floodwater Improvement" and "Broadband" rank average was close; however, more people listed the former as their first choice (24 vs. 16). Of the written in choices, water-related themes (sewage, water, wastewater, drainage, etc.) came up 10 times, with the majority ranking it as their first choice.

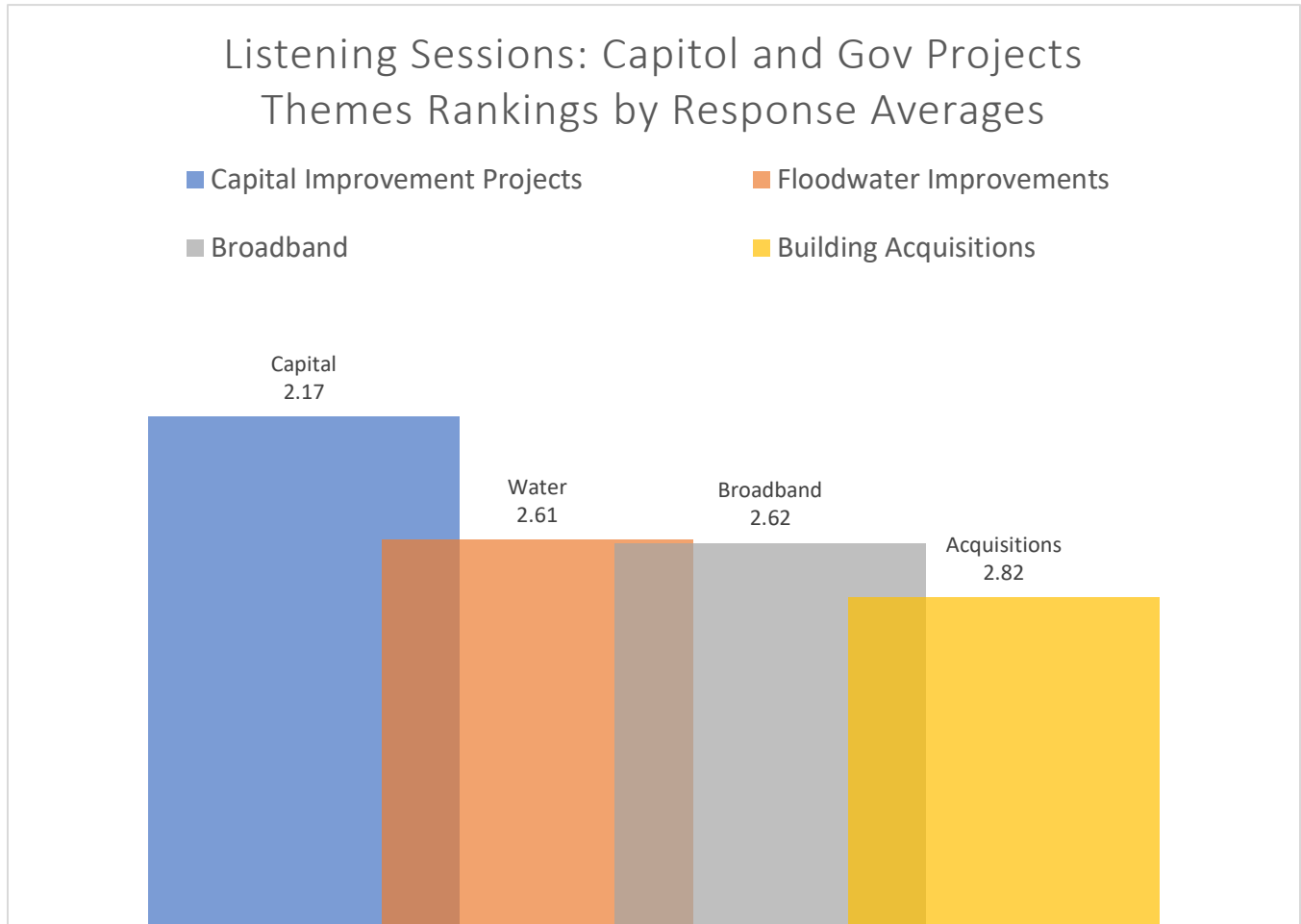


Figure 6. Rankings of importance across identified Cap & Gov Projects themes as gathered from comment cards in community listening sessions.

