WNYNSG COVID Recovery Focus Groups with Nonprofits
August 2020
Chautauqua County Nonprofits (41 participants)

Group 1

- What are gaps you see that are not being met right now?
    - Lack of coordination between how families navigate work schedules and meet the childcare / education needs of kids. At least 3 days a week need to provide something for kids, especially for families in jobs like manufacturing, other in-person jobs.
    - OASAS - Organization receiving 20% cut, getting more requests to do things with the schools – new school district – how to do more in the face of cuts? Need especially for SEL and trauma-informed care
    - Lack of coordination – streamline approaches as multiple organizations working with kids. Working in own silos. Being more innovative to meet needs with less resources
    - Lack of flexibility – families need flexibility (weekend hours, evening, meeting them where they are). Families struggle with technology use
    - Trying to take this as an opportunity to build out partnerships, build out the future of congregate dining which will look different post-COVID.
    - Senior housing repairs, tons of requests but underfunded
    - Tech insecurity for older folks. Broadband access. Having a hard time with SNAP and HEAP because they can't reach anyone in an office. Can't access the application
    - Technology – 7 different school districts, not enough laptops in the home for all kids. Even those with some tech will struggle, many families don't have any tech. Not great communication among districts and ISPs about this.
        - Just because you have internet doesn't mean you can run multiple streaming services. Not enough bandwidth for multiple kids to be working – service is just not available.
- What could it look like to have a collective, coordinated effort to build capacity of the nonprofit **sector** in your county?
    - These calls have been helpful – updates on what everyone has been doing. Monthly connection to continue to bring people together
    - Volunteers to help with secretarial duties, especially as administrative costs are cut. Is there a volunteer hub that could help orgs leverage volunteers? School districts used to do this with substitute teacher pool
    - Electronic referral system and navigate referrals for the client. Trying to get more partners linked into the system so their information can be sent directly to callers and there's a smooth handoff to the right organization. Specifically, when there is an abundance of food, a lot of it is wasted without communication. Set up a system with United Way to get the information

- Ability to share data between organizations. Collect data together – enhance data, share costs, new learnings. Help understand the degree to which we're addressing need
- Having shared outcomes that we are all working toward. Will achieve more positive outcomes if we are working toward the same thing recovery
  - Needs for collaboration: Someone who has the time to convene, manage the collaboration. Everyone is so busy, need a backbone organization
  - United Way is stepping up into that role – Adam has helped bring people together, super helpful. Someone to rely on to pull together pieces
  - If you are going to collect outcome data, everyone wants to know if they are effective, but if everyone is collecting different data, it's hard – how are we doing on these key measures as a whole
  - In Monroe / Erie – robust county wide data system that everyone reports into, run by the county. In Monroe, you can request reports of county wide comparative data to use in funding opportunities. Makes it easier to go after regional and national grants. Would be helpful to have this in Southern Tier
  - Document into Peer Place system (for all different services offered through county) – encourage contractors to provide data and we can pull countywide data for them.
    - For food systems, have organizations with a lot of different purposes, provide raw data every week and get back aggregate numbers every month

Group 2

- What does the **sector** need to do or build to serve these populations – over the next two years.
  - Capacity – trouble connecting people w/ clinicians, walking them through that process
    - Overload, compassion fatigue, burnout – need more capacity and people
  - Staffing – we can grow programs but need staff available to do that
    - +1
  - Funding for staff so we can provide programs/support for free to communities who need it
  - Collaboration across orgs working together – avoid duplication, partnering and figuring out what we can all bring
    - It's happening, but 1-on-1 or relationship based – should be more easily accessible, by multiple people in an org; fixed and easy process
    - More formalized community info exchange between orgs – esp. CBOs working more like integrated health delivery system; need to integrate systems and info sharing
  - Shared services – maybe not as far as mergers/acquisitions, but learn how to better share services, resources in a meaningful way
    - +1
    - Especially tech help right now
  - Opportunity to work together on strategic priorities for our community – collaborate so we're able to best meet the most needs w/o duplication
  - Create innovative tech solutions – e.g., an app for participants and orgs delivering services. Something innovative in the tech space, like you sometimes see in urban areas (e.g., task rabbit) – things that could help address needs in coming years
    - +1
    - To get people to use them is a challenge too; need to ensure we also have tutorial/trainings, one-one support, something to ensure usage and awareness
    - Communication of resources available – how do we comm what's available so that we can serve/teach populations
  - Board leadership – are we able to recruit the kinds of diverse people we need, drawing on the community, to help lead/problem solve and be strategic as an organization
  - May see paring down of nonprofits, survival – we need a hospice for nonprofits, understand and find humane, strategic way of putting some nonprofits to bed and shifting that work, those clients, to other partners
  - Training/support to navigate remote/tech-based services
- What services or supports are being provided to support the **sector** in these areas?
  - Have orgs that convene nonprofts – UW, community foundations; different networks in each sector (Housing – Homeless Coalition; Education coalition, etc) – not sure, maybe some gaps there, but certainly are resources

- - - Meetings have been helpful for awareness – pass info along who shared w/ families who needed the info
    - Good communication around what grants/money are available – UW, Com Fdtns, all have attitude of how can we help
    - Financially – covid response fund was helpful, esp in beginning when funding was very uncertain
- What are gaps you see that are not being met right now?
    - Easily accessible emotional health supports for providers, mental health providers, ensuring that they do not feel judged by their colleagues; need support for those on the front lines, esp. mental health clinicians/social workers; all relying on same people/resources; big challenge of making that not feel like a risk to ask for help
    - Get businesses to understand life is not normal – get them to loosen policies, be more flexible around attendance, scheduling; esp w/ changes in schools, transportation. Need flexible scheduling to ensure they can have a workforce
    - Knowing what the community wants – even calling clients, who we know need us, have a hard time articulating what they need, hard for us to figure out those needs even with direct outreach. Need to know what where and how, need some way to communicate w/ communities
        - Also around childcare, schools – there is always a group we know have needs who doesn't have bandwidth to respond, or can't make the connection, won't fill out surveys; hard to reach groups
        - Some likely related to limited tech availability, limited tech skills, literacy challenges – needs tailoring for each audience in order to best meet them where they are
    - Shared database so you know who is being helped, who is doing what – felt like a given to outsiders, but doesn't really exist – collaborative way for info sharing. Only exists in pockets
- What could it look like to have a collective, coordinated effort to build capacity of the nonprofit **sector** in your county?
    - Need for training in different areas – sector-specific, or HR practices, IT, tech; whatever we all need collectively to support us
    - Support for businesses –
    - Empire State Prop Reduction Initiative – earlier effort, could be expanded; had monthly meetings w/ trainings, report outs; lots of different things used those meetings to do – charity tracker, a system everyone shared. Ongoing, has been really useful