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# Adult Education Providers and Career Pathways: Insights from Three Cities



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# Introduction

- Aims and rationale of IES researcher-practitioner partnership project
- Summary of findings from survey, focus groups, and case studies
  - Program characteristics
  - Access
  - Support services
  - Outcome measures
- Discussion

# Poll: What are your views on career pathways?

- Check all that apply:
  - What are career pathways?
  - A necessary evil.
  - Great way to help adults achieve their educational and career goals.
  - More trouble than it's worth.
  - Lots of work, but worth the investment.
  - Employment is important, but what about other student goals?
  - A necessity in today's economy.
  - The latest buzzword.
  - Important for getting workforce education and adult education to work together.

# IES Project Overview

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

# IES Project Overview

- 3-year U.S. Department of Education (IES) researcher-practitioner partnership grant (2015-18)
- Aims
  - Understand how adult basic education providers in high-need cities are integrating career pathways (CP) into their services – especially for immigrants and adult with barriers to education and employment.
  - 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.

# Project Overview

- How do you define career pathways? (1-sentence free-write in chat pod. Write down the first thing that comes to mind.)
- Our definition (CLASP, 2012):
  - 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.”

# Methods: Research Questions

| Research Questions                                                                                                                               | Method                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| What are the key features of adult education-career pathways in each city?                                                                       | Survey                      |
| Which CP outcome measures are used most extensively?                                                                                             | Survey                      |
| Which measures, if any, are used by all ABEL providers within and across cities?                                                                 | Survey                      |
| What interim and long-term outcomes are ABEL providers helping lower-skilled CP participants to achieve?                                         | Survey                      |
| In each city, which policies and practices shape (a) CP programming for under-educated and immigrant adults and (b) coordination across systems? | Focus groups & case studies |
| How do selected programs design and implement CP programming?                                                                                    | Case studies                |
| Which programmatic features, policies, and other factors contribute to student success?                                                          | Case studies                |

# Methods: Data Sources

- Survey of all ABEL providers in Chicago, Houston, & Miami
  - n=147; 72% response rate
  - 2014-15 program year
  - Student characteristics & outcomes = rough estimates
- Focus groups with 18 providers (5-7 per city)
  - Nominated by survey respondents & city partners; reported CP services & successful outcomes
- Case studies of six exemplary programs (2 per city)
  - 18 class observations
  - 44 interviews with 56 people (teachers, administrators, support staff, key partners)
  - 3 focus groups with 53 students (3-13 per site)
  - Document analysis



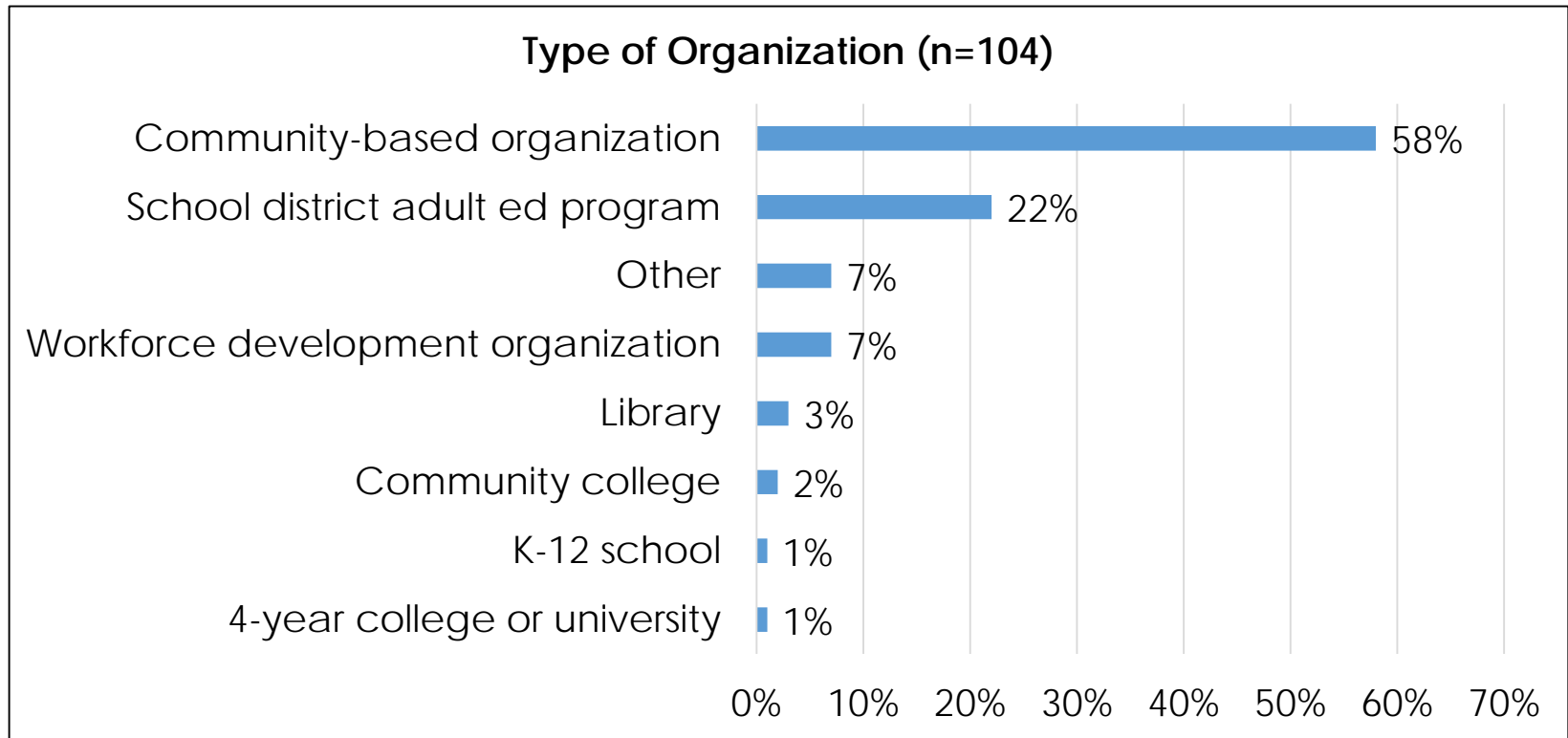
# Methods: Case Study Organizations

|                               | Chicago |              | Houston  |                   | Miami              |                  |
|-------------------------------|---------|--------------|----------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Occupational Sector           | JARC    | Malcolm<br>X | Alliance | HCC               | Lindsey<br>Hopkins | MDC –<br>Hialeah |
| AutoCAD                       |         |              | Yes      | X                 | X                  |                  |
| Business                      |         |              |          |                   |                    | Yes              |
| Construction                  |         |              |          |                   |                    | Yes              |
| Education and<br>childcare    |         |              | X        | X                 | X                  |                  |
| Food                          |         |              |          |                   | Yes                |                  |
| Healthcare                    |         | Yes          | Yes      | Yes               | Yes                | X                |
| Manufacturing                 | Yes     |              | X        | X                 |                    |                  |
| Office<br>management          |         |              |          | Yes               |                    |                  |
| Technology/IT                 |         |              |          | X                 |                    |                  |
| Transportation,<br>automotive |         |              | X        | X                 | Yes                |                  |
| Other sectors                 |         |              | X        | X                 | X                  |                  |
| Organizational type           | CBO     | CC           | CBO      | CC (CBO<br>sites) | School<br>district | CC               |
| Primary Populations           |         |              |          |                   |                    |                  |
| Immigrants                    | X       | X            |          | X                 | X                  | X                |
| Refugees                      |         |              | X        |                   | X                  | X                |
| U.S.-born<br>minorities       | X       | X            |          | X                 | X                  | X                |