Business Development and Support

Business development was seen as the least important category, but participants did show interest across most of the themes identified. Most people considered "Education Resources and Trainings" the most important theme, with 35 people making it their first choice. "Business Assistance" and "Workforce Development and Placement" were closely averaged, with the majority choosing one or the other as their number two choice. "Business Retention" was often seen as the least important, with 33 people marking it as four. The written in choices included non-topic related options or were not ranked.

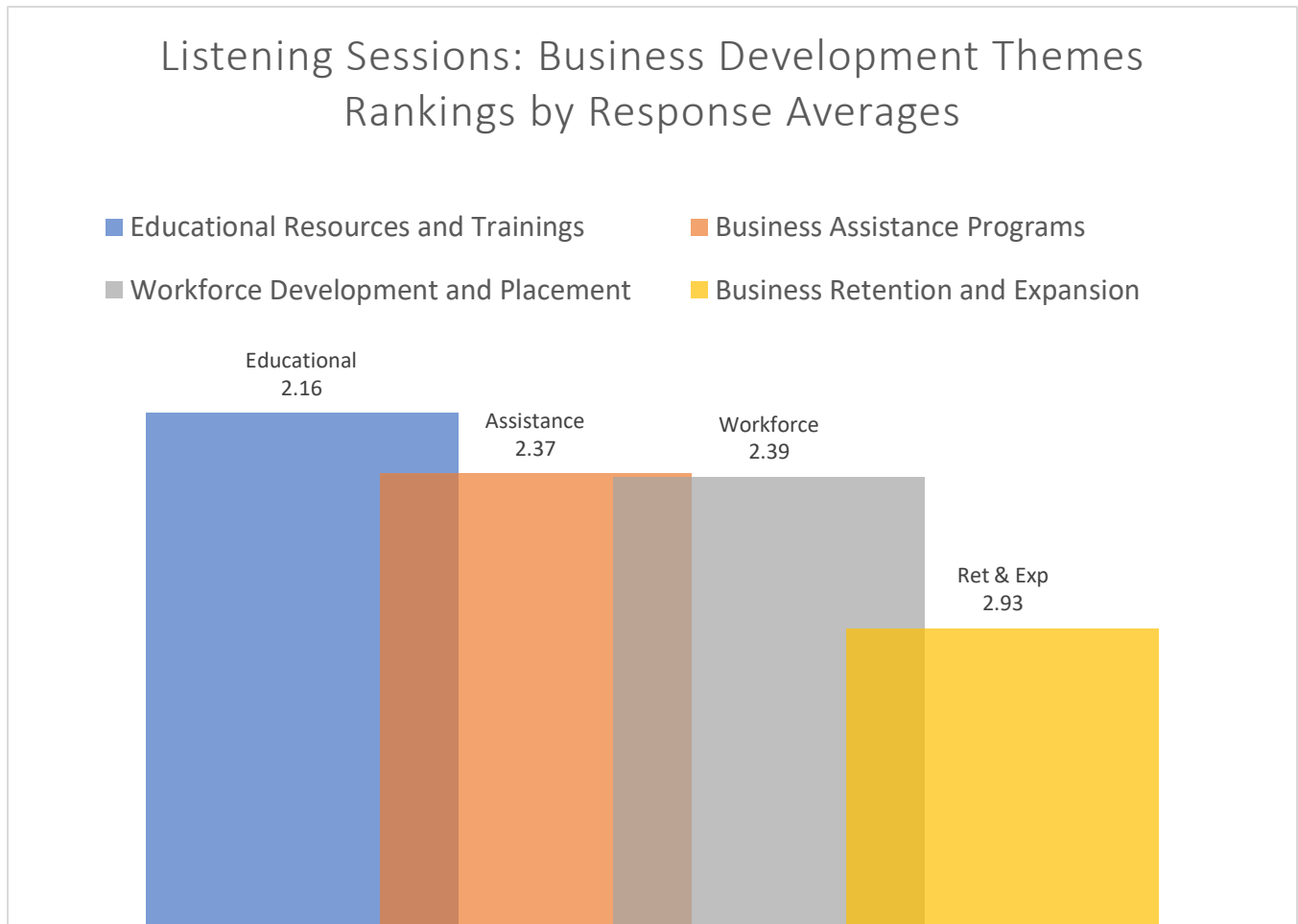


Figure 7. Rankings of importance across identified Business Development themes as gathered from comment cards in community listening sessions.

