



COVID-19  
The Impact on Broward County Nonprofit  
Organizations

August 2020

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The Nonprofit Executive Alliance of Broward's (NEAB) mission is to support health and human service organizations in Broward County through a network of nonprofit CEOs that work together to promote advocacy, collaboration and education. Our focus is on improving the business of nonprofit work and changing the way the community views the sector.

Upon the advent of COVID-19, NEAB immediately assumed a leadership role in providing valuable crisis communication updates to our members. As a voice of leverage, efforts to support the residents of Broward County's most vulnerable populations were maximized.

In testament to NEAB's collaborative efforts, we are proud to present this interim report on the status of COVID's impact upon Broward County's nonprofit community. The topics addressed in the report include but are not limited to how to manage staff, donors and volunteers; continuing to provide quality programming in a rapidly changing environment; ensuring financial stability and continuity of mission, among other shared circumstances.

NEAB's membership reflects the finest and most well-respected nonprofit CEOs in the county. Collectively, every aspect of the nonprofit continuum is influenced and has strengthened the safety net for vulnerable populations. Over the last few months, the membership has shared challenges, success stories and teaching moments of collaboration.

In addition to our exclusive monthly CEO meetings we have also convened our affinity groups online. Member organizations have had an opportunity for their CFOs and HR Directors to participate in discussion relevant to their roles. From ambiguity around the Payment Protection Program to addressing HR needs unique to the COVID pandemic, these leaders have found a safe space to learn and share with their colleagues. Our newly formed Development affinity group also met virtually to talk about how to fundraise effectively. Each affinity group has found tremendous value in connecting with their colleagues during this time of uncertainty, working together and sharing best practice ideas, policies and protocols.

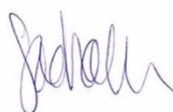
The Nonprofit Executive Alliance also partnered with the Health Foundation of South Florida, United Way of Broward and the Children's Services Council on a PPE consortium. Thanks to the generosity of these funders we were able to provide PPE to several of our members in May and then another round of PPE was donated to members that facilitated summer camp programming on site.

Our commitment remains focused on supporting our stakeholders- employees, funders, clients and volunteers. While uncertainty remains, our unwavering duty to our mission is paramount. We will continue to lead the region in delivering tools, resources and support to our members. We hope this report provides you with a deeper understanding of the impact that COVID has had on our members and the nonprofit community at large in Broward.

Sincerely,



Fran Esposito  
Chair



Sandra Veszi Einhorn  
Executive Director

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## **Executive Summary**

In early 2020, the emergence of a novel Coronavirus, known as COVID-19 appeared in the US. A Public Health and State of Emergency was declared in early March by the Federal, State and County government. By late March, stay at home and quarantine mandates were in effect throughout Broward County. Children's education moved to virtual environments, unemployment skyrocketed as the virus infiltrated our communities, upending the lives of Broward County residents and businesses.

While the County's order of May 22<sup>nd</sup> allowed for nonprofits to reopen, most of them never ceased operations and over half of nonprofits that completed the survey continued to operate on site due to the nature of their mission. Many nonprofits have seen the need for their services surge especially those that provide basic needs assistance and behavioral health services. The effects of COVID will take years to fully analyze, however, the immediate implications of the virus have been felt in all areas of our nonprofit continuum.

The purpose of the study was to better understand the dynamics as organizations worked to adapt to the current conditions, recognizing that the virus and its response continue to evolve. Many factors were considered, from a programmatic, financial and human resource standpoint. Everything from the delivery of services to agency budgeting had to be modified with enough flexibility to continue to be able to adjust to constant change. From these challenges, innovation was born.

In June, the Nonprofit Executive Alliance surveyed its membership on the impact of COVID on their organizations and those they serve. In addition to the survey, there were follow up conversations and additional feedback/input requested of the membership. Special thanks to the Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance, the Department of Health, the Community Foundation of Broward, Florida Nonprofit Alliance, United Way of Broward, 211 Broward, the Department of Children and Families and the Funder's Forum for sharing additional data that went into this report. This report is a collection of the data and the findings.

### **The Nonprofit Sector in Broward County**

According to a recent report by the Florida Nonprofit Alliance, there are more than 9,000 registered nonprofits in Broward County, accounting for more than 49,000 jobs with total revenue that exceeds \$6.2 billion.

The three largest components of the sector in Broward are health related nonprofits which include hospitals and medical centers (56%); human services organizations (18%); and education (17%). Though health related organizations only accounted for 6% of all nonprofits, they employ nearly 56% of the industry. In contrast, human services organizations represent 24% of the sector but only account for 18% of the total industry jobs.