# Findings: Program Characteristics

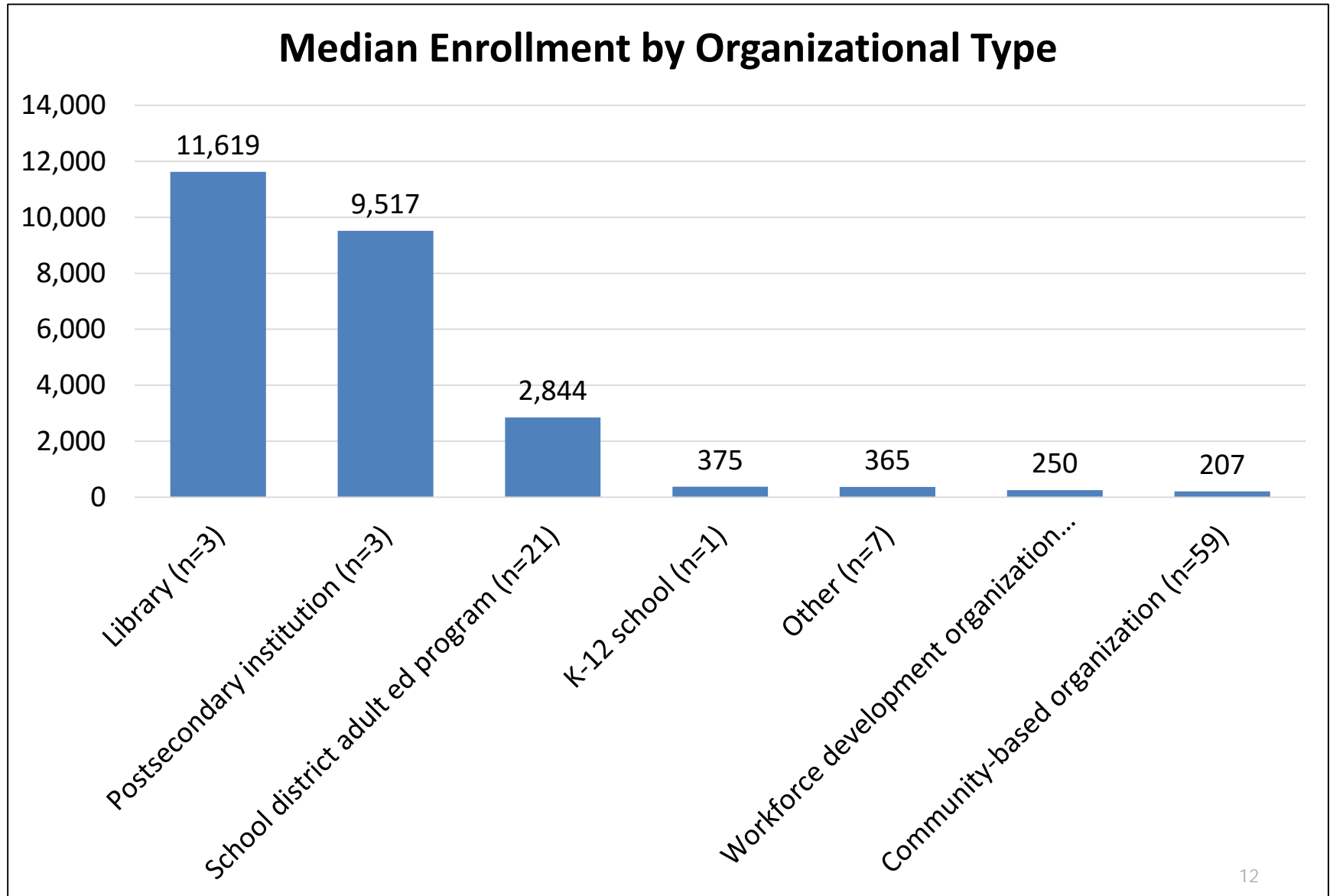
- Most common agency type\*: CBO



\*Chicago City Colleges and Miami Dade College submitted 1 survey for all campuses

- Other: homeless shelters, correctional facilities, etc.
- 48% of all CBOs were located in Chicago
- All school district adult ed programs located in Miami

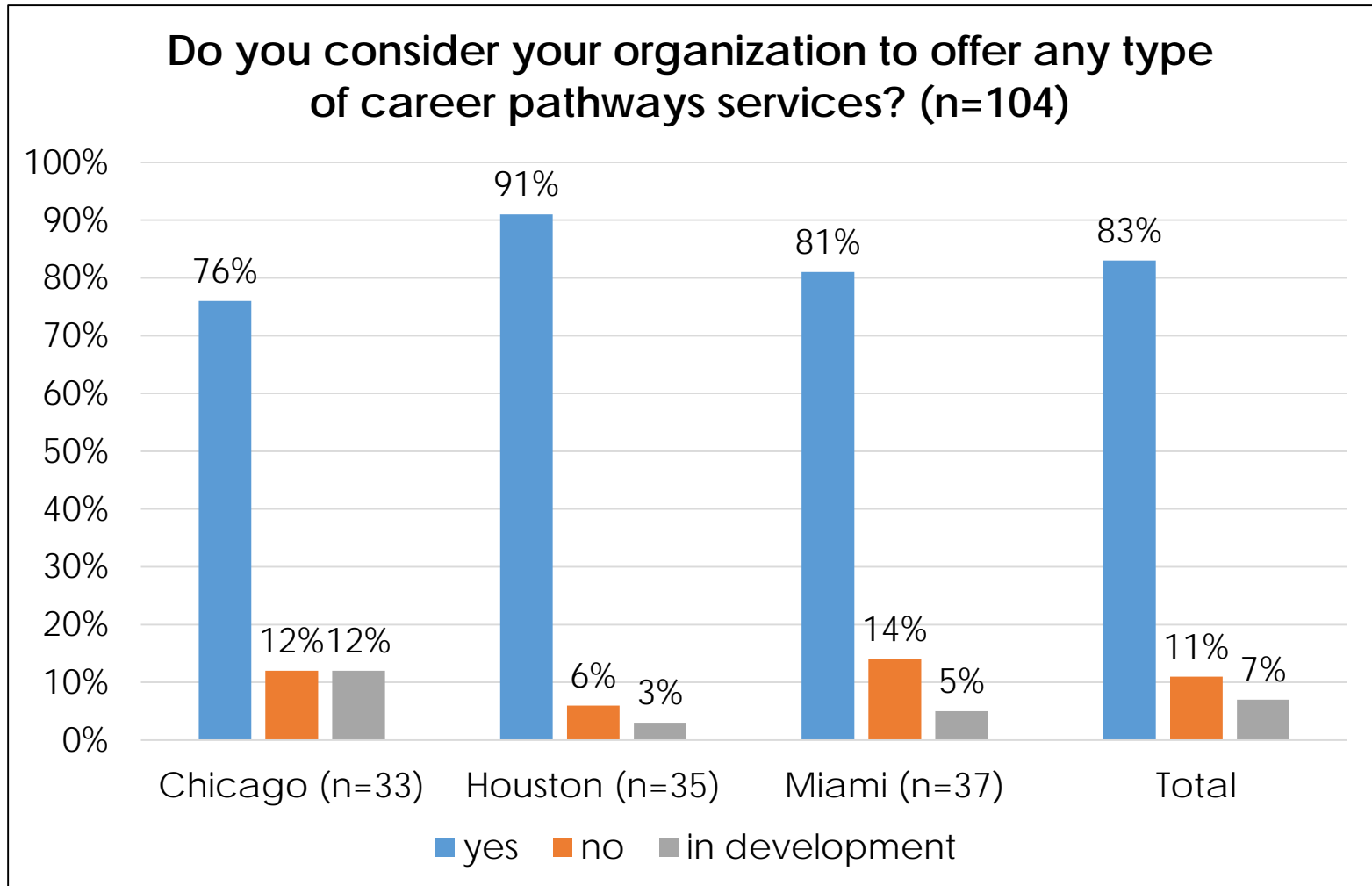
- Libraries and postsecondary institutions enrolled the largest number of adult learners, and CBOs the fewest