Listening Sessions Qualitative Results

As noted, participants at the listening sessions were allowed to verbalize and write down comments. Each precinct was represented by different people with different thoughts, but there was some agreement across all four precincts. Some of the major themes identified by BPR staff were:

- Nonprofits organizations should be encouraged to apply together for funding and receive extra consideration. This would encourage collaboration instead of competition within the nonprofit community.
- Look to help the communities outside of the city limits
- Transportation for low-income families to and from their medical appointments.
- Extra points to small local nonprofits
- Investment in wastewater, floodwater management, and first-time water
- Provide opportunities for nonprofits to build their capacity and provide greater services
- El Paso County should not duplicate/offer new services that are already being provided by the nonprofit community
- El Paso County's unused/underused buildings should be offered to nonprofits to use
- Address the mental health crisis
- Make the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) easy to understand and complete. Small nonprofits cannot afford to pay a grant writer
- Increase access to recreational opportunities: Parks, walking trails, biking lanes, recreational centers

Additionally, notes were analyzed to identify words that were commonly mentioned. The overarching word cloud was limited to the top 100 words, while the rest to 25. Health was the most commonly written word in the notes, as reflected in the comment cards. Several words that were often mentioned alongside health were mental, diabetes, substance, etc., reflecting a strong want and need from participants for funds to be invested in these areas. Words reflecting our local community, such as El, Paso, county, San, city, etc., often came up as part of bigger thoughts but demonstrated that participants felt funds should remain local. The word nonprofit(s) regularly came up, reflecting a common sentiment across participants for funds to be distributed primarily to nonprofits. Investment in "services" or "infrastructure" was another common theme, with words such as broadband, education, and projects coming up multiple times.



Figure 8. Word cloud for all notes across all precincts

Precinct 1

Within precinct 1, health and community and related words often came up, with words such as diabetes, mental, county, trails, etc., dominating the notes. With precinct 1 representing most of El Paso's eastside, Montana (the road) and Montana Vista (the neighborhood) often came up in the facilitators' notes. There was also interest in parks and recreation-related words, with park(s), trails, and walking coming up multiple times. During the sessions, there were also many conversations regarding the fund application process, thus accounting for words such as information, grants, agencies, spread, help, and agencies.



Figure 9. Word cloud for butcher paper notes from precinct 1



Figure 10. Word cloud for facilitators' notes from precinct 1

Precinct 2

The session held at this precinct reflected strongly in wanting to invest in health-related areas, such as diabetes and substance (abuse) coming up multiple times. Participants strongly voiced that funds should be for nonprofits and their programs. While the word business often came up, it was not a comment sentiment reflected in the comment cards, or at least not in funding directly towards businesses or business-related services. Need, assistance, support, more, etc., often came up in conversation and noted, displaying a common sentiment in support for their organizations or community.



Figure 11. Word cloud for butcher paper notes from precinct 2



Figure 12. Word cloud for facilitators' notes from precinct 2

Precinct 3

Precinct 3, representing much of the lower valley, reflected strong infrastructure support, with water being the most written word and infrastructure, wastewater, and broadband coming up often. Words such as services, resources, and parks reflect participants' wants and needs of support in this particular area. Health was also a common verbal sentiment, with mental (health) coming up often.



Figure 13. Word cloud for butcher paper notes from precinct 3



Figure 14. Word cloud for facilitators' notes from precinct 3

Precinct 4

Similar to the other listening sessions, support within health came up often, with health, mental (health), and diabetes coming up often. Support for LGBTQ was robust in this listening session. Another similarity to other precincts was that funds be designated primarily to nonprofits.



Figure 15. Word cloud for butcher paper notes from precinct 4



Figure 16. Word cloud for facilitators' notes from precinct 4

Online Survey Results

The online survey provided data for those who could not attend the listening sessions. There were 126 total responses, with the majority being in English. Data were gathered on the importance of each topic and for every theme within. These results reflect how people ranked their choices for the online survey.

