

Center for Hispanic Policy, Research and Development
Grantee Emergency Response Survey Summary
May 2020
(N=34)

In March 2020, New Jersey declared a state of emergency and public health emergency in response to the rising number of cases and deaths due to COVID-19.¹ NJ's Governor Murphy issued subsequent executive orders that instructed most residents to stay at home, schools to shift entirely to remote instruction, and non-essential businesses to close or move to non-contact transactions of work.² Many NJ residents took temporary leave from their jobs, experienced reduced work hours, were furloughed, or lost their jobs. NJ has been hit particularly hard with the second highest number of COVID-19 cases and deaths in the US.³ It is anticipated that the COVID-19 pandemic will have long-term and wide-ranging impacts on the US and NJ in terms of health and economic outcomes.

On May 4, 2020, the Center for Hispanic Research, Policy and Development (CHPRD) invited current grantees to participate in a survey to learn about how grantee organizations have responded to meet the current and future needs of their communities as well as to gain more insight into how the COVID-19 crisis has impacted organizations' ability to carry out grant activities funded by CHPRD. The online survey was conducted by the Center for Research and Evaluation on Education and Human Services (CREEHS) at Montclair State University (MSU) via Qualtrics. The survey was voluntary and anonymous, no respondent names or organization names were collected. In total, 34 respondents completed the survey. The following is a summary of these responses.

¹ NJ Executive Order 103

² NJ Executive Order 107

³ As of May 31, 2020, 160,445 documented cases of COVID-19 and 11,698 attributable deaths

1. What county/counties does your organization serve? *(Select all that apply)*

N=31	n	%
Essex	10	32.3
Hudson	9	29.0
Passaic	9	29.0
Union	9	29.0
Atlantic	8	25.8
Cumberland	8	25.8
Burlington	7	22.6
Middlesex	7	22.6
Camden	6	19.4
Cape May	6	19.4
Gloucester	6	19.4
Bergen	5	16.1
Morris	5	16.1
Ocean	5	16.1
Salem	5	16.1
Monmouth	4	12.9
Hunterdon	3	9.7
Mercer	3	9.7
Sussex	3	9.7
Somerset	2	6.5
Warren	2	6.5

2. In which program areas did your organization receive funding from CHPRD? *(Select all that apply)*

N=29	n	%
Community Service-Senior Citizen	9	31.0
Community Service-Children at Risk	8	27.5
Community Service-Mental Health	8	27.5
Citizenship and Integration Program	7	24.1
Community Service-Preventive Health	5	17.2
Workforce Development Empowerment Center	5	17.2
Hispanic Entrepreneurship Assistance Program	3	10.3
Workforce Investment In-School and Out of School Youth Program	2	6.9

3. Is your organization considered an “Essential Business” as defined by Governor Murphy’s Executive Order?

N=29	n	%
Yes	12	41.3
No	11	37.9
Unsure	6	20.6

3a. If yes: what services are you currently providing the community that meets the definition of “Essential Business”? (N=10)

- Counseling, Emergency Food, unemployment claims
- Crisis and mental health counseling
- Emergency Food Pantry, Mental Health Services, Parenting Education, Unemployment Claims, assisting clients with completing forms for SNAP, NJ Shares handled by telephone and online, recertifications for SNAP and NJ Familycare health insurance
- Home-delivered meals for seniors and food pantry
- Home health care, remote teaching, food pantry, rental assistance
- Hunger relief/food service - soup kitchen and food distribution
- Information about COVID-19 prevention, offering interpretation, and scheduling appointments for testing, assisting with food, providing homeless prevention services (rent, motel hotel vouchers, case management). Educating individuals by informing them that obtaining health services will not impact their immigration status. We are also offering other multi-services not listed in this question.
- Mental Health services
- Substance abuse and co-occurring disorders
- Substance use and mental health services

4. How many full-time staff did your organization employ immediately before the COVID-19 crisis?

N=28	n	%
1-5	5	17.8
6-15	9	32.1
16-25	6	21.4
26-49	4	14.2
50 or more	4	14.2

Response to COVID-19

5. Did your organization have to lay off or furlough any employees as a result of the COVID-19 crisis?

N=30	n	%
Yes	12	40.0
No	18	60.0

- 5a. If yes, how many employees were laid off or furloughed?