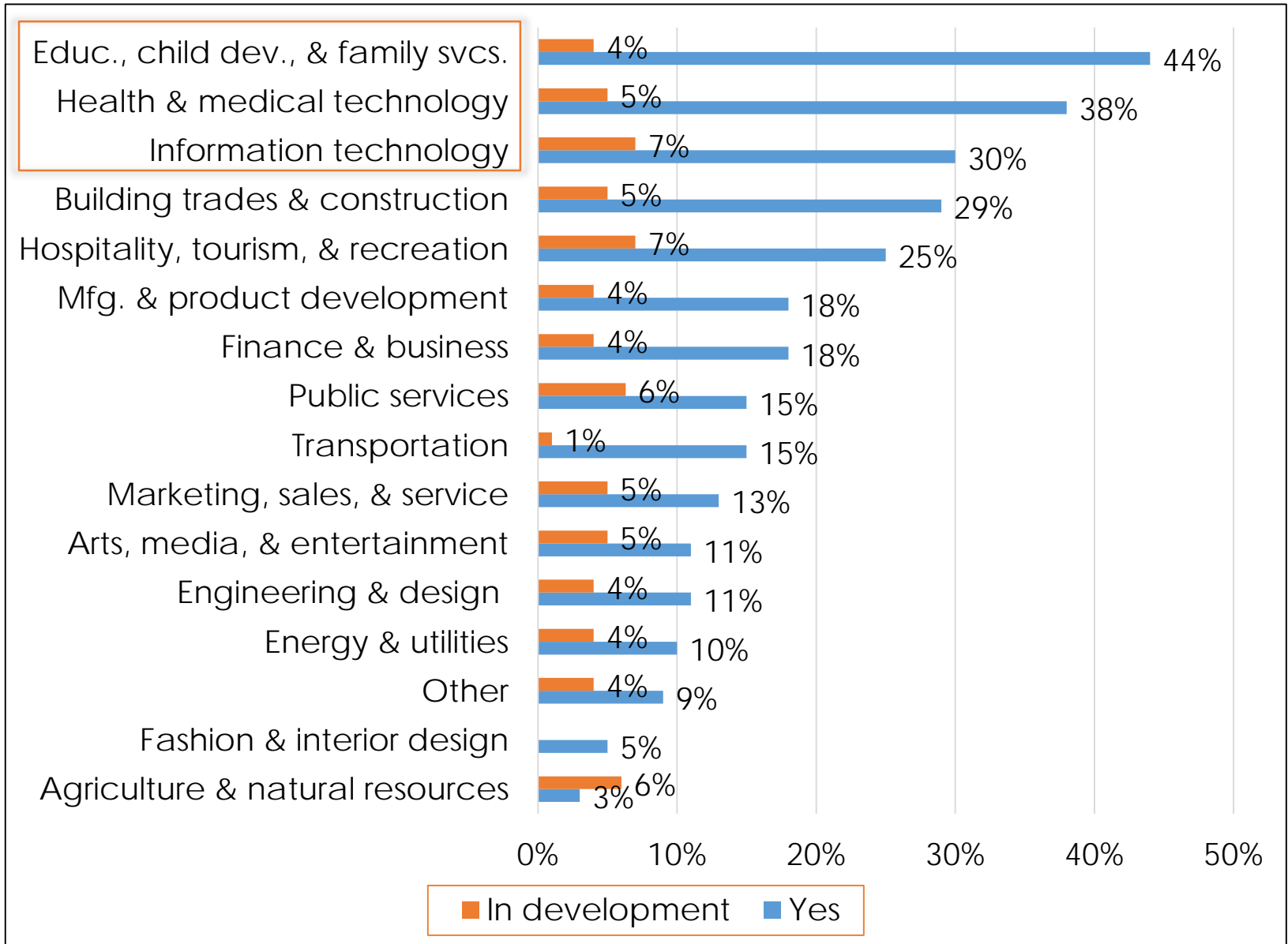
# Poll

- Does your organization offer career pathways, per the CLASP definition?
  - 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.”

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



- Targeted employment sectors (n=47 to 100)



# Program Snapshots

- There is tremendous variation in CP design and implementation within and across the cities.