Table 3. Responses for the online survey

Language	Responses
English	86
Spanish	40
Total responses	126

Overall Topic Rankings

Similar to the comment card responses, participants saw health and community assistance as the most important topics, with 58 choosing the former as their first choice and 37 for the latter. Compared to the comment cards, the ranking for third and fourth flipped, and the data reflect a more substantial deviation between the first two and the latter two topics. There was less support on average for business development and capital and government project, with 34 people marking the former as their fourth choice and 52 for the latter.

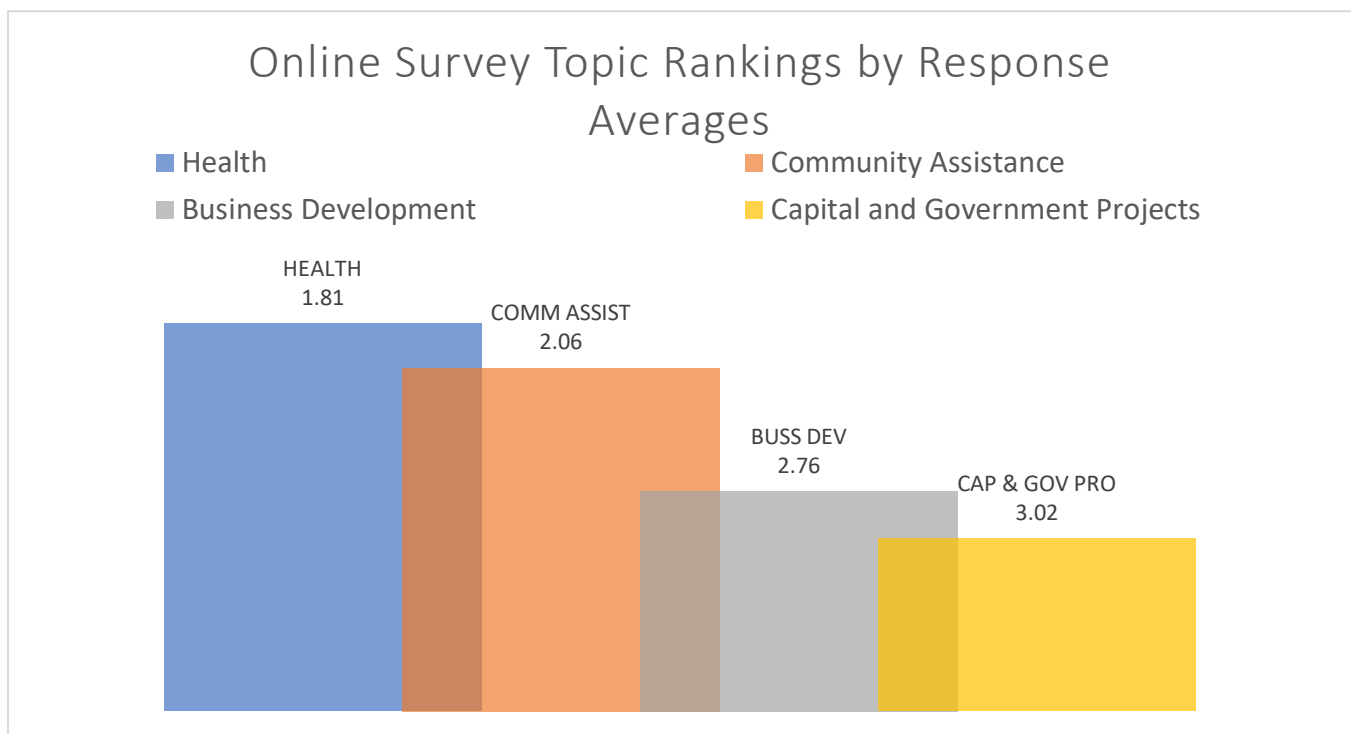


Figure 17. Rankings of importance across all four topics as gathered from the online survey

Health

On average, participants saw "Reduce Comorbidities" as the most important theme, followed by "Maintain a Healthy Life style," with over 40 people choosing the former as their number one choice. The other two options noted a significant difference between the listening sessions and the online survey. Comment card responses saw "Prevention and Mitigation of COVID-19" as the least important, while the online survey saw "Financing Medical Treatment for Indigent" as the least important, with 50 people marking it as their least important choice.

