



Rural Action Networking Convening Qualitative Data Analysis July 1st, 2020

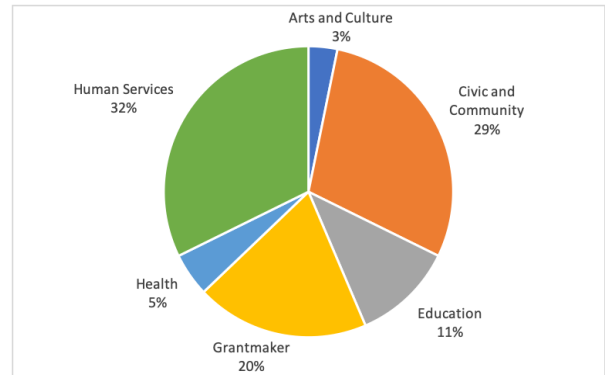
Event Overview

Community Resource Center convened an online collaborative conversation between rural nonprofit professionals, community leaders, and funders to discuss the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the intersections with rural communities.

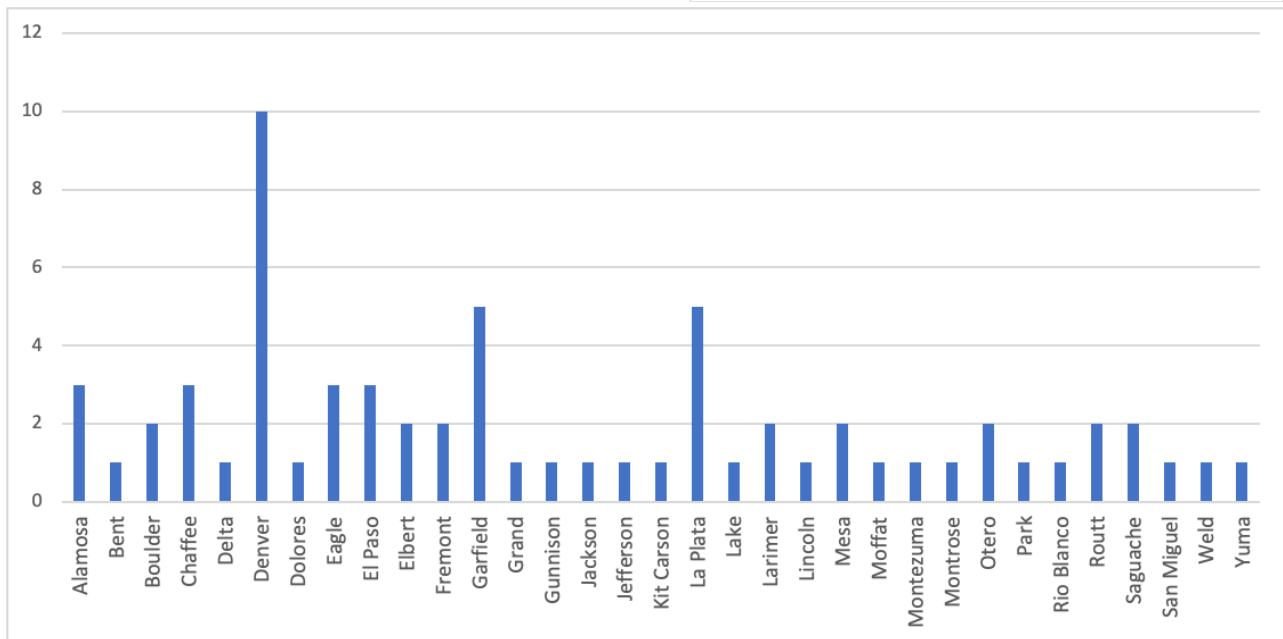
Small group breakouts were utilized to discuss short and long term needs, and for rural organizations to share strategies and partnerships that have emerged to effectively serve their communities. We had participation from 33 different counties in the session, representing over half the state.