## The Populations Served by Nonprofits

The United Way recently published their most recent economic report using 2018 data which analyzes the challenges of households who are “Asset Limited, Income Constrained and Employed – the ALICE Report”. A staggering 50% of Broward County residents were ALICE or below with a local median household income of \$57,278. This was the reality two years before this current pandemic destroyed our historically high employment rate. Unemployment in Broward County increased to 14.5% in May from 4.2% in March, according to the state Department of Economic Opportunity. Those hit the hardest by pandemic are likely part of the ALICE population. Yet some of those who find themselves newly unemployed are part of a growing number of households asking for help that have previously never sought assistance.

### Research findings

211, Broward’s first call for help line, is seeing a substantial increase in calls for food and financial assistance, housing insecurity and mental/behavioral health needs. From March to April, calls to 211 quadrupled for food assistance, from 577 calls in March to a staggering 2,303 calls in April. While calls decreased in May and June, nonprofits that address hunger needs continue to see record breaking need with an uptick in food insecurity calls increasing again in July.

As an example, the region’s largest provider of food assistance has seen a 600% increase in need since the COVID pandemic began. Requests for financial assistance have also soared, showing a frightening increase in the number of Broward households unemployed or simply unable to make ends meet in the current economic climate. Nearly 12,000 calls were placed to 211 for financial assistance during the months of March-July, with calls spiraling from 850 in March to over 3,200 in April. There were over 6,100 calls seeking mental health resources during the first 5 months of the pandemic, which increased significantly from 240 calls in March to more than 1,600 in July. 359 call were for suicide related needs during the 5-month period, increasing from 16 calls in March and peaking at a heartbreaking 99 callers in severe distress in July.

The Funder’s Forum, a coalition of local funders, including the United Way, Children’s Services Council, and the Jim Moran Foundation have adjusted funding criteria to support nonprofits during this critical time and together local funders have allocated over \$11 million in emergency assistance to support local organizations. Emergency assistance, including funding to support rent and utilities assistance accounted for close to 65% of local funding investment, followed by food distribution and hunger programs which have received more than \$2 million since the pandemic began. Additional funding efforts have helped employment efforts, purchasing of PPE and other health related services.

According to the Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance, Broward County’s job report indicated 11.8% unemployment in June 2020. This rate is 8.6% higher than unemployment a year ago, which

was 3.2%. Leisure and Hospitality industry was the most impacted sector, with a job decrease of 28.8%, which represented 28,000 less jobs in this sector.

- Industries hit worse are tourism/recreation (38%), professional/ business services (17%), retail/wholesale (16%), and education/health (12%). Least impacted is the information industry (1%).
- Employment is not projected to improve for some time due to (1) some jobs/industries not re-emerging and (2) challenges with getting people into new industries that require skills training. Older workers will have a tough time due to job competition and re-skilling for in demand tech-based jobs.
- People will exhaust unemployment benefits first- for many the stimulus is more than their earned wages. Job seekers will then flood the market once unemployment payments stop.

As noted by a recent convening of funded agencies of the Community Foundation of Broward, the inability to achieve “economic independence” (one of the Foundation’s 10 Issues that Matter) is more prominent now due to the overlapping pandemic and the social justice climate. The landscape has changed drastically and looks grim with more people now experiencing financial instability. The biggest two concerns expressed by community leaders during a recent discussion are unemployment and housing. The “financial fragility” of our community has been exposed in a way that many providers have long suspected.

Housing issues are exacerbated due to high rates of unemployment and a lack of affordable housing, which was a crisis before the pandemic began. Concerns about housing instability and the eviction moratorium eventually being lifted threaten to potentially lead to a staggering increase in more people experiencing homelessness.

The expiration of the eviction moratorium will force already financially vulnerable households to pay several months of rent in a short amount of time. Once a household becomes homeless it is incredibly difficult to rehouse with an eviction on their credit and a lack of income due to unemployment or other financial hardships, as a result of COVID. The top request for financial assistance is for rent and mortgage payments, closely followed by food and utilities.

The issue of health is also more prominent now and continues to unveil overwhelming racial and ethnic disparities. The health problems our community faced prior to the pandemic are exacerbated. Populations that have always suffered with chronic illness are more vulnerable. Data shows people of color have been affected most by the coronavirus, both in contracting the virus and deaths.

According to the Department of Health, as of late July, 75% of deaths for people under the age of 40 were Black, nearly 60% for ages 40-64 and over 42% for ages 65-79. Yet the overall population of Blacks in Broward is less than 28% of the total population.