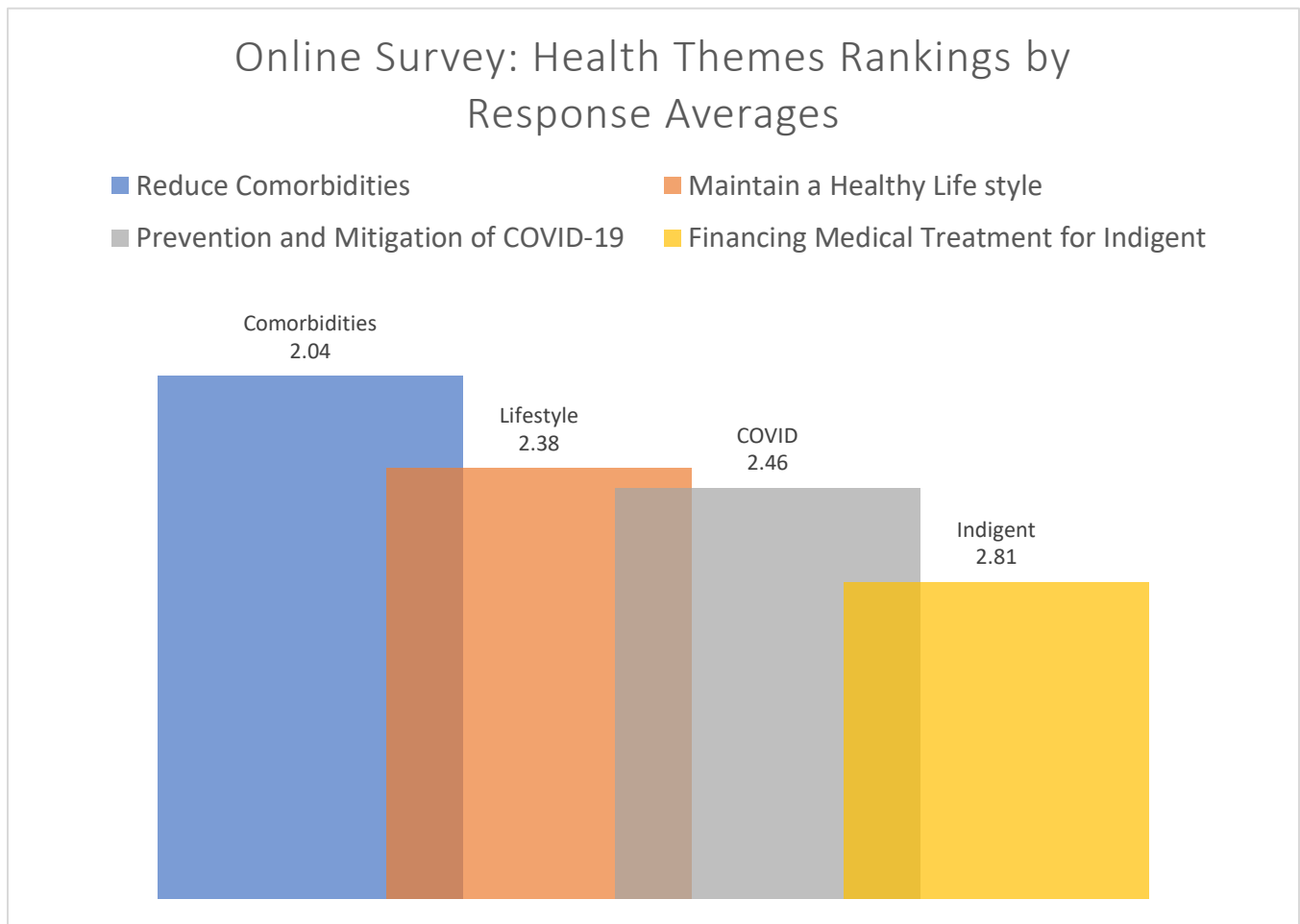


Figure 18. Rankings of importance across identified Health themes as gathered from the online survey

Community Assistance

Community Assistance was also highly ranked with online participants. Similar to the comment card responses, "Food Security" and "Housing Security" were essentially seen the same as the most important topic, with 81 responses reflecting one or the other. Also very similar, "Animal Welfare Programs" was seen as the least important theme, with 75 people seeing this as the least important.

