

2021 COVID-19 IMPACT SURVEY RESULTS

United Way of Southwestern Oregon

April 2021

In April 2021, United Way of Southwestern Oregon (“UWSWO”) invited over 100 Coos and Curry County nonprofit and community organization leaders to complete a survey on the impact of COVID-19, one year later. The purpose of the survey was threefold: to continue to inform ongoing south coast funder conversations; to educate the public about the impacts of COVID-19 on community partners; and to help shape UWSWO’s annual grantmaking program. Five raffle prizes were offered as incentives for leaders to participate. Over the two-week survey period, UWSWO received responses from 61 organizations representing a variety of sectors.

Highlights:

- General funding concerns continue to be a high priority for many organizations
- Most respondents have seen an increase in basic support needs from their clients, and most also expect the number of clients they serve to increase over the next 12 months; increased emotional distress was the highest reported current need/concern of their clients
- Over half of respondents saw a decrease in revenue and increase in costs 2019-2020 and over half expect their annual operating costs to increase over the next 12 months
- The highest priority activity for respondents over the next 12 months is to adapt current programs/services to meet ongoing and emerging needs
- Respondents reported grant writing training/assistance as the area that would be most helpful over the next 12 months; help with volunteer recruitment was also reported as a high need

Results are summarized below and the full results are available upon request.

Demographics of respondents

- Primary focus area of respondents: Health & Human Services
- Other focus areas represented: Education & Youth, Community & Civic Engagement, Arts & Culture, Animal Welfare, Environment, Faith-Based
- Counties served – respondents marked all that applied: Coos (79%), Curry (63%), Other (25% - Douglas, Lane, Jackson, Josephine, Marion, statewide, national)

Ongoing needs from COVID-19

- Over a third of respondents simply stated funding as an ongoing need, due primarily to increased operational costs, expanded programs/additional clients, cancelled fundraisers, etc:
 - *“Funding for specific covid related costs including the costs to clean and sanitize office spaces... increased overhead costs over-all, and specific assistance to individuals including transportation assistance, rental assistance, childcare assistance, job search, housing, etc. Ongoing needs remain our usual needs but amplified.”*
 - *“Because the ability to fund raise is very limited, we need funds for operational and programmatic costs. Purchasing food for preparing and serving/delivering meals, paying our utility bills, insurance and fees to operate.”*

- One in five respondents commented that capacity support, primarily for technology, equipment, and outreach assistance, was a need:
 - *"We are in need of acquiring and maintaining internet for our office to be able to conduct online classes."*
 - *"We have a great need for freezer space!"*
 - *"Ways to reach people that normally come inside our building."*
- Other needs included social/emotional supports, PPE/COVID supplies, basic client support, and volunteers:
 - *"Respite and self-care."*
 - *"PPE for employees and [clients]."*
 - *"Food, medical, transportation, and housing/shelter."*
 - *"Our volunteer base was made up of mostly retired individuals, so they were high risk."*

Client/service impact of COVID-19

76% of respondents reported an increase in their clients' needs for basic support since July 2020. Current COVID-related needs/concerns ranking highest included:

- Increased emotional distress
- Difficulty paying basic housing expenses
- Loss of jobs/income
- Food assistance
- Learning loss/K-12 education disruption

Needs/concerns ranking lower included loss of childcare/dependent care options, lack of access to medical care, access to COVID vaccines, and access to unemployment and other benefits. Access to COVID testing/information ranked lowest as a need/concern.

A few respondents provided specific additional comments related to client COVID-related needs/concerns including social isolation and disconnection from support systems (especially for bilingual families), lack of personal caregivers in the home, loss of comfort with working in general, children not being seen by mandatory reporters, and transportation.

76% of respondents reported expecting the number of clients they served to increase in the next 12 months. The top-ranked organizational priority over the next 12 months was adapting current programs/services to meet ongoing and emerging needs. Establishing new programs/services to meet ongoing and emerging needs ranked next, followed by supporting staff (retention, training, etc.) and improving internal systems/processes/procedures. Initiating or completing capital improvement projects was the lowest ranking priority for these organizations.

Financial impacts of COVID-19

Four in ten respondents were from small organizations (39% reported <\$100k as their annual operating budget in a typical year). Nine out of ten respondents reported receiving some type of COVID-19 specific funding, which could include local/state/federal COVID-19 grant awards, PPP loan(s), and/or community donations in response to specific COVID-19 funding outreach.

Excluding COVID-19 specific funding, 58% of respondents reported a decrease in revenue 2019-2020, and 66% of respondents reported an increase in overall operating costs 2019-2020.

Half (52%) of respondents expect their annual operating budget to increase as an anticipated long-term impact of the pandemic. Program adaptation and expansion was cited as the primary reason for this increase:

- *"Meal service to homebound individuals and for congregate take-out has increased while donations have decreased. In addition, we are serving meals to more people in the under 60 ages which we believe will continue and perhaps increase."*
- *"Increase in programs to serve and the tech to go along with the new programs and to maintain a virtual presence."*
- *"Our charitable giving receipts, other than COVID specific, have gone down with the area's income. We are quite concerned that our food needs will stay the same and we won't be able to cover our expenses once the COVID dollars disappear. We have gone from serving a high of 50 families to a regular 150."*
- *"We have not seen an increase in clients, but we know the tsunami is coming."*

Another 35% of respondents did not anticipate a change to their annual operating budget, citing stable funding sources and stabilization from the pandemic among the reasons why. The final 13% expected their annual operating budgets to decrease. Several respondents mentioned concern about ongoing fund availability at the federal, state, and local/private levels.

Ongoing support needs

When asked which support area would be most helpful for their organization over the next 12 months, grant writing training/assistance was reported as the highest need, followed closely by volunteer recruitment. Areas coming in lower on the "highest need" scale included technology support, Board development, budgeting/forecasting training, and networking opportunities with similar organizations. However, it is worth noting that networking opportunities received the most responses for "second highest need."

When asked about the "most impactful thing UWSWO could do" to support respondent organizations over the next 12 months, not surprisingly, funding assistance – direct or indirect – was most frequently mentioned:

- *"Continue to provide small grants to cover highly impactful programs like food distribution & transportation expenses."*
- *"Over the next 12 months the most impactful way UWSWO can support our organization is to help us continue our expansion of services to those in need in our community. To assist us in finding partners and funders to support us and to come along side us in partnership and support our expansion."*
- *"Additional funding for general operations is the most important thing that could be done to support our organization."*

Networking was cited in comments as the next most impactful thing UWSWO could do to support respondents' organizations over the next 12 months:

- *"Help us navigate the myriad opportunities and possible connections so that we can stay true to program goals while maximizing potential partnerships and gaining sustainability."*
- *"Continue to connect social service agencies and provide opportunities for networking. It may be harder than ever to get away and attend those opportunities such as SSC but it is also perhaps more important than ever."*
- *"Continue to be a bridge between funders and community organizations."*

Training and volunteer recruitment support were mentioned in comments from a handful of respondents as well.

Ending on a positive note...

The final section of the survey gave respondents the option to share one positive story or anecdote about their organization's response to COVID-19 over the last year. Respondents shared prideful stories of keeping their staff and clients safe for the entire duration of the pandemic, staff and Boards really stepping up to serve, "responding to more with less," collaborating with community partners, and finding creative solutions to serve, motivate, and inspire existing and new clients - and the community as a whole. One respondent simply replied, "Patience."

Many of these stories will be shared with the community in the coming months, but this word cloud summary created from their stories is a great illustration of the resilience and response of Coos and Curry Counties over the last 12 months:

