

CENTERING COMMUNITY IN A PANDEMIC

The Impact of COVID-19 on East Bay Nonprofits and the Community They Serve

Summary

With the rapid acceleration of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, it was imperative to understand the immediate impact on local nonprofits in the East Bay and the communities they serve. The East Bay's diversity is one of its strengths. However, the COVID-19 pandemic threatens residents who have built community, but not wealth, for generations. It also threatens to further erode a strained and fragmented nonprofit ecosystem. Maintaining a healthy and viable nonprofit community is essential to create a Bay Area in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential¹. This is why this survey is timely and consequential.

The Sanford Institute of Philanthropy (SIP/JFKU) at John F. Kennedy University, with support from the East Bay Community Foundation, Dean & Margaret Leshner Foundation, San Francisco Foundation, and Y&H Soda Foundation, and with technical support from CCS Fundraising undertook this survey to:

- Obtain timely and relevant data to inform advocacy for the nonprofit sector;
- Identify pressing needs and challenges that require immediate and/or short-term responses; and
- Enable a more coordinated approach to address the overall impact of COVID-19 in the two counties—Alameda & Contra Costa—that make up the East Bay.

The survey was emailed to 776 nonprofit partners of SIP/JFKU and current grantees of the foundations. The survey was open from April 15 – 27, 2020. From May 11 – May 26, input sessions were facilitated with community leaders to augment the survey data and gain additional insights on implications for nonprofits, governments and philanthropy.²

The survey findings and discussions with community leaders affirmed that the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the historic and persistent structural inequities in the East Bay and beyond.

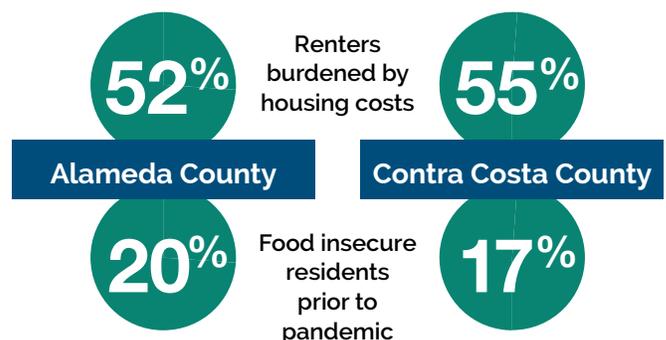
- Between 2000 and 2015 **low wage workers** in both Alameda and Contra Costa Counties saw the **least income growth** across the income distribution. The share of **renters burdened by housing costs**³ went up from 42% to 52% and 55%, respectively.
- Among low-income households across the East Bay, **Black and people of color households are most likely to be living in neighborhoods that are gentrifying or at risk of gentrifying**⁴.
- Prior to the pandemic, **20% and 17% respectively, of residents in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties were food insecure**.⁵

Community and civic leaders in the East Bay have an opportunity to leverage this historic moment to reimagine and redefine structures that center on building a fair and just society and belonging for the most impacted communities.

This report will bring to light the key findings, the implications drawn from the survey data and community input, and conclude with opportunities for action. It is a report of a “moment in time” that captures the immediate impact of COVID-19 on nonprofits, their clients and constituents, and the broader community in the East Bay.



Community leaders were unequivocal in stating that the most marginalized communities of color and workers (including nonprofit staff) are disproportionately impacted — physically, mentally, emotionally and economically.