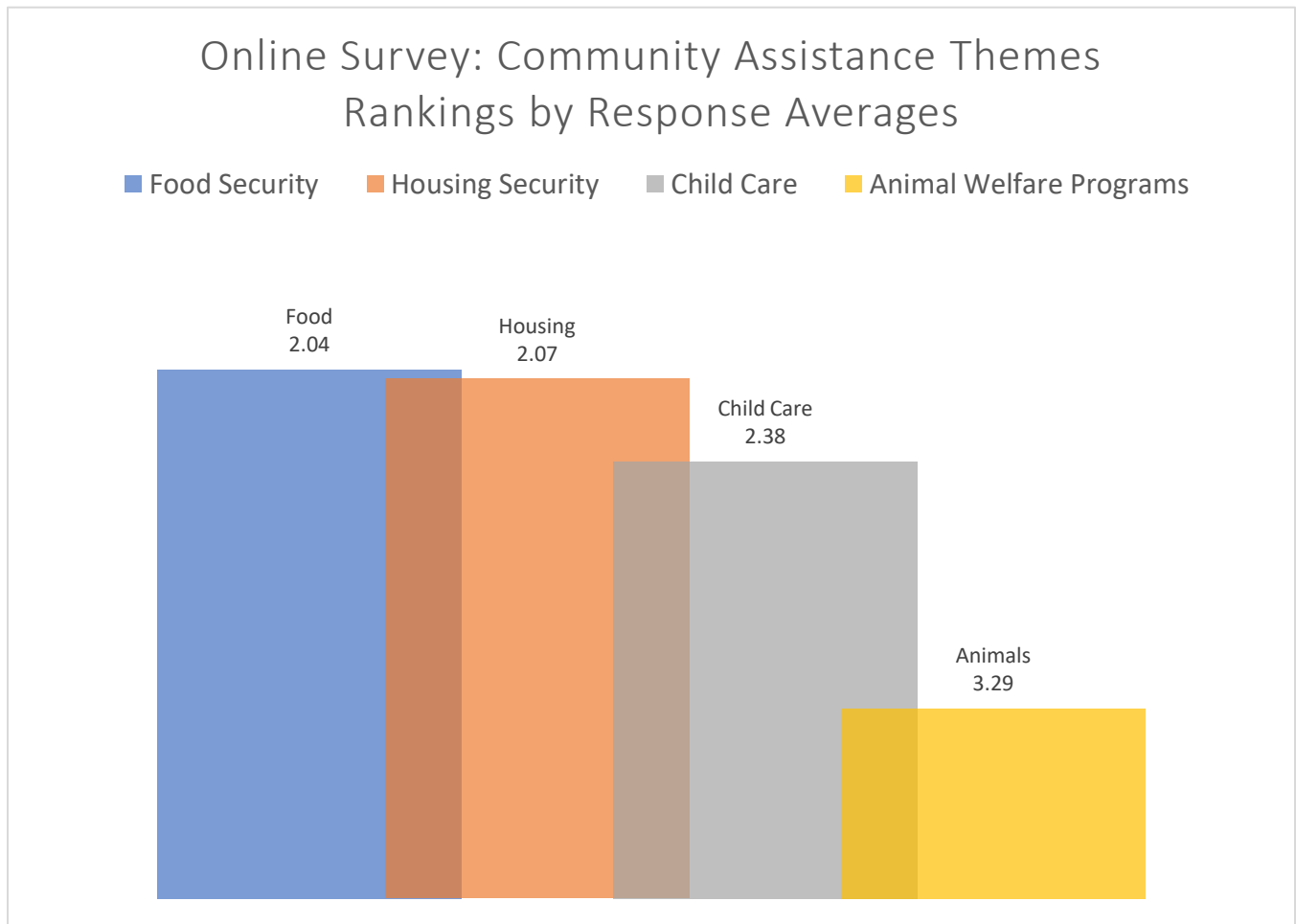


Figure 19. Rankings of importance across identified Community Assistance themes as gathered from the online survey

Business Development and Support

Business development garnered more support from online participants than those at the listening sessions. "Education and Resources and Trainings" was seen as the most important, with 40 participants marking this as their top choice. Feelings were very mixed in "Business Retention and Expansion," with 33 seeing it as their most important choice, but another 42 as their least important choice, the highest deviation across the four themes.

