



COVID-19 and NYS Nonprofits Pulse Report

Data gathered March 17 – 25, 2020

Prepared by New York Council of Nonprofits (NYCON)

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Survey Overview

Due to the historic COVID-19 Pandemic and the escalating spread of the deadly virus, New York State and local county governments have enacted several mandates in their efforts to ultimately reduce the number of infected individuals and ease the burden on our healthcare system. Several states, including New York State, implemented emergency disaster measures by drastically reducing the workforce to only workers deemed “essential” and restricting unnecessary travel, especially on public transit. In many cases, nonprofits are being forced to lay off staff or close their doors completely, while others are overburdened with trying to meet the growing needs in their communities.

While community health is at the forefront of everyone’s minds, the New York Council of Nonprofits (NYCON) was very aware of how these restrictions would impact nearly all nonprofits. NYCON conducted a survey of hundreds of nonprofits throughout New York State asking them to share the various challenges and struggles their organizations are facing on a daily basis due to the pandemic, and identify their immediate needs. NYCON used this input to design and make available the training, tools, and support that would deliver the most impact during this very challenging period.

Methodology

The survey was circulated starting on March 17, 2020 . Follow up emails which included pertinent resources such as NYCON’s “Covid-19 Resource Library” also included links to the survey. The email was sent to 4,737 individual email addresses identified as the primary contact for organizations representing either current NYCON members, or recently expired NYCON members (expired within the last two years). The survey was also sent to the board members of both NYCON and Governance Matters.

Of the approximately 4,700 emails sent, 4,100 were received successfully. There were 399 respondents who completed the survey through March 25 (Which is a 10.27% return rate – national average for email survey is generally 10%).

Respondents were asked to indicate their annual budget, the category that best described their mission, and top concerns and challenges.

Executive Summary

When asked how much COVID-19 is impacting their programs, services and general operations, the vast majority of respondents (85%) indicated “high, significant impact.”

Among those organizations that responded, 80% have annual budgets that fall between \$50,000 and \$5M, with 8.5% below \$50,000, and nearly 10% with budgets higher than \$5M.

A clear majority, 42% respondents selected “Arts, Culture & Humanities” as best describing their mission. Second most selected category was “Health & Human Services” at 17.5%.

Among respondents, the two most often identified (immediate or anticipated) impacts were the *inability to provide services* and *loss of revenue/income*. These were closely followed by potential or realized staff layoffs, anxiety/lower morale, and fear of the organization being forced to close.

Those who responded asked NYCON for public policy support and advocacy, guidance on the ever-changing laws and requirements, and online trainings for staff and board members. In particular, respondents asked NYCON for help in identifying and advocating for alternate funding streams to offset revenue losses.

Also, 247 of the 399 respondents indicated they were willing to having their unique comments shared with public officials and fellow NYCON members. There were also multiple requests for NYCON to facilitate group discussions and other networking opportunities where nonprofits can share ideas and resources with one another during this challenge.

Results

Responses are summarized in the charts below. For brevity purposes, not all answers submitted to open ended questions are presented here. Those that were selected and highlighted below were selected as representative of common themes.

1. How much is COVID-19 impacting, or expected to impact, programs, services, or the general operations of your organization.

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Low (little to no impact)	6	1.5%
Moderate (minor disruptions)	48	12.0%
High (significant impact)	341	85.4%
No Responses	4	1.0%
Total	399	100%

2. What specific impacts has your organization experienced or do you anticipate experiencing? (check all that apply, and add additional)

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Cancellations of fundraisers or events	322	80.9%
Disruption of programming or service delivery	352	88.4%
Disruption of supplies or services provided by partners	115	28.8%
Decreased staff and volunteer availability	224	56.2%
Increased demand for services from the community	95	23.8%
Funding, cash flow or budgetary challenges related to the economic strain	279	70.1%
Increased demand for technology/resources to allow staff to work from home	163	40.9%
Other	91	22.8%
Total	398	100%

Selected additional comments shared:

"We are closed / layoffs happened already."

"Morale of staff due to uncertainties."

"Increased demand for technology/resources to allow for virtual appointments."