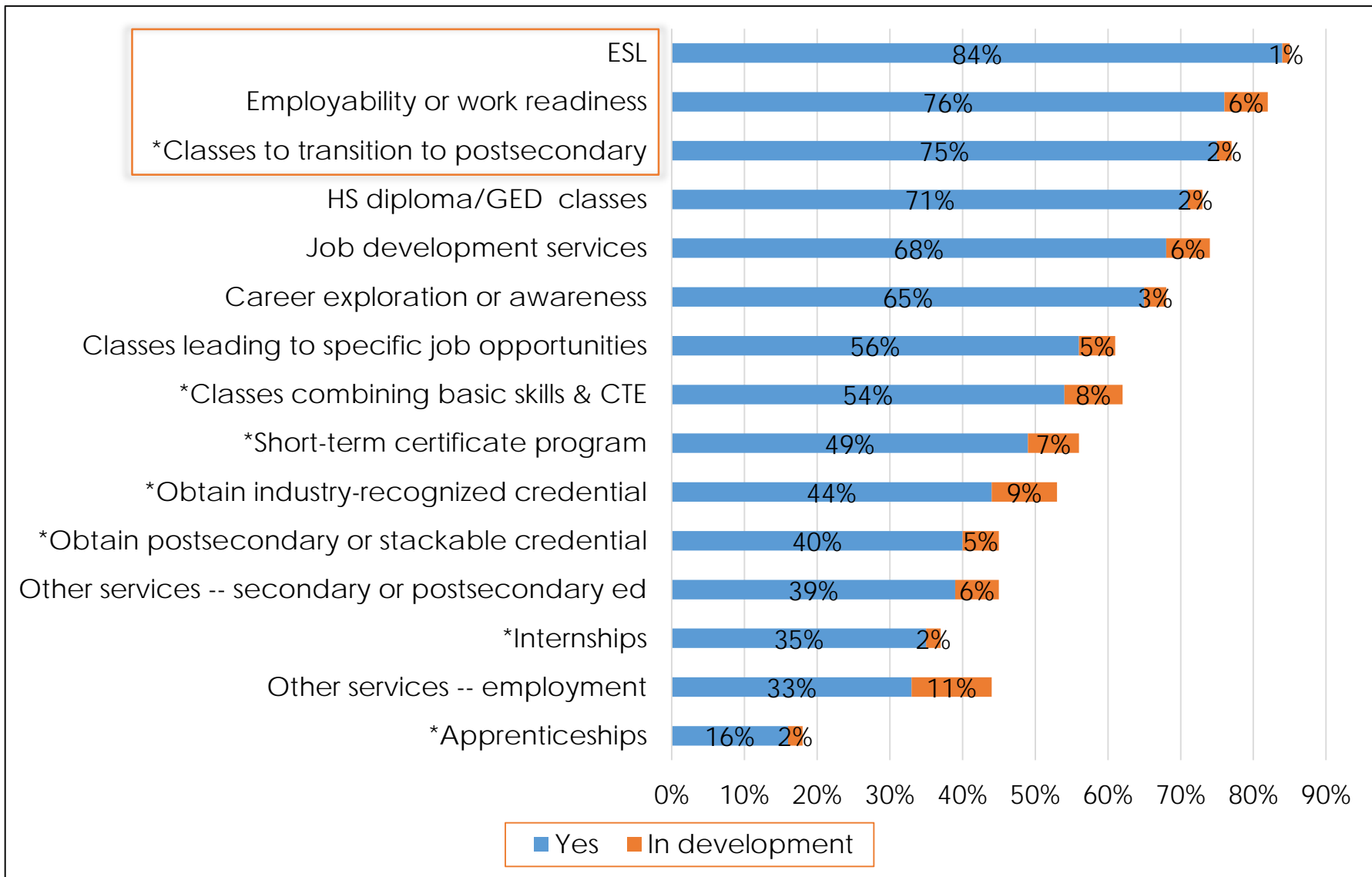


|                                               | JARC                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Chicago City Colleges - Malcolm X                                                                                                                                                    | Alliance                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sector                                        | Manufacturing                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Health                                                                                                                                                                               | CNA<br>AutoCAD                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Primary Goal                                  | Job placement, <b>financial stability</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Postsecondary ed                                                                                                                                                                     | Job placement, <b>financial stability</b>                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Primary CP Components                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bridge class (contextualized math) OR</li> <li>• CTE classes(computer numerical control [CNC], welding, press brake)</li> </ul>                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career Bridge Program: Health-contextualized language &amp; math classes (GED prep) AND</li> <li>• Free credit course (2nd sem.)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contextualized basic skills class AND</li> <li>• CTE class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CNA: sequential</li> <li>• AutoCAD: concurrent</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| Enrollment                                    | Open enrollment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Cohort (semester)                                                                                                                                                                    | Cohort                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Program Length                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bridge: 12 wks (192 hrs)</li> <li>• CNC: 20 wks (500 hrs)</li> <li>• Welding: 14 wks (350 hrs)</li> <li>• Press brake: 10 wks (250 hrs)</li> </ul>                                                             | 32 wks (2 semesters; 512 hrs)                                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CNA: 8 wks (180 hrs)</li> <li>• AutoCAD: 10 wks (160 hrs)</li> </ul>                                                                                                      |
| Credentials, Certifications, & Other Outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Industry credentials</li> <li>• Manufacturing jobs</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GED diploma</li> <li>• Transfer to credit courses</li> </ul>                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CNA: eligible for state CNA exam, certificate of completion</li> <li>• AutoCAD professional user certification</li> </ul>                                                 |
| Key Instructional & Support Staff             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bridge teacher</li> <li>• CTE teachers: all program grads</li> <li>• Program coordinators</li> <li>• <b>Employment coaches</b></li> <li>• <b>Financial coaches</b></li> <li>• <b>Job developers</b></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language teacher</li> <li>• Math teacher</li> <li>• Transition specialist</li> </ul>                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic skills teacher</li> <li>• CTE teachers</li> <li>• <b>Employment coaches</b></li> <li>• <b>Financial coaches</b></li> <li>• <b>Income support coaches</b></li> </ul> |

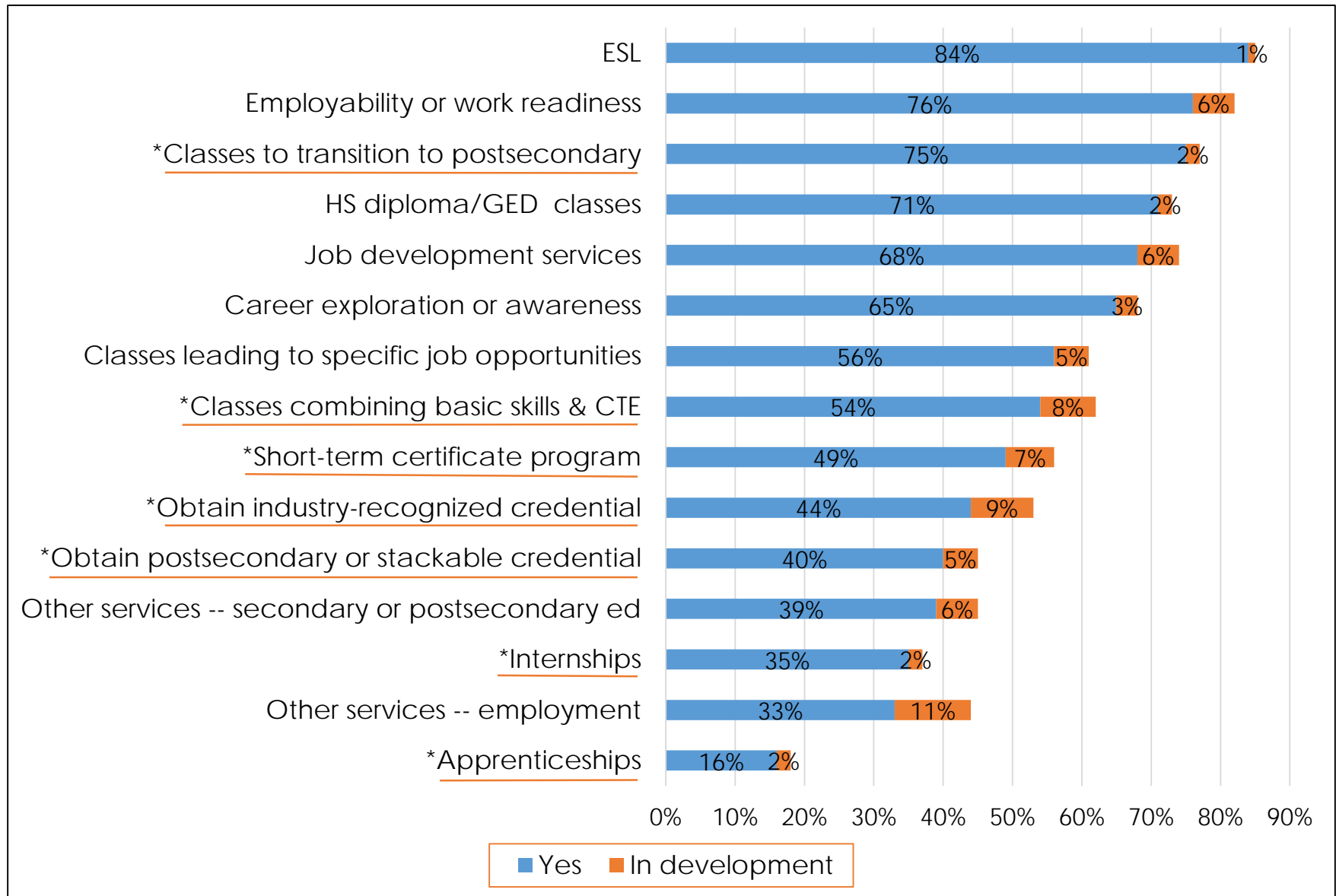
|                                               | HCC: AVANCE                                                                                                                                       | HCC: Chinese Community Ctr.                                                                                                                                           | Lindsey Hopkins Technical College                                                                                                                                                                      | Miami Dade College: FICAPS                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sector                                        | General Office Support Specialist                                                                                                                 | CNA                                                                                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nutrition &amp; Dietetic Clerk</li> <li>• Automotive Service Technology (AST – gen'l &amp; Braman)</li> <li>• Commercial Foods &amp; Culinary Arts</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manufactured construction (TRAMCON)</li> <li>• Business</li> <li>• (Health – not included)</li> </ul>                        |
| Primary Goal                                  | Job placement                                                                                                                                     | Job placement, <b>financial stability</b>                                                                                                                             | Job placement                                                                                                                                                                                          | Job placement or postsecondary ed                                                                                                                                     |
| Primary CP Components                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CTE class AND</li> <li>• Math &amp; language class (AVANCE: concurrent; CCC: sequential)</li> </ul>      |                                                                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CTE class AND</li> <li>• Practicum (dietetic clerk)</li> <li>• Internship (gen'l &amp; Braman AST)</li> </ul>                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online GED class AND</li> <li>• CTE classes (concurrent)</li> </ul>                                                          |
| Enrollment                                    | Cohort                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gen'l AST: open</li> <li>• All others: cohort</li> </ul>                                                                                                      | Cohort (semester)                                                                                                                                                     |
| Program Length                                | 12 wks (272-292 hrs)                                                                                                                              | 2 mos (208 hrs)                                                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dietetic Clerk: 4 mos (300 hrs)</li> <li>• Culinary: 18 mos (1200 hrs)</li> <li>• AST: 18 mos (1800 hrs)</li> </ul>                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TRAMCON (4 levels): 23 mos (880 hrs) – shorter for fewer credentials</li> <li>• Bus.: depends on certificate</li> </ul>      |
| Credentials, Certifications, & Other Outcomes | Office skills certificates (e.g., Microsoft Office)                                                                                               | Eligible for state CNA exam                                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AST: industry credentials</li> <li>• licenses</li> <li>• transferrable credits</li> </ul>                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GED diploma</li> <li>• TRAMCON: industry credentials &amp; transferrable credits</li> <li>• Bus.: college credits</li> </ul> |
| Key Instructional & Support Staff             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic skills teacher</li> <li>• CTE teacher</li> <li>• Program mgr.</li> <li>• Workforce dir.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic skills teacher</li> <li>• CTE teacher</li> <li>• <b>Employment, financial, &amp; income support coaches</b></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CTE teachers</li> <li>• Counselors</li> <li>• Case managers</li> </ul>                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GED teacher (support)</li> <li>• CTE teachers</li> <li>• Career readiness advisors</li> </ul>                                |