Participant Demographics

Attendee Total	Organization Total	County Total
68	62	33



Counties Represented





Representatives from foundations and statewide organizations contributed to the session representation from the front-range.

We asked participants a series of questions in small breakout rooms, and tracked their responses using a collaborative note-taking software, Padlet. Questions included:

- What is being revealed about our communities, and your work in this moment?
- What are you discovering?
- What are you letting go of, keeping, or creating? What has been challenging about letting go?
- What do you envision for the future – of your organization, your community?

Within the responses from participants, a number of major themes emerged:

TOPIC AREA	NUMBER OF MENTIONS
Theme - Innovations	74
Challenge - Equity	52
Challenge - Remote Operations & Access	41
Theme - Collaboration	38
Challenge - Uncertainty	32
Challenge - Economy	31
Theme - Funding	28
Challenge - Public Health & Healthcare	26
Challenge - Food & Housing	21
Challenge - Social Isolation	18
Challenge - School & Youth Programs	17
Theme - Rural Nonprofits	15
Challenge - Internet	12

EQUITY | 52 mentions

Issues of equity are at the forefront of rural leaders' minds. These encompass a broad range of racial and social equity issues intersecting with the elderly, racial minorities, immigrant communities, impoverished communities, and rural resort communities. Although the current focus is providing direct services to those in need, there is an overall



consensus that the pandemic has exacerbated the need for internal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion improvement and broad systemic reform.

- “Rural communities are homogenous, and the diversity is hidden in pockets. We need to find ways to reach a broader range of people and address the needs they identify.”
- “Disruption can be a really positive thing. I hope COVID-19 disruptions will allow us to address systemic racism and white supremacy.”
- “In Montrose, nonprofits have really stepped up to promote equity in the community. However, despite making resource information available in Spanish, there are still barriers to access since many organizations do not have language-access resources. We are challenging the government and community partners to look at language access. Although we have started an immigrant emergency relief fund, families are fearful of taking assistance – even from a trusted source. They are afraid accepting help will come back to bite them in some way.”
- “When people think about SE CO, they may think that conservative groups want immigrants out, but this is not the case. As a farming community, they value them – immigrants are an integral part of this community. We need to slow down and have these conversations that can go both directions. We need to find more commonality, making more face to face conversations possible. I’d like to see more of these types of communication – breaking down assumptions and engaging more folks in healthy conversation.”
- “When there are few cases in a community, but high social impact of the regulations and effects - how do we tell this story?”

REMOTE OPERATIONS & ACCESS | 41 mentions

In line with the conversation around equity comes the issue of broadband and challenges working remotely, including access to childcare. Many respondents noted that the rural communities they serve lack reliable internet connection. This poses a significant barrier to accessing virtual K-12 education, engaging in social interaction, and receiving telemedicine or other online resources.

- “Technology Equity. We can't have equity if people don't have access to participation.”
- “Internet solutions are still not enough. The hotspots made available are just not enough to meet the level of need, exposing the inequity in access to opportunity.”
- “We need to consider the students pushed into remote learning without access to technology or mental health support.”
- “Resort communities are disproportionately affected and have a lack of childcare for frontline workers. Hospitality is extremely affected.”



UNCERTAINTY & FUNDING | 60 mentions

It is clear that the overall uncertainty around the pandemic poses a significant challenge to capacity, funding, and planning. Depleting general operating funds, loss of fundraising opportunities, and donor fatigue are preventing the sustainable diversification of revenue streams. Rural communities are also seeing slower responses in terms of government relief. Nonprofits brought up the paralyzing nature of trying to make organizational decisions with incomplete information and uncertain funding.

