



Inclusive Emergency Alerts:

Recommendations for Language and Disability Access

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Background

The Colorado State Legislature passed House Bill 23-1237 in May 2023, tasking the Natural Hazards Center with conducting a study to:

- **Assess the state of emergency communications** in Colorado.
- **Identify gaps** in access and inclusion.
- **Identify best practices** for developing and distributing inclusive alerts.
- **Provide actional recommendations** to improve these communications for people with limited-English proficiency (LEP) and people with disabilities.

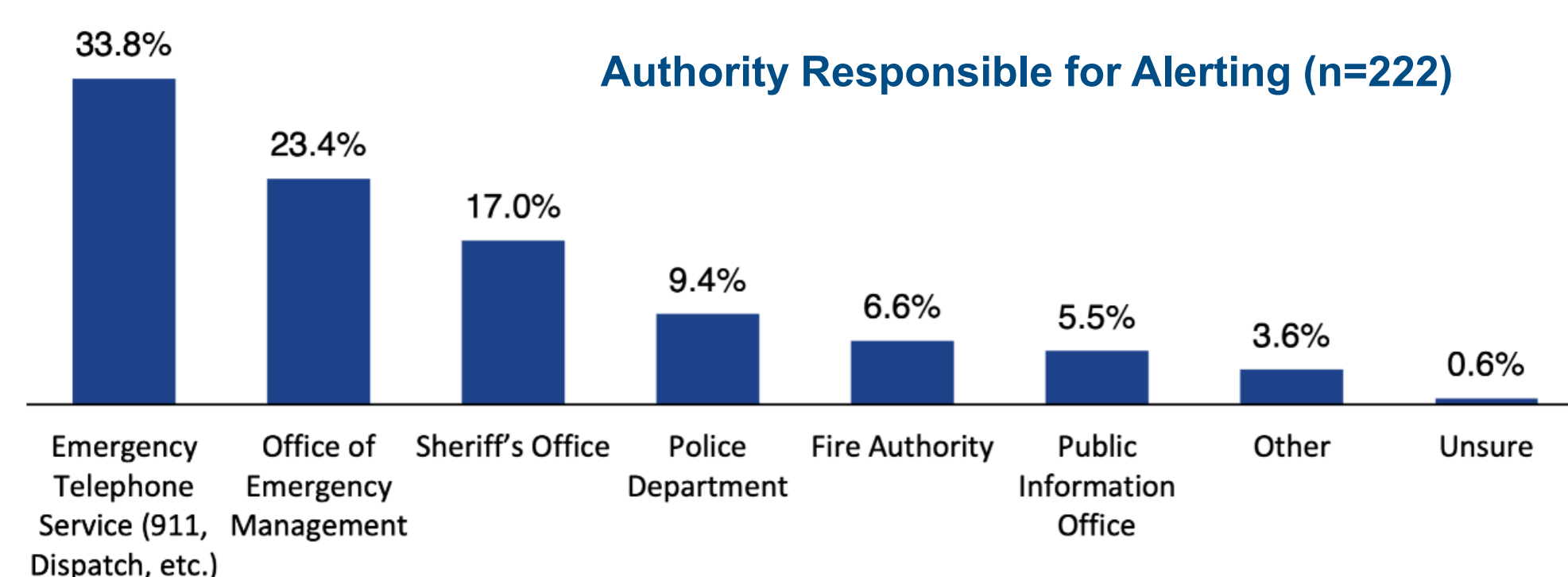
Methods

To address these gaps in knowledge, our team conducted a mixed-methods study where we:

- **Gathered best practices** for inclusive emergency alerts through a systematic literature review.
- **Surveyed emergency response personnel** who provide alerts to Colorado communities.
- **Held a series of partner meetings** with the following groups:
 - Emergency Response Professionals
 - Alert Provider Companies
 - News Reporters
 - Community Advocates
 - Elected Officials

Results

Our study revealed the following **five overarching themes** related to inclusive emergency alerting in Colorado.