Health disparities and economic stability are intertwined when analyzing the health of residents. Community leaders expressed that residents who are unemployed and reliant upon food donations are not prioritizing their health now. Two critical issues are food insecurity and practice of safety measures to prevent the spread of the virus. Many organizations have pivoted to provide food and other basic needs to their clients in an effort to ensure that health does not further decline.

Another common theme was concerns about abuse during the stay at home orders—substance, physical, mental and emotional. Many providers are able to identify abuse when they are physically present with clients, especially educators and clinicians. Multiple agencies raised alarms that victims are stuck at home with their abusers or that heightened stress in the home will lead to an increase in abusive incidents. This concern is heightened by the decrease in abuse calls noted by DCF, both in calls made and calls accepted. In February there were nearly 1,200 calls accepted (a call where information given over the phone would substantiate a possible incident of abuse). That number dropped by 100 in March and dropped to less than 770 accepted calls in April. While calls did increase in May and June they were still more than 20% to pre-pandemic levels.

### **COVID's Impact**

When asked how COVID has impacted their organization, an overwhelming majority of respondents (86%) indicated changes in employee work habits and revenue streams, while nearly 89% reported changes in their service delivery model. Seventy three percent saw changes in volunteer participation.

Notably, organizations that rely on in person programming have struggled the most, finding it challenging to convert to a virtual model of program delivery. This was prevalent in organizations that serve seniors and persons with special needs, who are also at higher risk for COVID illness and complications. Therapeutic services including nonprofits that work with service animals also faced challenges adapting. Additionally, nonprofits who have for income generating programs were also affected by a significant decrease in demand for services, thereby worsening budgetary issues.

Organizations that remained open during stay at home orders, including those that manage group homes, were also impacted by additional unbudgeted expenses directly related to COVID, such as personal protective equipment and adherence to other CDC guidelines. One organization noted additional monthly expenses of more than \$15,000, proving to be a significant disruption to their budget.

More than half of nonprofits surveyed have provided additional services to support their clients. While most of these services were related to financial or food assistance, some organizations have grown their footprint by expanding their qualifications for services. Several organizations partnered on food distributions to support families in need. Many nonprofits

have been able to expand services by going virtually, such as those delivering mental health services. One organization that serves seniors ordered remote pets and MP3 players to help with social isolation, a growing concern among providers before the pandemic that has since been exacerbated.

All nonprofits surveyed had unexpected expenses to adapt to the COVID environment. 77% needed additional IT assistance to adapt their working environments, provide services in a virtual setting or create a telehealth system. Three quarters of respondents needed PPE for their employees and volunteers and half had to make changes to their offices. Several organizations sought legal and HR advice on creating new policies and procedures. These resources were also shared with Nonprofit Executive Alliance of Broward members through its CEO list serv.

Nonprofits also reported that while many funders were more flexible with an increase in direct spending there was no additional allocation of administrative funds, despite having additional expenses related to admin including cost of personnel working additional hours to meet the increased need. This was an issue especially for those with government contracts to provide services. Large upfront costs, including issuing laptops to staff working remotely, new software to provide services and ensure the security of work product also unexpectedly impacted organization's budgets. It was noted that investment in technology was desperately needed before the pandemic and "forced to happen" due to current circumstances.

All organizations anticipate additional expenses during the entirety of the pandemic. Top considerations for expenditures include PPE for employees and volunteers, temperature scans and changes in the facility or office. Just less than a third of respondents will be requiring daily health certifications for employees. A small number of organizations have implemented apps to assist with health certifications. Nonprofits who provide service that require physical interaction with clients will also require similar precautions in line with CDC guidance in addition to screening questions before visits/appointments. Some organizations are also considering asking clients to sign waivers of liability and most are closing or limiting common areas in their offices and facilities while others are still keeping their offices closed to the public.

### **Nonprofit Concerns**

Nonprofits have several concerns related to COVID. The top concern, noted by 87% of organizations, was related to fundraising and budget concerns with many apprehensive about being able to keep their staff employed. Half are concerned about managing staff in the temporary abnormal and maintaining the company culture that was created before the pandemic.

Forty eight percent are concerned with their ability to provide continuity of quality programming during the length of the pandemic. Additional concerns include another wave of stay at home orders, ensuring that client's needs are being met, keeping employees safe and



healthy, and ongoing external threats to efficient execution of their mission. One respondent noted concerns with clients and staff's inability to follow CDC best practices at home due to large families and small living quarters, while another noted concerns around dealing with individuals "playing politics" with COVID and not wanting to follow CDC best practices. Our HR Affinity group has been working to share best practices related to new policies and procedures, in order to adapt to current conditions.