N=7	n	%
4	1	14.2
6	3	42.8
10	1	14.2
18	1	14.2
20%	1	14.2

6. To what extent is your organization's staff able to work remotely (i.e., work from home)?

N=27	n	%
To a great extent – Staff can work remotely without any interruption in operations	11	40.7
To some extent	14	51.8
To a small extent	2	7.4

7. In what ways has your organization had to restructure in order to address the needs of the community during the COVID-19 crisis (e.g., hours of operation, reassignment of tasks)? (N=21)

The majority of respondents have restructured by pivoting to virtual services. Some reported a seamless transition, while other organizations required training or hiring additional tech staff.

"We have transitioned our operations and programming to virtual platforms, including updating our policies and procedures in this new virtual space. Our intake and enrollment team are conducting interviews via video-conferencing applications, such as Zoom and Facetime. Our case managers are conducting regular supervision and coaching by phone and video-conferencing. Within two weeks, we rolled out virtual training programming and youth development activities and workshops."

"We turned to remote work activities and remote learning. Required the build out of our IT capacity with the purchase of additional servers, computer, VPN hooks ups, mobile phones. Training for staff to prepare and use internet for work and teaching. At the current time, staff is able to work as best they can with no formal attendance requirements - possible because of greater flexibility by funders and obtaining PPP loan. a focus and increase in training. Prohibited staff from taking on duties that required

their leaving their stay safe base, confronted with inadequate PPE to allow contact with clients given the high-risk factor."

Several respondents stated that their organizations have had to alter services. This ranged from shutting down particular programs to changing hours of operation. Others have had to restructure operations to accommodate social distancing guidelines, including restricting the number of staff available in-person. For others, the increased need among the community has led to an increase in payroll hours, and financial investments in additional services and equipment.

"We have witnessed a substantial increment in need of services and support of our constituency. Since the end of February, we have felt the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic effect in our community. Due to this situation, our current and new request for service support has had a significant impact on our payroll and other areas of our organization. We have had to ramp up staff availability (working hours) to support and provide the tools our community needs to survive this pandemic. Our payroll has increased by 32%. This has also necessitated the need to redistribute some tasks to be able to take on this new level of support. For our staff to sustain the level of service our members require, we have also invested in additional IT services, technology, and equipment. This investment is directed to provide our community with Town Hall Meetings, virtual networking/updates and work from home availability."

"Our agency is closed to the public. It has changed its operating hours from 9am-5pm to 10am-4pm. Our food pantry is no longer allowing clients to pick up. Instead, we are delivering groceries via our newly formed no-contact delivery system. Our preschool students are being taught remotely. We have suspended all group activities, HIV testing and vision screenings."

"We've reassigned staff to assist in food distribution in order to keep them employed. We've altered our hours. We've suspended on-site educational programs and are doing all instruction remotely."

Respondents also noted some concerns. These included providing virtual services due to restrictions, inability to provide all staff with equipment (e.g., laptop, printer, phones) to work from home, an increase in requests for food and rent assistance, and the disproportionate effect the crisis is having on the undocumented community.

"We noticed that 85% of our calls are people asking for rent assistance, other for food. This crisis is affecting tremendously our undocumented families. Some of the challenges of working from home are not be[ing] able to provide each staff with the equipment needed for them to do their job efficiently. This included a business laptop, a printer, and a business cell phone. Unfortunately, some of the staff are using their own personal computer (which are not very reliable) they are experiencing inconvenience by using their own personal phone, and a little be of frustration for their inability to print/scan while working from home."

"We continue to restructure to serve the ever-changing needs that the COVID crisis has presented...For 2 months we couldn't provide group therapy via telehealth due to restrictions. We started providing support groups for parents, a new modality of service for our Clinic. On April 28 we started providing group therapy for kids with a focus on social connection and COVID related mental health symptoms, like increased anxiety."