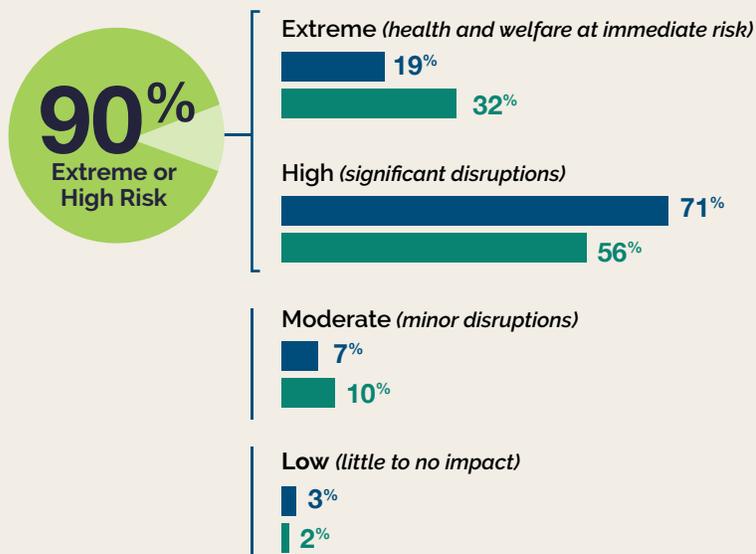


SURVEY FINDINGS *Community Impact*

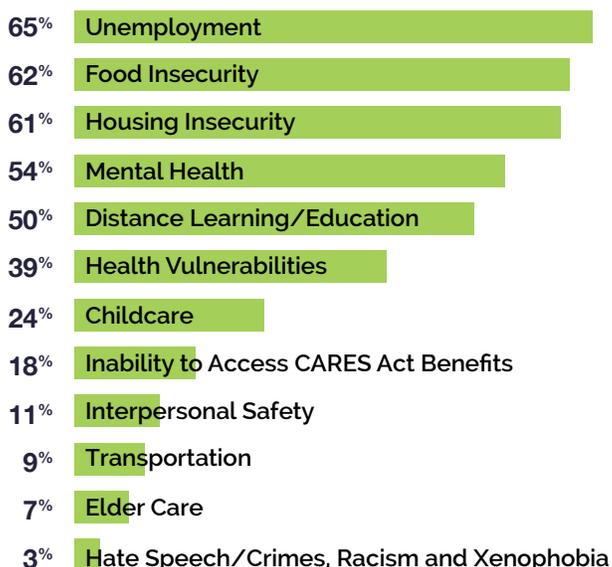
IMPACT ON CLIENTS/CONSTITUENTS

90% of respondents said their clients/constituents are at extreme or high risk. In 3-6 months, the anticipated percentage of clients/constituents experiencing extreme risk increases from 19% to 32%.

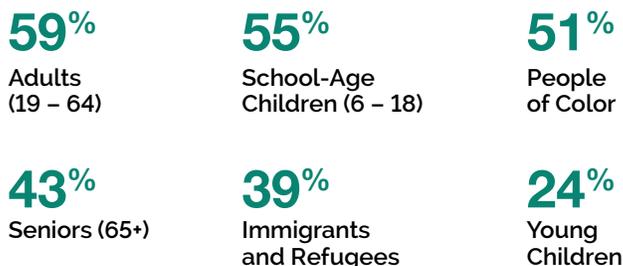
- What level of impact is COVID-19 already having on your clients/constituents?
- What level of impact do you expect COVID-19 to have on your clients/constituents during the next 3-6 months?



COMMUNITY CHALLENGES



MOST IMPACTED DEMOGRAPHIC SEGMENTS



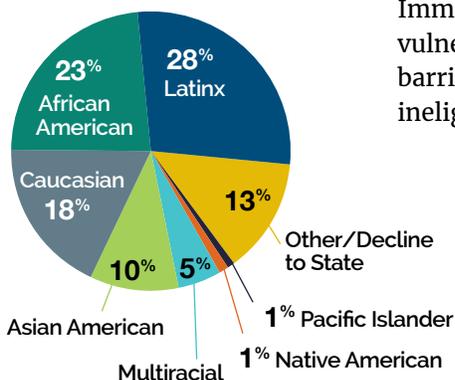
WHO DO THE RESPONDENTS SERVE?

The Reach of Nonprofits is Deep and Wide

30% of the nonprofits participating in the survey serve more than 5,000 community residents.

Most nonprofits responding to the survey are small in size and have 25 or fewer full-time and part-time employees.

- 74% of the nonprofits serve households earning less than \$80K.
- 54% of the nonprofits serve households earning less than \$40K.



Immigrants and refugees are among the most vulnerable populations due to language and other barriers including undocumented immigrants' ineligibility for federal COVID-related programs.