All organizations are apprehensive about the impact that the different crises (COVID, economic and racial) will have on their staff and those they serve, both in the short and long term.

### **Organizational Impact**

Eighty percent of organizations self-reported that their organizations adapted well- all staff had capability to work remotely and programs/services were also maintained. Fourteen percent indicated that they struggled to move programs/services online and less than 1% did not adapt well with staff issues and/or an inability to execute their mission virtually.

Some organizations noted that due to the nature of their mission, virtual was not a possibility. Many organizations acknowledged the need to "reinvent" how their mission is delivered, how they involve volunteers and how they engage their staff. Several nonprofits have trepidations about the pandemic dragging on and its impact in the long term.

Universally it is recognized that online meeting platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams are not a replacement for in person meetings. Early on, the "digital divide" affected organization's ability to connect with staff and clients. One responder recognized a continuum of adaptability depending on the program, but was still able to engage with clients.

### **Operations Impact**

Regarding operational challenges, 52% struggled with communicating with clients, and 30% were challenged by connecting with donors, funders and volunteers and not being able to be face to face with them. Less than 20% suggested that they had challenges communicating with staff.

Both staff and clients feel overwhelmed with the changes, uncertainty and multiple crises happening at once. HR concerns were how to implement policies fairly while being sensitive to employees who are considered high risk for COVID and confusing or changing guidance from the Health Department and CDC on issues such as quarantining, contact tracing, and disclosure about cases.

Some expressed frustration that it was difficult to identify and manage employees that have been taking advantage of evolving changes, but not being motivated or a team player.

Many organizations are confronted with finding a balance with employee productivity for those who have children at home that are unable to attend school or go to childcare, especially with the anticipation of the 2020-2021 school year beginning in a virtual setting. Staggered scheduling of in office time for staff is another consideration being evaluated by organizations. In order to maintain company culture some nonprofits encourage video conference lunch and happy hours among colleagues.

These concerns were magnified by those whose responsibilities include meeting with clients in a virtual setting such as a clinician or educator. Senior serving providers had noteworthy trepidations that not only do many seniors lack access to technology, but they are also considered high risk. Therefore providers are required to have minimal, if any, interaction with clients but also noted the fact that the telephone can also be an issue for seniors with hearing impairments.

These seniors tended to suffer from isolation more than others, even before the pandemic began, and organizations relied on in home visits to provide services and check-ins. Organizations that rely on volunteers have also had their operations affected by the inability to recruit on site volunteers on an ongoing basis for activities such as food delivery and distribution. Client communication concerns include the inability to perform outreach, engage groups and individuals in a virtual setting and the digital divide, and the inability to effectively access technology.

### **Budgetary Implications**

The top budgetary implication was the inability to raise funds, a challenge for 44% of organizations. Thirty four percent are troubled by the ability to draw down grant funds or bill for programs/services and funders' shifting funding priorities. Most organizations that have a fee for service model saw significant decrease in revenue and almost all had at least one event that has been cancelled. Just less than a third of organizations have had to tap into operational reserves.

Less than 10% were lucky enough to have not had any fiscal impact on their budget thus far. The lack of investment in technology before the pandemic for many nonprofits had substantial financial implications, especially those who also invested in technology for some of their clients. However, technology investments have led many of our members to revise how data is collected, shared and used to improve outcomes.

Seventy seven percent applied for and received Payment Protection Program (PPP) funds and only 1 noted that they were unsure how to utilize it properly in order for it to be forgiven. Funding was critical to avoid having to lay off or furlough staff. Concerns remain with the PPP window closing and no additional stimulus funding has materialized as of yet. Our CFO affinity group expressed frustration with having to spend time on webinars offering conflicting or ever-changing information on how the PPP would be forgiven and what accounting

processes need to be in place to show that funding has been used as required for forgiveness. Nearly all have reservations about budgetary planning for the next year or longer, which was a noteworthy trepidation as many nonprofits operate on a July-June fiscal year.

Funding concerns are a prevalent response among many of the questions. Nonprofits would like to better understand how they can access CARES Act funding. There is also concern that funders will not be able to sustain additional emergency funding levels without impacting pre-COVID priorities. A majority of organizations noted that their annual budget includes income and expenses such as staff that are event driven, with anticipated lost revenue for events having a “significant” impact. Nonprofits also rely on “face to face” interaction for donor engagement and have struggled to replicate that effort online.

One organization shared that they are unable to have “open houses” which they previously used to engage both new clients and donors. Many organizations also recognize the impact that COVID has had on their donors, many of whom are small business owners that have also seen their income reduced. There is a hesitation in some cases to “make the ask” when donors might not be in a position to give as generously as they have in the past.