# Findings: Access

- Agencies offer a wide array of classes & services
  - Average: 7 types of classes

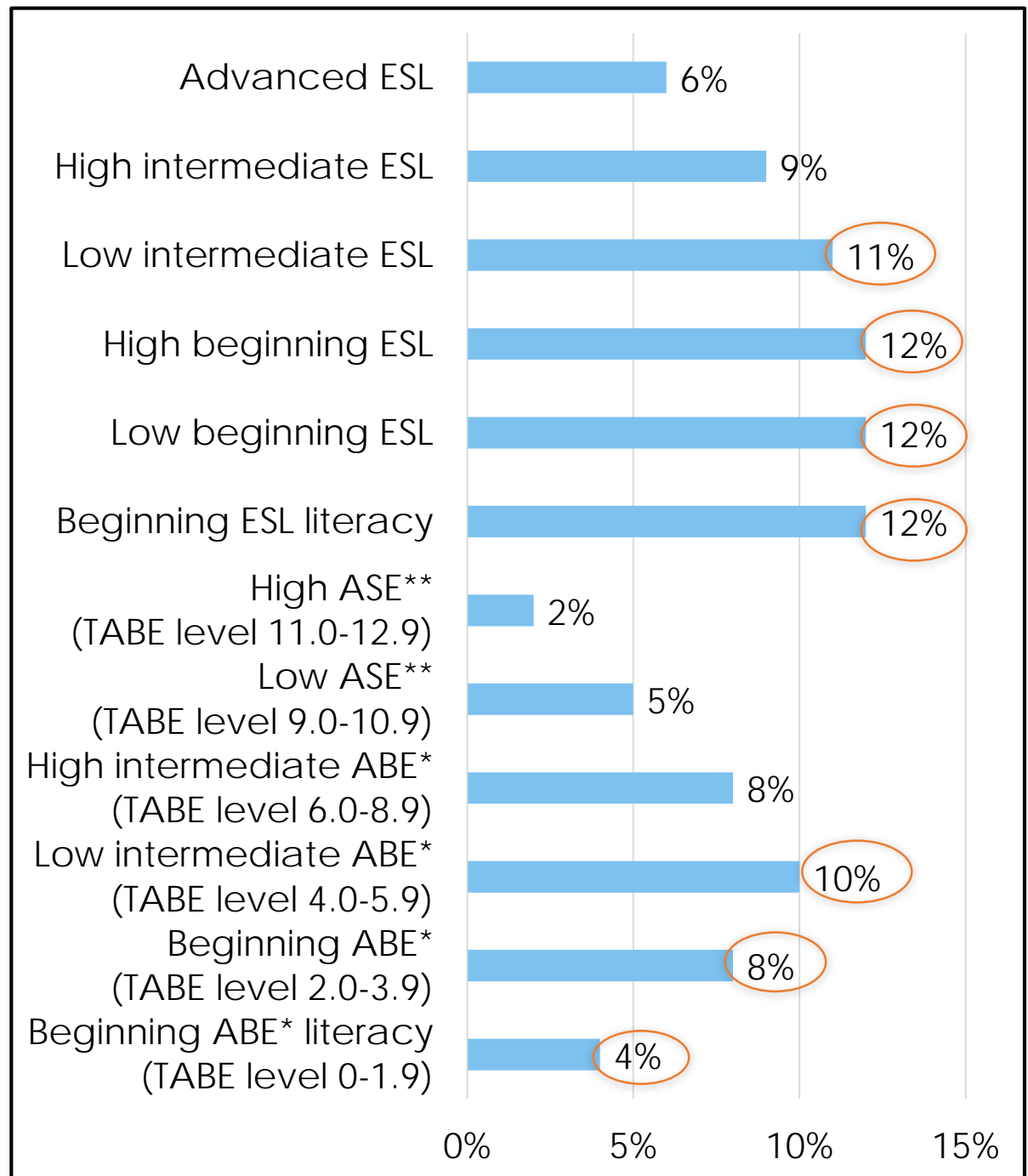


- But “core” CP services are much less common

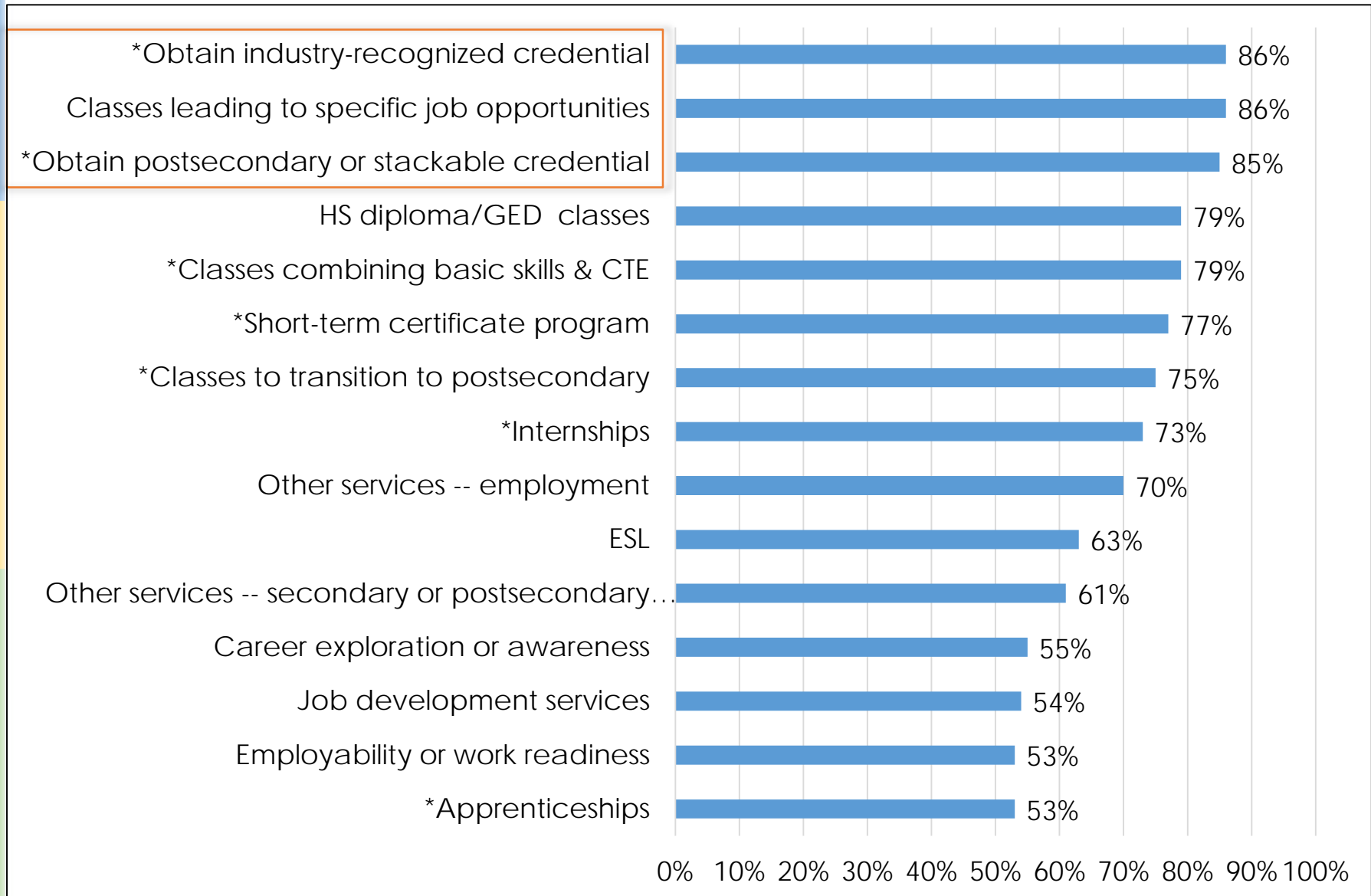


- 36% of agencies that said they offer CP had zero students enrolled in 6 core CP classes:
  - transition to postsecondary education
  - obtain a postsecondary or stackable credential
  - short-term certificate program needed for advancement in education or employment
  - industry-recognized credential
  - apprenticeships
  - internships
  
- Raises questions about robustness of CP in some organizations

~69% of CP students are at low intermediate ABE or ESL level (NRS)



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





- Examples of entry requirements for CP classes in our study
  - HS/GED is not required: minimum TABE = 5.0 to 9.0
  - HS/GED is required
    - HCC: placed in HSE or ESL class with no career content
    - Alliance: ESL – no career content; Burlington English – career content

|                                | JARC                                                                                       | Malcolm X                                                                                                                                      | Alliance                                                                     | Houston Comm. College                                           | Lindsey Hopkins                                                                                                                                       | Miami Dade College                                      |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| HS/GED Diploma Required?       | No                                                                                         | No                                                                                                                                             | Yes                                                                          | Yes                                                             | No<br>Yes – Braman Auto                                                                                                                               | No                                                      |