8. Which of the following best describes your community's needs that have emerged from the COVID-19 crisis? *(Select all that apply)*

N=27	n	%
Job loss/insecurity	22	81.5
Food insecurity	17	63.0
Mental health (concerns, anxiety related to COVID-19)	15	55.6
Connectivity (i.e., internet or software access)	12	44.4
Housing insecurity	12	44.4
Access to healthcare (e.g., primary care provider, urgent care, clinics)	10	37.0
Other	8	29.6
<i>Business disruption - access to government programs for capital</i>		
<i>Immigration status</i>		
<i>Domestic violence</i>		
<i>Fear of being undocumented with no financial benefits from the government</i>		
<i>Addiction issues</i>		
<i>Lack of educational supports for children, lack of special needs supports for children, lack of childcare for essential workers</i>		
<i>Social isolation and need for social connection via organized agency virtual events</i>		

9. Is your organization prepared to meet the emerging needs of your community?

N=27	n	%
Yes	19	70.4
No	1	3.7
Unsure	7	25.9

- 9a. If no, please explain:

No responses

10. Has your organization sought additional funding to deal with the needs emerging from the COVID-19 crisis?

N=27	n	%
Yes	21	77.8
No	6	22.2

10a. If Yes: From where have you solicited funding? *(Select all that apply)*

N=20	n	%
Private Funding	15	75.0
Federal Government	13	65.0
State Government	12	60.0
Other	3	15.0
SBA PPP Loan		
Lendistry		
Community Members		

10b. If Yes: From where have you received funding? *(Select all that apply)*

N=20	n	%
Our organization has not received any additional funding	5	25.0
Private Funding	10	50.0
Federal Government	10	50.0
State Government	4	20.0
Other	3	15.0
SBA PPP Loan		
And federal funding from NEA pending		
Currently looking for food donation		

11. During this time, is your organization conducting any outreach to assess community needs?

N=29	n	%
Yes	20	69.0
No	9	31.0

11a. If Yes: What forms of outreach has your organization conducted (or do you plan to conduct)?

- Phone and email check-ins, referrals
- Surveys and interviews (e.g., students, senior citizens, service recipients)
- Receipt of grant to expand outreach efforts in 2 counties
- Reaching out to partners to assess program implementation/improvement
- Social media

12. During the COVID-19 outbreak, how has your organization collaborated with other local organizations to meet the needs of the community? Please provide an example(s). (n=21)

Nearly all respondents reported collaborating with local organizations to meet community needs. Many organizations are promoting and providing referrals to other organizations, or creating formal partnerships or affiliation agreements. Some are also accepting clients from and helping other organizations.

"We have been gathering the services provided by other organizations to link our participants to those services. We are sending emails promoting the services that other community organizations are providing. Some of the families we serve have shared their specific needs and we have been able to link them with local organizations that could assist them."

"We have collaborated with several agencies to help clients find information about funding/loan opportunities, push information out further and in more easy to access manners."

A number of respondents reported working with local organizations to provide services and resources to the community. Examples of this include: providing organizations with the capability to provide services virtually, and assisting food banks with staff, space, and distribution.

"We are working with 5 other organizations to meet the food needs of our community, sharing resources (food, staff, volunteers, vehicles and warehouse space). We are working together to deliver food to homebound families and coordinate food distribution."

12a. What are some challenges your organization has encountered in collaborating with other local organizations? (N=20)

About a third of respondents stated that communication has been a challenge in collaborating with local organizations. Some are having difficulty getting in touch or working out technological challenges, and others are finding that communication becomes difficult and inefficient when there are too many collaborators. Other respondents named challenges with effectively communicating with youth and parents.

"Lack of time and communication. Every organization is trying to figure out what are the next steps. Each one is developing their own strategic plan."

Other frequently cited challenges were underfunding and reduced staff at many organizations. Some struggle with their own understaffing, while others who have remained fully staffed are struggling to work with organizations working at reduced capacity. One respondent stated that the lack of Spanish translators at other organizations to assist their clients has been an issue.

"All organizations in our space are overworked and underfunded. Corporations and private foundations give less philanthropic funding when their investments take a hit in the market."

"Some of the challenges we see are that many of the partners we have traditionally relied on are finding it difficult to adapt their business models to this new normal. Some are more responsive and flexible than others in reimagining their programming and operations."

13. What are some needs that you anticipate your community having related to the COVID-19 crisis over the next few months?

Several respondents anticipate their communities will need assistance with loss of income and other issues related to employment instability. Many named food insecurity, rent/utilities, and legal issues as needs that may arise.

Some respondents also stated that small businesses will need funding and guidance on reopening safely. Others foresee an increased need for mental health services, particularly those that are culturally informed, to deal with the stress of COVID-19 and its effects (e.g., health, income loss, remote learning, domestic violence and child abuse)

Also, several respondents anticipated needs, such as support for Hispanic students and parents struggling with remote learning, technologies to communicate, and monitoring children.