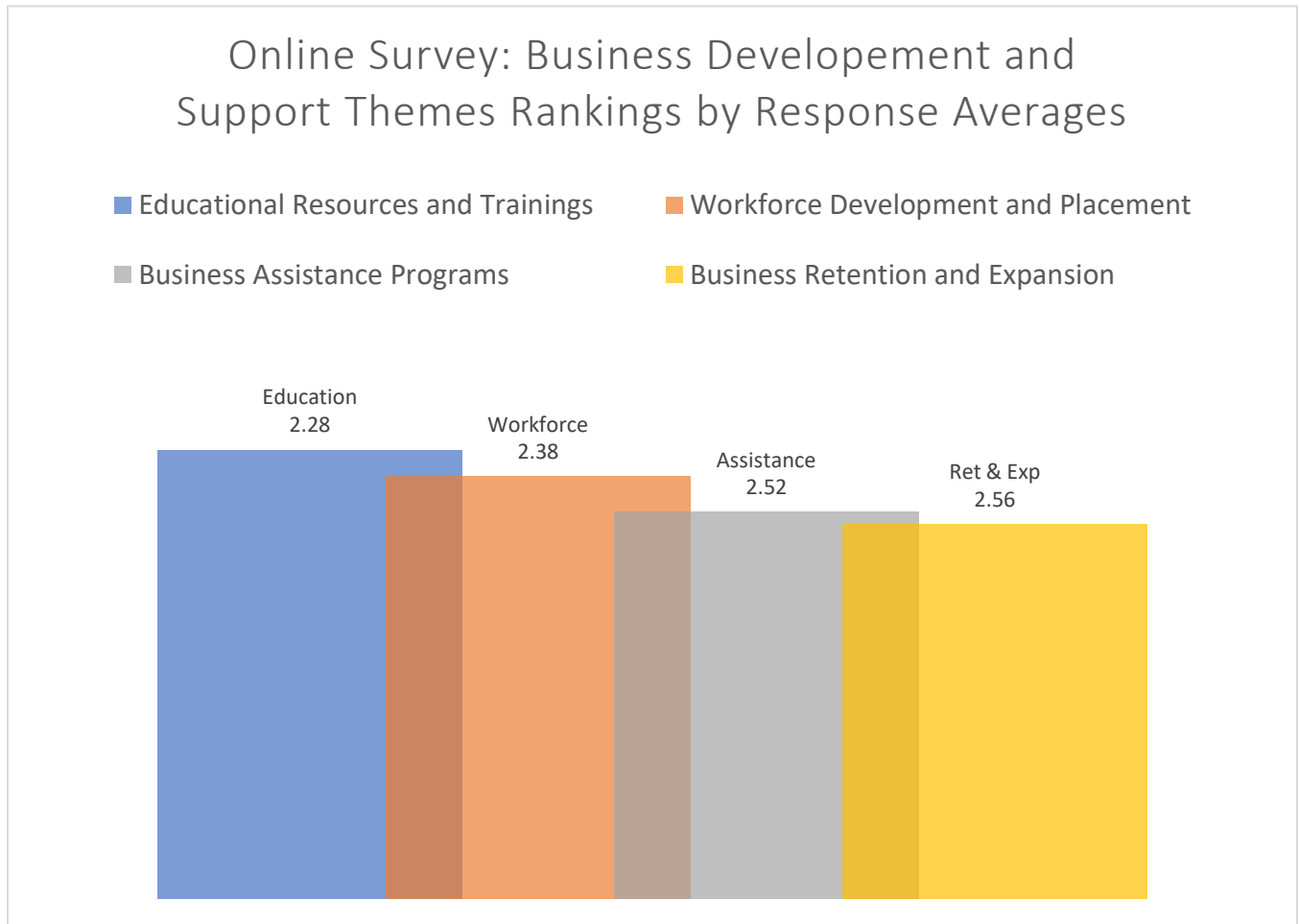


Figure 20. Rankings of importance across identified Business Development and Support themes as gathered from the online survey

Capital and Government Projects

On average, this topic ranked substantially lower than the other ones. Compared to the comment card responses, online responses garnered more support for "Floodwater Improvements" rather than "Capital Improvement Projects," with 50 marking the former as their first choice vs. 31 for the latter. There was some support for broadband, with 29 people marking it as their most important choice. Similar to the comment cards, there was little support for "Building Acquisitions," with 57 people marking it as their least important choice.