- 72% Serve Immigrants/Refugees
- 20% Serve a Majority of Immigrants/Refugees
- 39% Serve Less Than 10% Immigrants/Refugees

SURVEY FINDINGS *Nonprofit Impact*

IMPACT ON NONPROFITS

Almost 80% of survey participants are currently experiencing high (64%) or extreme (14%) impact on their agency or service delivery model. This risk is anticipated to remain consistent in 3-6 months.

- What level of impact is COVID-19 already having on your agency or service model?
- What level of impact do you expect COVID-19 to have on your service/delivery model during the next 3-6 months?

Extreme (risk of closing down)



High (significant impact)



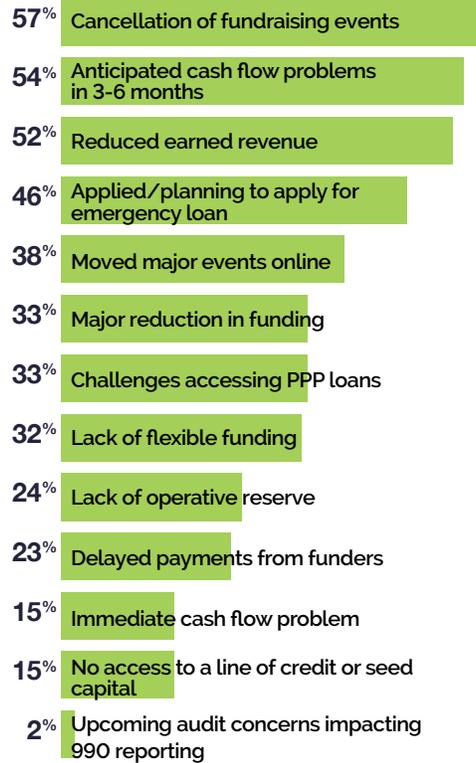
Moderate (moderate impact)



Low (little to no impact)

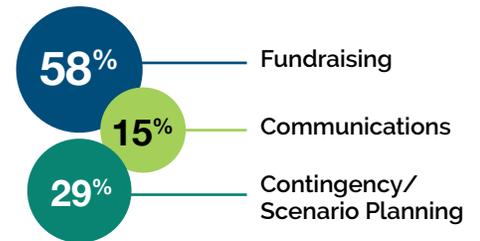


PROGRAMMATIC IMPACTS



Community input sessions pointed out that African-Americans, Latinos and undocumented immigrants and their families, as well as people of color led nonprofits face structural barriers to accessing critical resources including COVID-19 relief and recovery assistance programs.

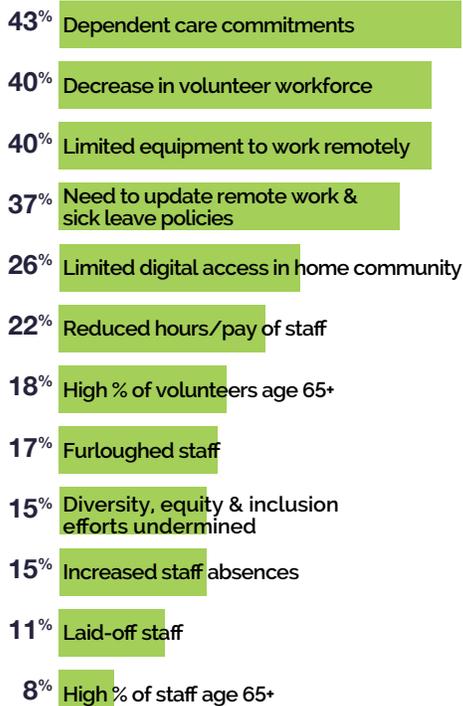
CAPACITY BUILDING NEEDS



“Working out of home means that I’m also a parent and teacher in addition to my regular work duties.”