| Minimum Test Score (TABE)      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bridge: 5.0</li> <li>• CTE: 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 (L)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6.0 to 11.9</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CASAS 3</li> <li>• To exit Gen'l Auto: TABE 9 (R, L) &amp; 10 (M) OR pass industry certifications</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9.0</li> </ul> |
| Earn HSE through organization? | No                                                                                         | Yes – part of program                                                                                                                          | No                                                                           | Yes – at HCC, separate class                                    | Yes – separate from CTE classes                                                                                                                       | Yes – part of program                                   |

- L = language; M = math; R = reading

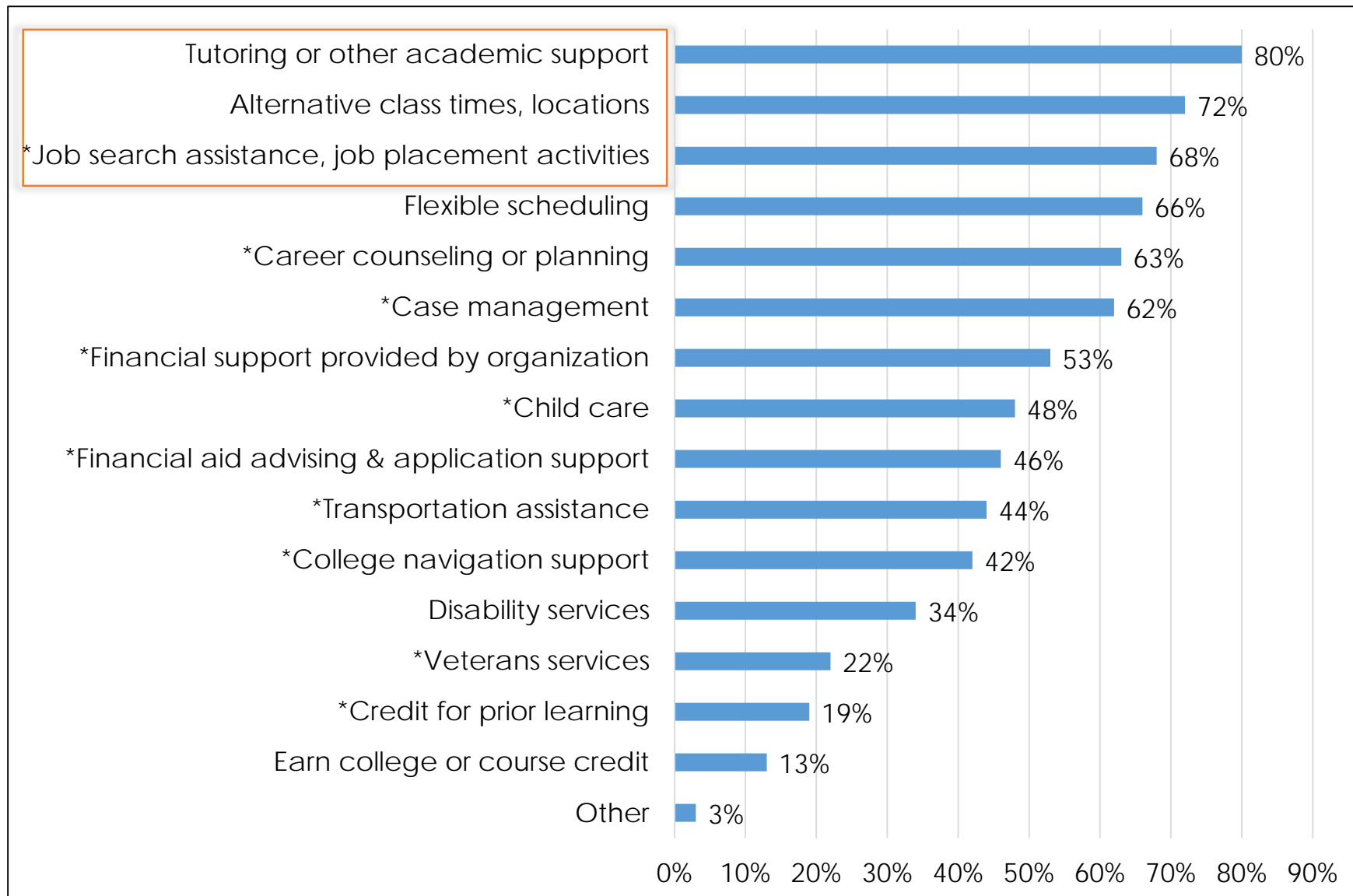
- Bridge classes can help students be *better* equipped for CTE classes
  - JARC: taking Bridge class increases math ability and motivation (vs. students who test out of it and enroll directly in manufacturing classes):
    - “You can do well on the TABE test and not really know math and reading that well, particularly math....One of the biggest differences [is] that people who go through our Bridge program really come out knowing math on a much more competent level.” – Business and Workforce Services Director, JARC
    - “I've come to see with some of my Bridge students, because they've been here a little bit longer, they have a little bit more motivation and a little bit more drive than someone who fast-tracked in [the manufacturing classes] without actually going to Bridge.” – Instructor