1. Colorado has a patchwork of alerting systems.

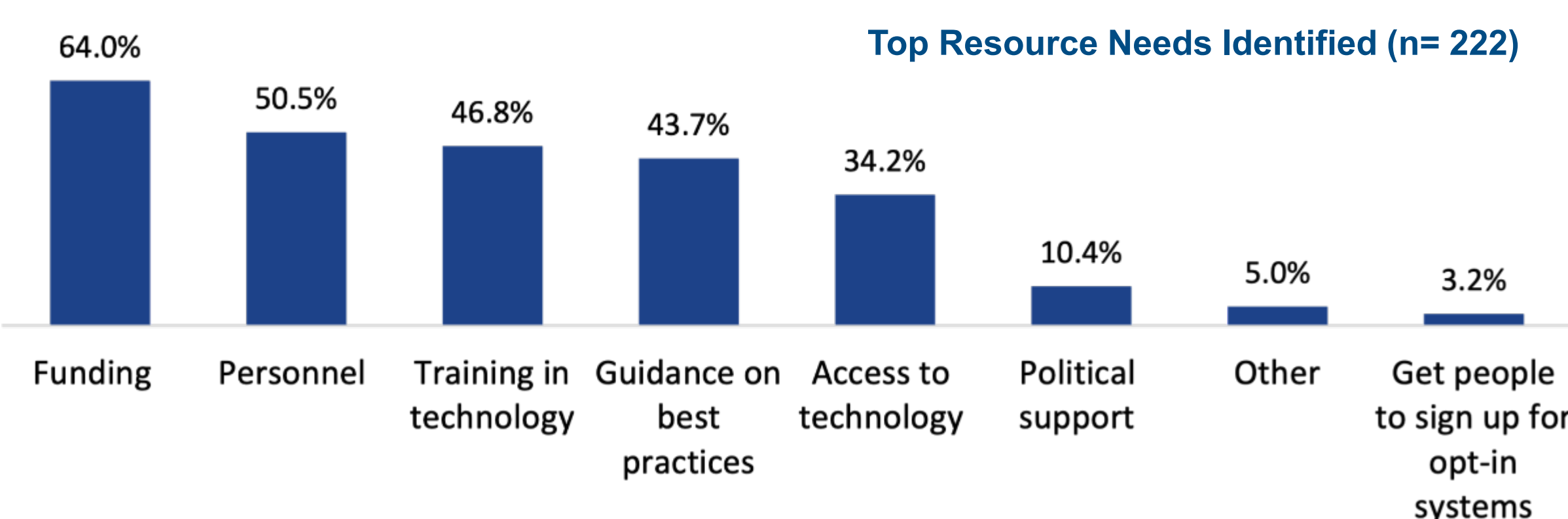
“The success of these systems in an emergency relies on the community actively signing up for alerts.”
-Delta County Survey Respondent

2. Authorities rely heavily on opt-in systems with low rates of uptake.

3. Resource constraints hinder inclusive alerts.

“...we usually resort to online translation services, but they are rarely correct.
It's a Catch-22 when we are expected to get warnings out as quickly as possible in every language possible but doing so isn't possible in a timely manner.”
-San Miguel County Survey Respondent

4. Guidance, funding, and personnel are needed to ensure inclusive alerts.



5. Technical limitations are significant.

Recommendations

- **People**
 - Hire state-level language access personnel.
 - Develop formal relationships with LEP and disability communities.
- **Practices**
 - Adopt a centralized alerting system and standardize practices.
 - Create and distribute language and disability access resources.
- **Funding**
 - Support research in inclusive practices.
 - Secure funding to support inclusive alerts.

Implications

- Policymakers in Colorado can address the gaps in receiving alerts in Colorado.
- This research shows the need for future research directly engaging with LEP populations and people with disabilities, such as hosting focus groups or surveying different populations.

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Deliverables and Publications

- A final report on the study in both English and Spanish.
- Journal articles:
 - “Barriers and Best Practices for Inclusive Emergency Alerts and Warnings.” *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, DOI: 10.1016/j.ijdr.2025.105581.
 - “Inclusive Emergency Alerts: Are Agencies Ready, Willing, and Able?” *Natural Hazards Review*.
 - “Research as Part of the Legislative Process.” *In process*.