"The need to close the digital divide and provide real-world solutions to education inequity is huge. Black and brown kids will need additional supports to maintain their skills. Parents with language and educational barriers are not in a position to teach current curriculum or to support their children in catching up without significant additional resources."

"In the coming months we will need additional funding to buy instant testing paraphernalia and masks and cleaning supplies. We will also need knowledge to avoid the spread of [COVID-19] and the capacity to share this knowledge to the clients we're serving. We will also need the knowledge of how to help clients we're serving with regards [to] the financial crisis we are facing 6 to 8 months from now."

14. Please share any lessons your organization has learned regarding emergency preparedness over the last two months. (N=20)

Several respondents reported that their organizations were to some extent unprepared to deal with the COVID-19 crisis. Many noted that their technology was not sufficiently up to date and others indicated their organizations needed to develop emergency disaster plans.

"Strong and compassionate leadership and a mission-driven staff were critical to our ability to quickly adapt and continue operating with no interruption in service. We did so in spite of being located at the epicenter of the pandemic. This included but is not limited to an existing Contingency Operating Plan and our use of a web-based information data management system. While we have historically collected documents in hardcopy, our team had begun to shift to digital file storage. Additionally, our agency has always been data-driven and goal-oriented. When we moved to remote operations, our leadership quickly put into place metrics to keep our program staff and administrative team accountable for delivering our mission."

"We have been encouraged by our ability to adapt to rapidly-changing needs of schools and students. We are hoping that we will be able to secure unrestricted funds to keep our organization operating during this time."

"This Crisis was never anticipated and it has been an on the job learning process. We have learned to make whatever adjustment is necessary to provide services to our community. It has been a fine tuning

process that we anticipate will continue to evolve to make it better. It is also a process which the community we service is still learning to embrace. It is a great change from physical contact to solely conducting business electronically."

Some respondents mentioned the need for collaboration through coordinated community efforts and working with banks, experts, thought leaders, and government officials.

"We have learned that a coordinated effort with our community partners is most effective."

"We can benefit from working with thought leaders in our fields and subject matter experts, but the time that it takes to organize new systems and structures takes a significant investment. Also, much time was wasted following dead leads in sifting through an overwhelming amount of information about funding and other resources - resources all organizations are seeking at once. It makes sense to take the time to structure programs appropriately so that critical staffing and time aren't wasted on duplicated or misaligned efforts."

Several respondents mentioned anticipating the need to deliver services virtually for the foreseeable future, while others reported learning new technological skills as their organizations adapt.

"In moving the entire organization online we have developed new technology skill sets, including teaching and recruiting online. We have also become a paperless organization. All our paperwork is now exclusively digital, including all our account payables and receivables done online. We have truly become a 21st century organization, taking full advantage of the technology available now."

"We have learned that it is necessary to be flexible. We have also learned that distance learning and service provision remotely are going to become part of the new normal for the foreseeable future."

Some respondents stated that being frugal, having remote work capabilities, and having flexible plans in place served well as preparation for their organizations.

"Being frugal for many years has allowed us to remain operational and support our community. Being prepared to work remotely, having some equipment and programs in place already due to snow days, etc. has really given us a leg up to keep going without missing a beat."

Others stressed the importance of being able to adapt without too much bureaucracy, providing genuine personal, human connections, being prepared to use different communication channels (i.e., collect as many different forms of contact information as possible), and paying attention to employee needs and morale.

"That people [don't] only need things, they need someone who can make a personal connection and listen deeply, people need genuine connection."

"Confirmed that "fee for service" and "production-based contracting" used by government that were inappropriate during normal times are disastrous during a crisis. Organizational readiness was inadequate. Attention to staff morale is even more important during emergencies."

CHPRD Grant

The remaining questions are about the effect of the COVID-19 crisis on your organization's ability to carry out activities funded by CHPRD.

15. Given the current circumstances, describe any challenges or issues that you foresee in achieving the goals and objectives that you proposed on your grant application. (N=21)

The majority of respondents indicated they do not foresee any challenges. Some stated they have been able to successfully transition to virtual services or adapt activities to meet their goals and objectives, as well as to maintain 100% of their staff.

"We do not foresee any difficulties achieving the deliverables for our current contract or our proposed in our application. As with many organizations, our current concern is funding and cash flow to deliver our mission and our promise to maintain 100% staffing at full employment and with full benefits."

