



FOR SOUTH CENTRAL NEW YORK

Prolonged Pandemic Need Assessment Survey Summary

We've had 111 responses broken down as follows:

Health and Human Services organizations-26

Arts organizations-18

Early Childhood organizations-8

School Districts-9

Food Security-8

Libraries-9

Animal Welfare-6

Museums/Historical Societies-9

Economic Development-7

The questions were designed to ascertain the operational and program-related needs of organizations as a prolonged pandemic plays itself out. What follows are the questions that were posed to organizations and a summary of their responses.

- 1. Has your organization developed a plan to continue operating during a prolonged COVID-19 outbreak?** More than half of the respondents have developed a plan to continue operating and close to a third have a plan in process. Only 4 % had no plan in place. Several organizations were waiting for their board to approve their plan and others have had to suspend operations completely due to the nature of their service (i.e. a community chorus made up of predominantly senior citizens). A handful were so small that they did not have the need/capacity to develop a plan.
- 2. How has the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic affected your organization's bottom line? Please include the estimated revenue loss for your current fiscal year.** The numbers here are staggering. 67 organizations provided a fixed number in response to this question. Their pandemic-related revenue losses range from \$1,000-\$800,000. **The total lost revenue reported from the 67 respondents is \$5.8 million dollars.** This is an average loss of \$86,000. This assumes that PPP (Paycheck Protection Program) loans will be forgiven. If they are not, it will be substantially higher. These losses are attributed to a number of factors including: cancelled fundraisers, loss of membership, loss of tuition for summer programs/camps, reduced annual giving as employment is negatively impacted, delays and reductions in state/federal contracts, decrease in program enrollment, decrease in fee-for-service income, rescission of county support, increased

expenditures on unfunded mandates related to the pandemic, and cancelled performances/seasons.

3. **Describe the changes made to your operation and programming as a result of the pandemic.** Organizations have adopted a wide-range of changes and modifications to their operations and programming over the past 6-months. The biggest change by far was to move services and operations on-line which included upgrading technology, providing telehealth services, producing new content, becoming more engaged and active on social media platforms, offering virtual camps and classes, transitioning staff to work from home, and purchasing cloud-based programs to support virtual work. Many organizations moved their services outdoors for the Spring/Summer and have restricted their use of volunteers to reduce their exposure to the virus and the organization's exposure to liability. The overwhelming majority of respondents had significantly reduced their programming or cancelled it altogether. They have taken significant steps to reduce expenses including major staff cuts, reducing staff hours, renegotiating contracts with vendors, giving up physical space to go completely virtual, and reducing salaries of remaining staff. Many report seeking new forms of support from foundations and other funders as well as re-imagining fundraising and securing bridge-loans. Finally, all reported having to perform a major update of policy and procedure which will account for the organization's efforts to continue running while keeping staff and the communities they serve safe.
4. **What are the major concerns about your organization's ability to operate as we move into the 6th month of the pandemic?** As bad as the losses for 2020 have been, all respondents expected that 2021 will be worse. Many receiving state funding have been told that there would be a minimum 20% cut across the board for state contracts. Live indoor performances are currently prohibited and it is unclear when restrictions will be lifted. As the course of the pandemic remains uncertain, closures/shutdowns could happen at any time and would negatively impact many organizations. Disengagement of donors and audiences is a big concern in 2021 as development positions have been furloughed. The majority of organizations responding reported a loss of fundraised revenue ranging from a few thousand dollars to a few hundred thousand dollars. In order to remain open, significant modifications to space will need to be completed as well as the added expense of PPE. These are unfunded mandates and a hardship for organizations that are already struggling. Several of the organizations have been able to pivot and offer services outdoors but will be unable to continue to do so as the weather turns colder. A significant number of respondents feared that they would not be able to meet their core mission.
5. **What are the specific concerns you have about meeting the needs of your employees during a prolonged COVID-19 pandemic?**
The number one concern of employers was employee burnout. Uncertainty over almost all aspects of their daily lives combined with fears of being laid off or furloughed and the responsibility of working AND educating their children at home have taken their toll.

Many have been able to piece together a childcare solution over the summer months but they rely on their children being back in school for day-to-day care. They cannot afford childcare centers and even if they could, there are not enough slots available to meet the anticipated need. Employers are concerned about the safety of their employees and have done their best to meet the unfunded mandates of NYS. Employees are very concerned about their safety while returning to the office and delivering face-to-face services. Employers are especially concerned that their seasoned, trained employees once furloughed or laid off, will not return.

6. **What are the specific concerns you have about meeting the needs of your clients/customers/patrons during a prolonged COVID-19 pandemic?**

The primary concern that organizations have about their clients/customers/patrons is that they are isolated and are experiencing “virtual fatigue”. For many receiving services from the respondents, face-to-face contact with the provider might have been the only social contact for the individual. Being isolated has resulted in a noted up-tick in mental health crises for the people served by the respondents. Also referenced frequently was organization’s concerns about the safety of their clients once they are receiving services in-person again. Organizations report that they have had difficulty meeting the needs of their clients because of difficulty communicating via technology and because of a lack of re-imburement for services provides from County, State and Federal funders. Most concerning for a majority of the respondents is the number of programs/services/events that have been cancelled or restricted due to the pandemic. They fear that if their clients are not engaged with their services now, they might not be able to re-engage them post-pandemic.

7. **Are there specific disruptions to a particular service you provide that you are most concerned about?**

The service disruptions cited most often center around essential programs such as: food security, mental health support groups and individual counseling sessions, enrichment programs for children and youth and the availability of childcare programs. Respondents from arts organizations were primarily concerned about their inability to perform live as it is their business model. They fear that by the time they are able to resume live performances, many will have folded due to lost revenue.

8. **What specific kinds of support from local funders would be most helpful to survive a prolonged COVID-19 pandemic? Overwhelming response was to support general operating through grants or low/no-interest loans.** Cited impacted expenses included lost revenue, covering paid sick leave, increasing staffing, meeting increase client needs, etc. The other major response involved making funds available for additional food assistance and health/safety supplies for staff and clients of services. Several organizations also asked for assistance with technological upgrades to build capacity to work at home and/or hold remote meetings.

Recommendations to support organizations during a prolonged pandemic:

- Provide general operating assistance
- Support the purchase of Personal Protective Equipment
- Advocate for childcare options during the school year
- Support technology requests that assist in delivering services remotely
- Advocate for stable funding streams from County, State, Federal sources

Support collaboration amongst organizations as well as mergers

- Continue to offer Program Related Investment as a funding opportunity