# Findings: Support Services

- Support services are crucial for access, persistence, and overall well-being and financial stability.
  
- Poll: What kinds of support services does your organization provide? (check all that apply)
  - case management
  - transportation assistance
  - child care
  - financial support provided by your organization (e.g., scholarships, fee waivers, tuition assistance)
  - financial aid advising and application support
  - tutoring or other academic support (e.g., study skills classes)
  - college navigation support
  - career counseling or planning
  - job search assistance or job placement activities
  - veterans services
  - disability services
  - flexible scheduling (e.g., non-semester-based, open enrollment)
  - alternative class times and locations (e.g., evening classes)
  - credit for prior learning
  - earn college or course credit
  - other

## ■ Median: 7 support services



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

- Most consistently mentioned (focus groups):
  - Case management
  - Career counseling
  - Wrap around services – childcare, transportation, financial assistance, etc.
  - Citizenship and immigration support
  - Assistance with transition to postsecondary programs and employment
  
- Philosophy of meeting students' needs
  - “We have a philosophy of trying to meet the student where the student is at. Which means that...if the student needs the citizenship, or if the student needs the job, or if the student needs the drug counseling, or if the student needs the domestic violence referrals and case managers— So that we feel if the student leaves, there's something that we didn't do.” (Chicago focus group)

- Support services increase students' "mental bandwidth"  
(Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013)
  - Cognitive impact of thinking about financial concerns = losing 1 night's sleep
  - Due to support services, "we don't have to stress about all those actual life problems. All we have to do is concentrate on our school work.....It takes a big burden and a big load off the mind when you don't have to worry about that, and you just concentrate on the school work, which is very helpful." (JARC participant)
  - JARC provides bundled services so students can "focus on the end goal, which is to remain in training." (Center for Working Families director)

- Comprehensive supports
  - “Bundled” services – national models
  - Center for Working Families (JARC) – required for all manufacturing students
    - Access to income supports
    - Financial literacy classes (Fridays)
    - Financial counseling (one-on-one)
    - Employment coaching & other supports through JARC (transportation, etc.)
    - Available for after program exit, for lifetime
  - Financial Opportunity Center (Houston) – students must choose 2 services
    - Access to income supports
    - Employment coaching
    - Financial coaching (plus access to financial services, e.g., credit-building products)



- Community colleges: same supports as credit students (tutoring, wellness, & disability centers, gym, library, computer lab, etc.)
  - College location fosters college student identity: Continuing education students “like being on campus....You get a student ID, you get a parking decal, you have all the same benefits that...the for-credit students do....They’re so excited. A lot of them tell you, ‘I never thought I’d be going to college, and now I’m on a college campus and I have my student ID.’ And they can go to the gym, you know. It’s a big deal for them.” (Miami Dade College staff)
  - MDC students: “You feel like you’re in college.” “You have your student ID. Finally a college student. You go to class regularly, you have your books. You have the other students with you. You walk around, go downstairs to the cafeteria. You see other people, you know. You feel like you’re doing something with your life.”

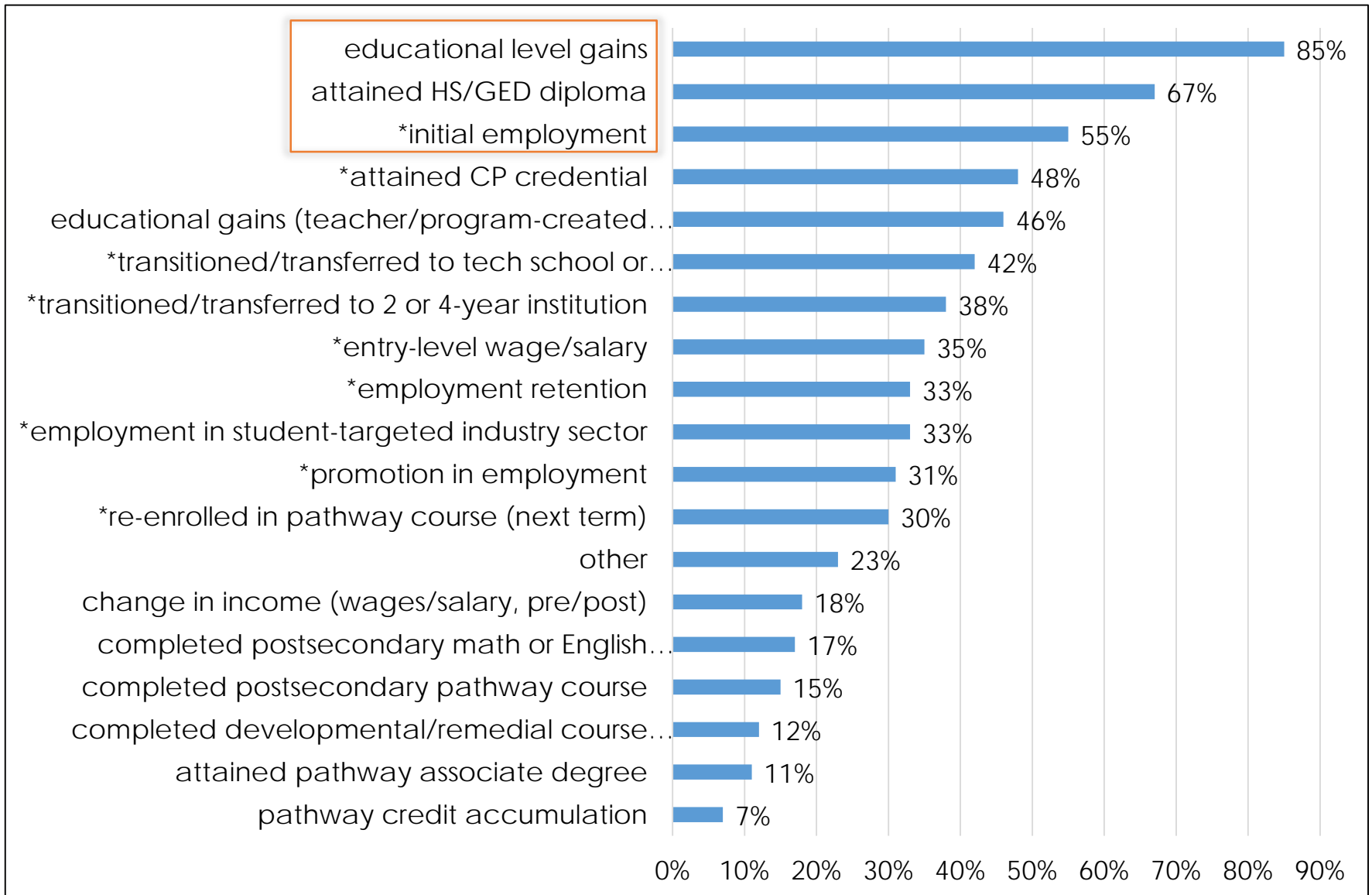
- Incentives
  - Chicago City Colleges: 1 free credit class (Bridge), 2 free credit classes (Gateway)
  - Monetary vouchers for passing GED subject tests (Houston)
  - Financial incentives for job placement, retention, other milestones (JARC)
  - Reduce inmate sentence for attending & completing CTE (Miami)
  