"At the present time, I don't see any issues with us carrying our services. (possibly modification on the grant to address emerging new issues). We are more concerned with the challenges of our community and the lack of funding resources to address the new barriers caused by this pandemic."

Many respondents stated that stay at home orders and social distancing will make it difficult to meet their target number of clients, will reduce attendees to events, and necessitates the shutting down of some activities.

"What will be missed is the person to person relationship that truly cements the relationship for new clients. Overcoming this obstacle will be critical to understanding any underlying issues and challenges the client may be encountering."

"As with many organizations, our current concern is funding and cash flow to deliver our mission and our promise to maintain 100% staffing at full employment and with benefits."

"Our main challenge at this point is participation of the youth and access to the necessary technology. In dealing with a high-risk population that under normal circumstances are not motivated in their own education, it becomes more difficult yet even more necessary to engage them."

Other challenges noted by respondents include the adaptation to new technologies, which have challenged both from the organizations and community members, needing extra financial support, and additional knowledge in order to meet their goals and objectives.

16. Have you submitted a contingency plan to CHPRD?

N=27	n	%
Yes	18	66.7
No	9	33.3

16a. If no, why not? (n=7)

Most respondents indicated that they were unaware they were required to submit a plan or that one was never requested. Others noted they would if given enough time and that their current program is meeting and plans to continue meeting community needs.

17. Will you be able to maintain your level of service as specified in your grant documents?

N=25	n	%
Yes	22	88.0
No	3	12.0
Not sure	0	0.0

18. Will you be able to spend down your CHPRD grant funds by the July 1st deadline?

N=25	n	%
Yes	21	84.0
No	4	16.0

18a. If no, what specifically is keeping your organization from spending down its grant funds?

No responses

19. How can CHPRD help support your organization in meeting these needs when they arise? (N=19)

A number of respondents requested that CHPRD continue to share information and resources as well as provide support as they adapt. Respondents stated CHPRD has been responsive and flexible to the changed environment.

"There's always a way to help and support each other if needs arise and just the acknowledgement and assurance that you (CHPRD) are there and will help us to achieve goals and objectives is a big help already. Thank you."

"Communication through [organization's] budget revision request was smooth and I feel the Center is available to support our needs. I think that maintaining communication is key."

Some respondents requested more flexibility in their budget allocations and increases in funding from CHPRD. One suggestion to assist cashflow was to disburse funds for the current contract and move forward on a quarterly or monthly basis moving forward. Another suggestion was convening subgrantees and other service providers to collaborate and maximize resources and efficiency.

"Disbursing funds for the current contract and moving forward on a quarterly or even monthly basis would greatly help with cashflow. Any assistance to access other funding and resources. Convening subgrantees and other service providers to coordinate and collaborate to maximize resources and

reduce duplication of services. Maintain, and increase wherever possible, funding levels to continue the great work so many of us are doing."

Other suggestions included:

- Promoting grantee services among other organizations
- Conducting a grantee feedback survey
- Conducting mandatory Zoom meetings with grantee organizations
- Donating food, toiletries, or other goods that can be distributed to the community
- Directing grantees towards other funding opportunities

20. Please add any other comments here. (N=11)

Some clients are experiencing "growing pains" in adapting to the COVID-19 crisis. Those with the most critical needs and those most disproportionately impacted are being prioritized (e.g., seniors, low income families). One organization reported needing to utilize its line of credit in order to meet payroll. Another is anticipating their projected income loss to increase.

"As a response to the COVID-19 outbreak, [our organization] is prioritizing those with the most critical needs, particularly those that come from communities most disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak [in the city] by providing front line direct services to the most vulnerable population, our elderly. [Our organization expanded its Seniors Congregate Program by delivering meals five days a week to 232 seniors throughout the city. In addition, more food bags for families are distributed on Wednesdays. [Our organization has been forced to utilize its line of credit to meet payroll, purchase additional food/cleaning/sanitizing supplies for home-delivered meals, contracting a cleaning company."

"Our agency initially anticipated a 13% loss of income and this is projected to increase in the coming weeks and months."

A number of respondents thanked CHPRD for their support and for providing the opportunity to give feedback.

"CHPRD has been a wonderful resource with respect to delivering help to the underserved, even before this pandemic hit, but even more so now. Access has been vital via phone and email. Nice to know we are not alone in the community without backup."