The Community Foundation
BOULDER COUNTY

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For Immediate Release
November 18, 2011

Survey confirms prolonged strain on Boulder County nonprofits

Boulder County nonprofit organizations are showing signs of continued strain three years after The Great Recession hit Main Street, a new survey finds. They are struggling to meet increased demand for their services in an environment of flat or fewer resources.

The Community Foundation periodically surveys local nonprofit leaders about the status of fundraising and organizational capacity issues. Executives from 56 Boulder County nonprofits responded this month to a 10-question survey asking them to reflect on their organization's business since the end of 2009. The consistency of their answers provides a solid snapshot of the current status quo.

Among the survey's key findings:

- Demand for services and participation in programs is up at 37 (66%) of the responding organizations.
- Client demographics are shifting to serve people who didn't used to rely on these services. Changes in client/customer demographics were reported at 20 (36%) of the agencies, with 10 (18%) of them citing a noticeable increase in financial assistance requests, because clients have reduced resources. Of particular note, The Boulder Shelter for the Homeless reports that clients possess higher skill sets than before.
- Gifts are down at 22 (39%) of the responding agencies, where fundraising fell short of goal in 2010; and 20 (36%) of the groups reported they are not on track to make goals in 2011. A decrease in gifts from major donors was reported by 24 (43%) of respondents.
- Reduced resources have led to 12 (21%) of the organizations reducing or restructuring staff. These groups are increasing the use of volunteers, re-organizing staffing structures, tapping into reserve accounts, instituting mandatory time-off for staff, and consolidating space.
- Cultivating funding streams is a top priority for 40 (71%) of the respondents.

"As you can see by our survey results, Boulder County nonprofits are feeling the pinch of our nation's economic setbacks. They've had to tighten up in response to diminished resources at the same time they're reporting an increased demand for services. ," said Elvira Ramos, Director of Programs at The Community Foundation. "This year's Community Trust grant proposals serve as testament to these facts with total requests increased by nearly $100,000 over last year."

The Community Trust is The Community Foundation's unrestricted grant-making fund. Volunteer committees are currently reviewing this year's applicants for funding and will make awards to some of Boulder County's best nonprofit programs in January. The Community Foundation is in the final year of a 4-year, $4 million initiative to increase The Community Trust. These survey results underscore the importance of continuing to raise these funds.

"Despite the bad news, I have much for which I am thankful," Ramos said. "I am grateful to the Community Trust volunteers who toil countless hours reading grants and worrying over the community's unmet needs. I'm thankful for everyone who has the resources to be generous this year to the Community Foundation's Community Trust efforts. Finally, all of us should extend our thanks to all of the nonprofit staff, trustees, and volunteers who work so hard to better the quality of life for all of us in Boulder County."

For more information on The Community Trust Initiative, visit www.commfound.org, call 303-442-0436 or email Chris Barge, at Chris@commfound.org. To donate, please make a check out to The Community Trust and mail it to The Community Foundation, 1123 Spruce Street, Boulder, CO, 80302.

Purpose of The Community Foundation

Now in its 20th year, The Community Foundation has granted more than $43 million to nonprofits in Boulder County and beyond. Our mission is to improve the quality of life in Boulder County, now and forever, and to build a culture of giving. We are committed to intimately understanding needs and connecting to the nonprofits that address those needs. Together, Boulder County residents and The Community Foundation can make a meaningful impact on our fellow residents' quality of life today and in the future. To learn more, please visit www.commfound.org or call 303-442-0436.