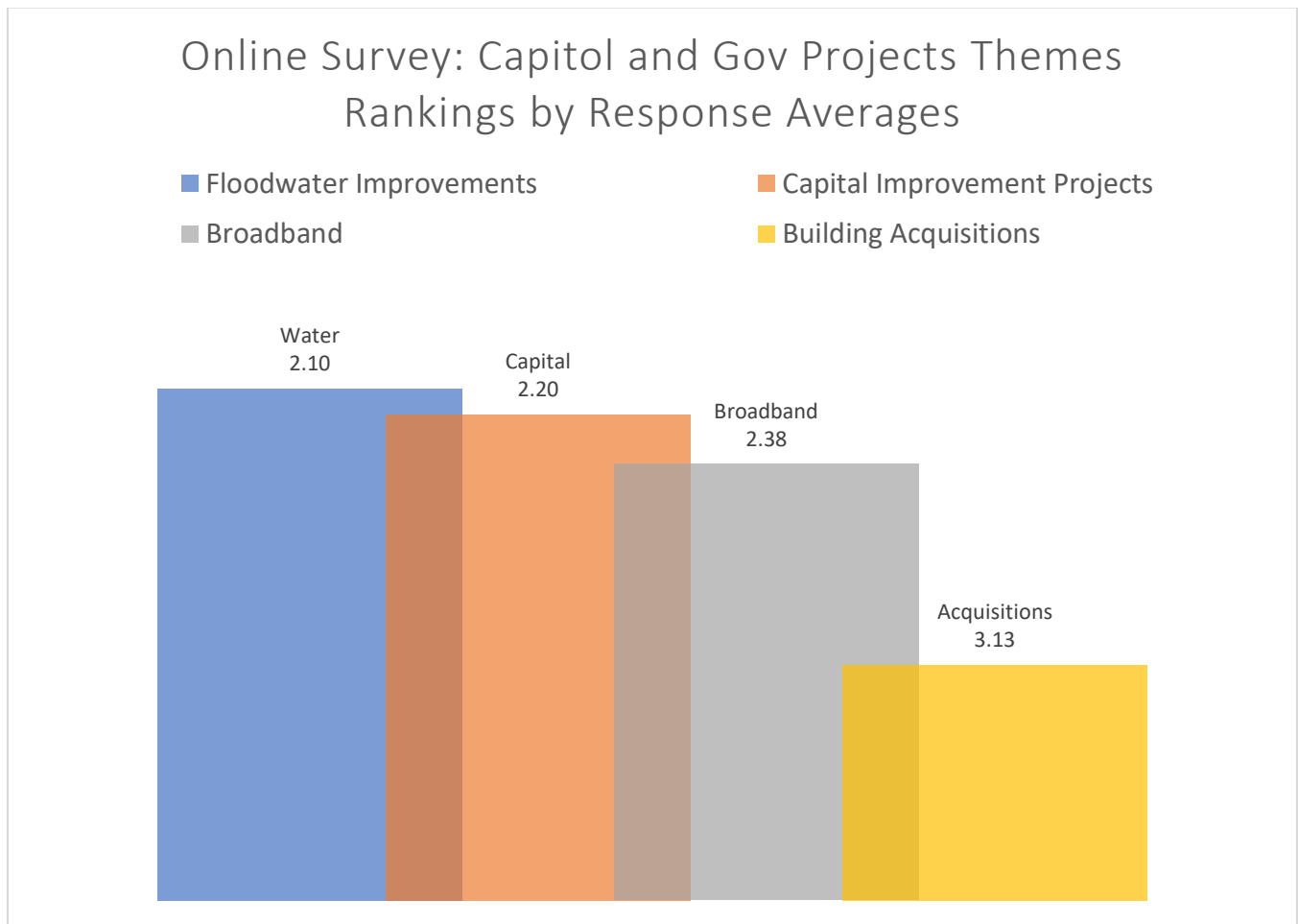


Figure 21. Rankings of importance across identified Cap & Gov Projects themes as gathered from the online survey

Results from the listening sessions provide an important data point for the Court to consider. The Benchmark Report, private constitute input, and the online survey also provide insight for consideration. All this information, taken together with the County's strategic plan and mission, may be helpful for prudent decision-making.