Survey Respondent

IMPACT ON STAFF



DESPITE THESE CONSTRAINTS NONPROFITS CONTINUE TO CONTRIBUTE



INCREASED DEMAND FOR NONPROFIT SERVICES

The following nonprofit types experienced the most increase in demand for their services:



Implications OF THE EAST BAY NONPROFIT SURVEY FINDINGS

Nonprofits have risen to the challenges of the moment by adapting how they work but also what they work on. Advocacy organizations have raised funds and realigned budgets to provide financial assistance to individuals and families in crisis; service delivery agencies have joined coalitions to support policies to alleviate the burden on their communities. The survey affirms the dire impact of reported and unreported unemployment in the region and workforce development nonprofits reported an increase in demand for their services. Nonprofits serving low-income communities of color are notoriously underfunded,⁶ which does not bode well for those communities to recover quickly from the current levels of financial hardship. Despite significant programmatic disruptions and ongoing challenges faced by their staff, nonprofits continue to contribute meaningfully and bring specific assets to this moment that all sectors can support and leverage.

“In economically challenged neighborhoods we are dealing with mental health plus unemployment plus housing instability plus food insecurity. And we are also dealing with substance abuse, addiction and trauma. How do we address the fragility of the nonprofit sector?”

– Community Leader

Multisector coordination efforts must be sustained and expanded as the number of community members whose health and welfare are at extreme risk is anticipated to increase over the next few months. The community input

sessions raised the need for these coordination networks to center on community and to follow the leadership of trusted community leaders.

The community input sessions reaffirmed the high level of mental and emotional stress among community members including nonprofit staff and volunteers who are either experiencing their own trauma or responding to their inability to fully support their clients. Nonprofit staff must also balance their professional roles with additional dependent care responsibilities. Furthermore, as the world shifted to “work from home” it became clear that nonprofits need a technology plan and infrastructure that gives them the flexibility to operate with agility in this new environment.

As state and local government resources are projected to decline, cross-sector partnerships are an opportunity to support decision-making, resource allocation and policy implementation that ensure those most underserved are prioritized and that historical inequities are not perpetuated. Including community voices is not only just and fair it is often required by law⁷ and can surface barriers and bright spots that may be invisible outside a community.

The survey findings and community input sessions affirm that this pandemic has brought to the forefront the racism of existing systems and the underinvestment in East Bay communities. At the same time, community leaders are stepping up to co-create and lead a collaborative ecosystem that considers the cultural, social, economic and political context of the East Bay and values the unique as well as the shared experiences of different marginalized communities across the region.





The moment calls for effective short-term responses that serve as building blocks for long-term systemic and equitable ecosystems. Despite the economic and fiscal challenges, this moment calls for collective far-sighted actions to create new social and economic systems where everyone can thrive.

Philanthropy and government can and should commit to significantly larger investments in Black-, Latinx-, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native-led groups that develop and empower regional coalitions and workgroups championing coordinated actions that transform existing power dynamics.

Partnership Opportunities

- Convene likely and unlikely allies including impacted community members, faith, labor, nonprofit, business, government, and philanthropic and civic leaders to capitalize on the promise of emerging collaborations and strategically co-create an equitable East Bay for all
- Build the capacity of philanthropy, government, and all major institutions to listen and learn when their communities hold them accountable
- Deepen advocacy and strengthen cross sector partnerships (business, community, education, government, labor, and philanthropy) to prioritize economic opportunity for living wage jobs for low and moderate-income workers, particularly people of color
- Engage low-income communities of color to ensure active civic participation
- Continue to build community voice and power to lead innovations as well as inform philanthropic and policy decision-making
- Explore mechanisms for shared data analytics/predictive modeling efforts to guide decision-making by government, philanthropy, nonprofits and community
- Demand and deliver data collection and analysis that disaggregates data by race and ethnicity

“How will government and philanthropy address the tech gaps that have been illuminated through this crisis?”

– Community Input Session Participant

Programmatic Opportunities

- Develop a coordinated and culturally responsive wellness strategy to address the mental health impacts of the crisis on families and communities, including nonprofit staff
- Launch culturally appropriate communications and messaging for communities with limited understanding and trust of government to ensure people are aware of and understand how to access resources
- Close the gaps in the digital divide that perpetuate inequities in access and opportunities for traditionally marginalized communities⁸
- Coordinate financial support for undocumented communities especially with trusted community organizations
- Create and disseminate narratives and stories to highlight intersectional challenges and reinforce opportunities for systems change in the East Bay

Capacity Building Opportunities

- Create the space for and sustain culturally competent fundraising to meet the needs and strengths of people of color and women-led nonprofits
- Invest in scenario planning in service of a healthy and vibrant nonprofit ecosystem
- Continue to build the capacity of nonprofit board members to deepen their confidence and engagement
- Explore innovative and enterprising approaches in nonprofit financing and fundraising to address gaps in earned income and other forms of revenue

- Invest in appropriate, community-informed nonprofit sustainability initiatives that advance the capacity of nonprofits to stably and sustainably address and center the needs of their communities

Leaders across all sectors — philanthropy, nonprofits, government, and business — have an enormous opportunity to re-build local communities by centering and building the economic and political power of marginalized communities.