- Gaps
  - Grants may only cover tuition or supports (transportation, books, equipment, fees, etc.) for certain students
  - Some case managers, counselors, or transition specialists had large caseloads (100+ students)



# Survey Findings: Outcome Measures

- Lack of common outcomes is a barrier to measuring, comparing, and documenting progress across programs.

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

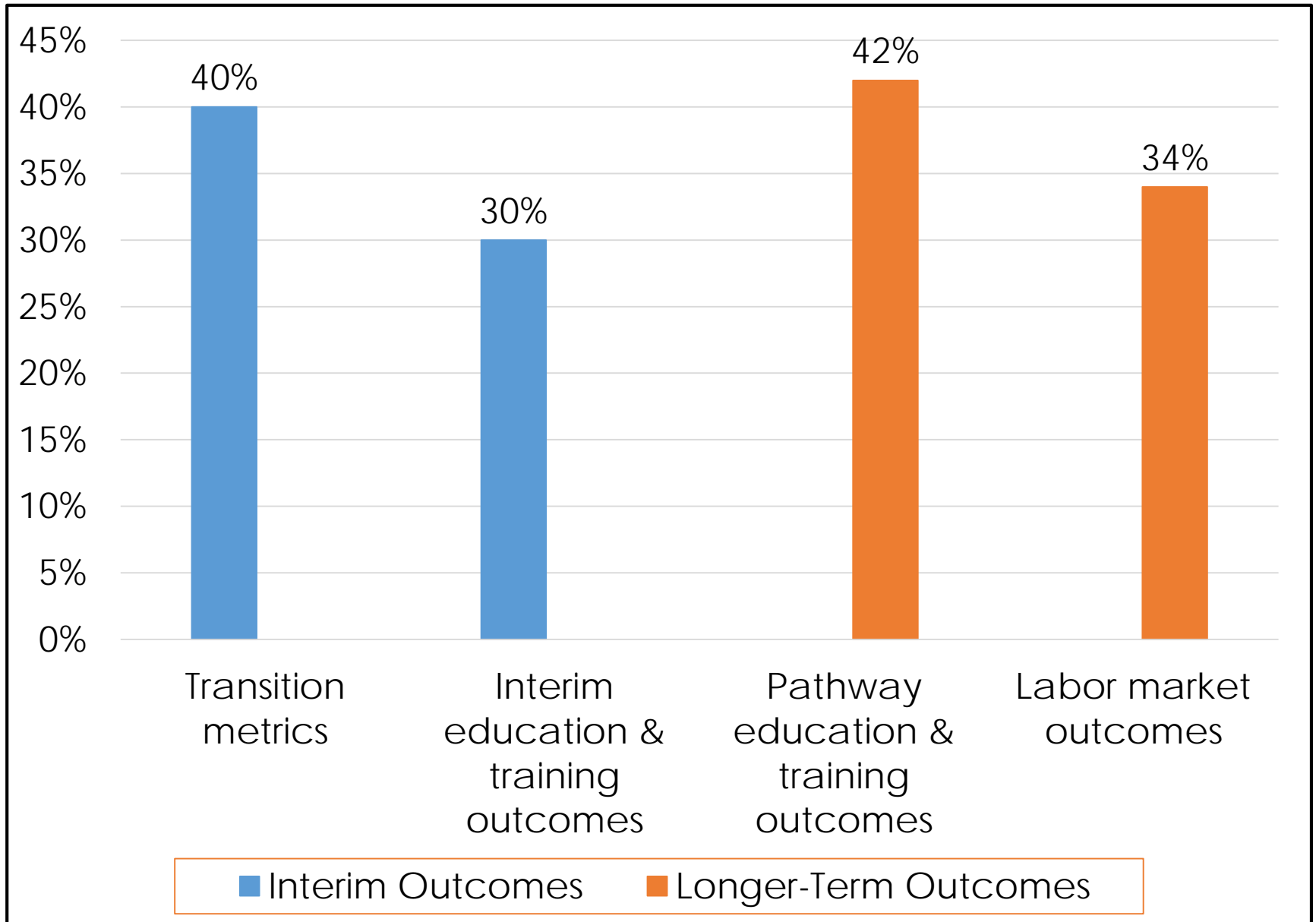


\* significantly more likely at agencies that said they provide CP

| CLASP Category and Corresponding Survey Items                                                                              | %   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Interim Outcomes                                                                                                        |     |
| 1a. "Transition metrics (following participants across education and training funding sources and settings)" (CLASP, p. 5) |     |
| • transitioned/transferred to tech school or college                                                                       | 42% |
| • transitioned/transferred to 2- or 4-year institution                                                                     | 38% |
| 1b. Interim education and training outcomes                                                                                |     |
| • educational level gains on standardized test                                                                             | 85% |
| • educational gains (teacher/program-created assessment)                                                                   | 46% |
| • re-enrolled in pathway course (next term)                                                                                | 30% |
| • completed post-secondary math or English course                                                                          | 17% |
| • completed postsecondary pathway course                                                                                   | 15% |
| • completed developmental/remedial course (postsecondary)                                                                  | 12% |
| • accumulated pathway credits                                                                                              | 7%  |

| CLASP Category and Corresponding Survey Items    | %   |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 2. Longer-Term Outcomes                          |     |
| 2a. Pathway education and training outcomes      |     |
| • attained HS/GED diploma                        | 67% |
| • attained CP credential                         | 48% |
| • attained pathway associate degree              | 11% |
| 2b. Labor market outcomes                        |     |
| • attained initial employment                    | 55% |
| • entry-level wage/salary                        | 35% |
| • employment in student-targeted industry sector | 33% |
| • employment retention                           | 33% |
| • promotion in employment                        | 31% |
| • change in income (wages/salary, pre/post)      | 18% |
| 3. Other                                         |     |
| • Other                                          | 23% |

- Averages: interim = 32%; longer-term = 37%





# Discussion

- Which findings surprised you the most? (type a phrase or sentence in chat pod)
- What's one way you can apply what you learned from today's webinar? (chat pod)
- Questions? (chat pod)

# For More Information...

- Project website: <http://adultpathways.psu.edu/>
  - Download the full report on survey findings from the “Updates” tab
- 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
- Acknowledgements:
  - Survey respondents and pilot testers
  - Staff and students at case study organizations
  - Kent Miller, Social and Economic Sciences Research Center, WSU
  - PSU graduate assistants: Ally Krupar, Ruth Sauder, Tabitha Stickel
  - Institute of Education Sciences & Meredith Larson

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