Nonprofits have struggled with loss of income due to cancelled events, which are important revenue generators for many local nonprofits. These funds were usually budgeted for administrative expenses and other line items that contracts and grants typically do not cover. Responses varied on how far out organizations have cancelled their events, with some not anticipating a return to events before 2021. There has been minimal success in “online events” but nonprofits are getting creative. Some have engaged their donors in online happy hour events, with one group delivering margarita mix and planning on having trivia games to engage attendees. Another successful idea for a planned 5K event was to ask participants to note their running time and have a medal mailed to them. Alternatively, some noted that the pandemic has led to a possible resurgence of fundraising by mail campaigns, which has seen a downward trend as online fundraising has increased. This was noted due to “online fatigue” from being online and in front of a computer more than usual. However, online auctions are also becoming more prevalent, whether associated with an event or as a stand-alone fundraising effort.

### **Long Term Impact**

When asked whether any COVID changes will be made permanent, 64% indicated that programmatic changes such as continuing with online service delivery would stay, while 45% will continue to encourage staff to work remotely. Twenty two percent were planning on a reduced workforce or permanent cuts in other budget areas.

Nonprofits leveraged this COVID opportunity to deepen their impact with the families they serve and support additional unmet needs. Being creative with engagement of stakeholders has been key. Some recognized that going virtual was a benefit in being able to

provide telehealth and mental health services. When the digital divide did not hinder the effort, they have been able to eliminate other barriers to access, such as transportation, timing of programs and childcare. Online programming has not been as successful for education service providers, who noted the struggles that children of all ages had with remote learning.

Additional populations unable to adapt to a virtual setting are seniors, persons experiencing homelessness, those with developmental disabilities or who struggle with severe mental illness and/or substance abuse. As one provider shared

*“Many people with serious and persistent mental illness and/or substance abuse issues do not have a basic phone, let alone a smart phone, internet or computer. These folks often tend to be very vulnerable and have had basic phones lost or stolen from them. We believe that more of these folks will fall through the cracks and not receive the services that they need. Staff has a limited ability to outreach to this population currently. We continue to creatively find ways to arrange our space but less people will be able to be served.”*

COVID also provided an opportunity for organizations to develop new partnerships. Half of those surveyed partnered with another nonprofit, many with other members of the Nonprofit Executive Alliance of Broward. Thirty percent established a partnership with a for profit business, 27% with a faith-based group and 22% with local government.

## **Conclusion**

Despite declining revenue and already razor thin budgets, we have witnessed the industry innovate and identify new ways to provide programs and services. Many are transforming their delivery models in an effort to keep people healthy, connected, and ensuring that basic needs are being met. The most positive discovery has been the resiliency of Broward nonprofit organizations.

While it was not without its share of struggles and challenges, most have been able to pivot, adapt and innovate. One member alluded to the fact that they now feel like they are more prepared for other types of emergencies.

Additional thoughts and comments by members of the Nonprofit Executive Alliance of Broward include:

*“We learned that uncertainty is one of the hardest emotional problems to deal with. We learned that uncertainty caused both our organization and our clients increased need for community support, nonprofit organizations to form partnerships, and to expand our emotionally and financial support abilities to survive a crisis. We learned how to adapt to uncertainty.”*

*“It brought out the best in people. The level of creativity and ability to adapt quickly to new circumstances was amazing to witness.”*

*"I will never tell another Millennial joke again. The younger employees rose to the occasion and did not have or need time to transition to a remote process."*

*"Substantial economies and efficiencies can be achieved through remote operation and reliance on video technologies without loss of effectiveness."*

*"I learned that we are adaptable, strategic and that our team is passionate about our mission and dedicated - staff and board. I learned that our nonprofit network and partners have always been - and are now more than ever - an invaluable safety net for the agency and for leadership."*

*"The pandemic experience has served to reinforce the validity of our organization continuing to operate virtually. It's brought out the best in our staff and volunteers, and our response has created new and different opportunities for us."*



# Nonprofit Executive Alliance of Broward

ADVOCACY ♦ COLLABORATION ♦ EDUCATION

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### About the *Nonprofit Executive Alliance of Broward*

The Nonprofit Executive Alliance of Broward's mission is to promote health and human service organizations in Broward County through a network of nonprofit CEOs that work together to promote advocacy, education and collaboration. Our focus is on improving the business of nonprofit work and changing the way the community views the sector.

For additional information or to learn more about our organization please contact our Executive Director, Sandra Veszi Einhorn [sandra@npobroward.org](mailto:sandra@npobroward.org) or 954-507-7156.

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