Local Government Opportunities

- Equip and enhance 211 systems to intentionally deploy resources to sub-regions and populations with the greatest needs, including limited English proficient communities
- Launch a coordinated, multilingual, multichannel, messaging campaign to direct people to 211
- Reassess and streamline county processes to effectively deploy public funds out to impacted and eligible communities
- Build on pre- and post- COVID local government-community partnerships to prioritize the well-being of historically marginalized communities and implement innovative policies that address racial and economic disparities. Resources include: National League of Cities (NLC)⁹ and International City/County Management Association (ICMA)¹⁰

What's Next?

This report offers concrete opportunities for philanthropy, local governments, nonprofits and community members to act upon in order to ensure equitable, culturally responsive and multilingual access to resources and services for communities across the East Bay.

We expect to conduct a follow-up survey in the fall to track and understand the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on East Bay nonprofits and the communities they serve, adding questions that provide more racially and ethnically disaggregated data.

We invite community, nonprofit, local government and philanthropic leaders to share this report with their emerging and established networks. We also welcome your reflections on the implications and opportunities presented here, as we move towards a just and equitable East Bay for all.



Footnotes

- ¹ "Just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential", [Policy Link](#)
- ² See Acknowledgements: List of Community Input Sessions Participants. *These sessions aimed to get a range of voices from across the East Bay but given the limited turnaround time do not represent all the community voices.*
- ³ HUD defines cost-burdened families as those "who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing" and "may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care."
- ⁴ Data from Bay Area Equity Atlas, <https://bayareaequityatlas.org/>
- ⁵ "A household that is "food insecure" lacks access to affordable and nutritious food to support a healthy life. <https://cchealth.org/eh/food/donation.php> and <https://www.accfb.org>
- ⁶ <https://www.insidephilanthropy.com/home/2020/4/2/the-hardest-hit-who-is-supporting-communities-of-color-during-covid-19>
- ⁷ Examples include the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) requiring stakeholder engagement as part of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) for schools or AB 617 Community Air Protection Program.
- ⁸ An estimated 31-33% of low-income students and 22-26% of students of color in West Contra Costa, Antioch, Pittsburg, Hayward and Oakland Unified School Districts lack internet access. In addition, English Learners, students with disabilities and homeless youth are more likely to lack internet access." <https://west.edtrust.org/resource/education-equity-in-crisis-the-digital-divide/>
- ⁹ <https://cityspeak.org/2020/04/21/disparate-impacts-of-covid-19-on-communities-of-color/>
- ¹⁰ <https://icma.org/events/free-webinar-sharpening-focus-social-equity-make-strategic-budget-decisions>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Community Input Sessions Participants

We are deeply grateful to the following community leaders for contributing their valuable time to discuss the survey data and its implications for the communities they live and work in.

Contra Costa County Funders Forum

Sanford Institute of Philanthropy's Advisory Council

West Contra Costa County Care Coalition
facilitated by RYSE (100 nonprofit,
government, community and civic leaders)

Other Participants

Carol Burton, Jeweld Legacy Group
Dan Geiger, Human Services Alliance
David Sharples, ACCE Institute
Debra Ballinger, Monument Impact
Devorah Levine, Contra Costa County Department
of Employment and Human Services
Duffy Newman, Contra Costa County Health Services
Fran Biderman, Family Economic Security Partnership
Héctor Malvido, Ensuring Opportunity
Judy Schwartz, Fremont Family Resource Center
Kirsten Rigby, Village Resource Community Center
Lavonna Martin, Contra Costa Health Services
Mariana Moore, Ensuring Opportunity
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