"Long delay for testing results for contacts of staff."

“Extreme cleaning and maintenance measures, edging on toxic, hardship on staff and slow guidance from certain state agencies.”

3. Please share your biggest concerns and challenges here:

Cancel events	Lose funding /revenue /gov. contracts	Cash Flow/Payroll	Not provide services or /remotely	Personnel shortage/ downsizing	Supply shortages	Closure
25.4%	50.4%	26.2%	34.9%	20.2%	2.6%	5.8%

Selected additional comments shared:

“Paying for the OT necessary to step up janitorial (cleaning & disinfecting) work.”

“Loss of billing for fee for service programs. Loss of community engagement and events.”

“Biggest challenge is service delivery while staff are working remotely.”

“From the perspective of a small arts organization:

- *Poor stock market = less grants*
- *Business disruption = less sponsorships*
- *Poor Economy = less donations*
- *No Events = no income*
- *No Events = cancelled fundraiser*
- *No Events = no connection to community*
- *All of the above = impacts felt for years”*

“We are an EMS agency. I fear for the health and safety of our members and staff.”

“Anticipating the end of the crisis. No one knows and living it out is the challenge. Difficult to plan for home, family, organization, and community.”

“Our organization has no cash reserves nor endowment to help us in these dire circumstances.”

“The biggest challenge is that there is no precedent to know what best practices are. We are all in this together to figure out what will get us through. I am hoping we all learn to better help each other and come out of this an even more caring community.”

4. Please tell us about your needs and how you think NYCON can help:

Advocate NYS for \$ for Nonprofits & Arts	Facilitate Webinars of NY nonprofits	Guidance/Be a credible resource of info including HR & Unemployment issues	Finding Granters	Don't know or unsure
50.4%	14.4%	38.9%	28.9%	12.6%

Selected additional comments shared:

"Maybe hosting a conference call or webinar for EDs so they can discuss difficulties/action plans to help us all think outside the box?"

"Communications guidance across the Board - and guidance of unemployment for my staff."

"Best practices. Advocacy for the nonprofit sector to financial stay viable."

"Sharing info on interim policies agencies are adopting."

"Technology and training to help nonprofits increase their ability to operate remotely."

"I think just having a place to share concerns with others and ideas."

"Authoritative guidance re: operational continuity issues."

5. What size is your organization's budget?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Under \$50,000	34	8.5%
\$50,000 - \$250,000	91	22.8%
\$250,000 - \$500,000	80	20.0%
\$500,000 - \$1M	69	17.2%
\$1M - \$5M	81	20.3%
\$5M - \$10M	15	3.7%
\$10M+	25	6.2%
No Responses	4	1.0%
Total	399	100%

6. What category best describes your organization's mission:

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Arts, Culture & Humanities	169	42.3%
Environment & Conservation	6	1.5%
Human Rights & Advocacy	8	2.0%
Animal Welfare	2	<1%
Health & Human Services	70	17.5%
Poverty Alleviation & Housing/Shelter	10	2.5%
Educational Institutions	25	6.2%
Food Access & Nutrition	8	2.0%
Youth Development	19	4.7%
Religious & Spiritual	7	1.7%
Other	71	17.7%
No Responses	4	1.0%
Total	399	100%

Conclusion and Recommendations

Nonprofits throughout the state responding to the survey are primarily concerned about loss of revenue, decreased income, and reduced funding for emergency needs. Most expressed anxiety and frustration caused by lack of information available, and desire stability while trading presently uncharted waters.

They are looking for an authoritative, credible source of information, and an ally who understands the challenges facing them today as they attempt deliver quality programming in their communities. They are seeking training opportunities, information on changing policies, and additional funding opportunities to offset economic losses. They seek compassionate support and understanding as they attempt to remain loyal to their mission, constituents and staff.

Resources Available:

- **NYCON's COVID-19 Resource Library for Nonprofits** (Includes ongoing list of COVID-19 relief funding opportunities): <https://www.nycon.org/resources/covid-19-resources-for-nonprofits>
- **Schedule of NYCON's COVID-19 Webinars and Network Calls:** <https://www.nycon.org/news-events/events>