- “No one is making decisions - everyone is overwhelmed and doesn't want to make the wrong decision.”
- “When a nonprofit scales back, how do you recover / get back to where you were initially?”
- “It's frustrating and impossible to plan for such an uncertain future.”
- “You don't know what you don't know until it comes up”
- “We don't know if new innovative programs will be successful. With new evaluation expectations we need to adjust the definition of success.”
- “Each month's deadline reveals evolving needs. Philanthropy follows the state budget. Private money starts to see requests that may have been state funded.”
- “Rural areas aren't seeing as much relief - DOLA, federal relief, etc. are slower.”
- “Funders were/are mostly supporting programmatic initiatives in response to COVID - general operating funds are being depleted as the pandemic continues.

INNOVATION & COLLABORATION | 112 mentions

Despite all of these compounding challenges, many respondents are struck by the deep resiliency and innovation emerging from rural communities. Rural nonprofits are seen as leading recovery efforts in their communities through collaboration and coalition-building.

- “Everyone in rural regions has the mindset of collaboration. The rural communities seem more resilient than front range. Rural nonprofits always had to collaborate, so they are working even BETTER together now.”
- “Collaborative grant requests are more successful. Helps drop the competition if we are working together.”
- “Food has been a big issue - food pantries and food providers haven't historically collaborated, and in Durango, the suggestion to combine purchasing power, allowed us to pull this together. We need more collaboration to form a food coalition.”

Event Feedback

All participants were sent a survey of their feedback on the session:

As a result of this event ...

- **94%** of respondents agreed that they have a better understanding of the challenges nonprofits are facing during this pandemic.



- **86%** of respondents agreed that they built new connections with other nonprofits and community leaders.
- **83%** of respondents agreed that this session was a meaningful use of their time.

What will you take away from this event?

From Grantseekers (Nonprofit, Community Group, Local Government)

- "Went in feeling like the only nonprofit that was struggling, left knowing we were not alone."
- "The importance of partner-building and collaboration. [I would like] more of this collaborative meet-up for rural organizations."
- "It was good to connect with other rural leaders ... the group breakout sessions were great. Thank you for giving us enough time and encouraging us to dive deeply into discussion."
- "Ideas for creative fundraising."
- "Personal connections and the stories of rural areas."



Appendix | Attendee List

First Name	Last Name	Position	Organization	County
Brenna	Anderson	Program Director		Dolores
Kylie	Brown	Rural Outreach Coordinator	Downton Colorado, Inc.	Denver
Kristin	Carpenter	AV-CTC Program Director	Otero County Health Department	Otero
DeeDee	Clement	Executive Director	Loaves and Fishes Ministries	Fremont
Andrea	Coen	Executive Director	Guidestone Colorado	Chaffee
Jeff	Corn		YouthPower365	Eagle
Diane	Cribley	Chair of Board of Directors	Elbert County Agricultural Alliance	Elbert
Nicci	Crowley	Deputy Director	Onward! A Legacy Foundation	Montezuma
Pamela	Denahy	Director of Tourism	City of La Junta	Otero
Christopher	DiRosa	Program Manager	Center for People With Disabilities	Boulder
Christy	Doyon	Executive Director	CASA of the Ninth	Garfield
Jamie	Ellis	Executive Director	Golden Age Center	Fremont
Bruce	Evans	Fire Chief	Upper Pine River Fire District	La Plata
Maryo	Ewell	Director of Community Impact	Community Foundation of Gunnison Valley	Gunnison
Ruth	Fletcher-Carter		Senior Access Points of Larimer County	Larimer
Lupita	Garcia	Office Manager/Outreach	Energy Resource Center	Alamosa
Scott	Gelzer	Leader	Management Cornerstones	Out of State
Ari	Goodman	Rural Independent Living Advisor	Center for People With Disabilities	Boulder
Ginny	Hallagin	Executive Director	Dynamic Dimensions, Inc.	Kit Carson
Stefanie	Harville	Operations and Finance Director	Western Colorado Alliance	Mesa
Heather	Hawk	Executive Director	Early Childhood Council of La Plata County	La Plata
Diane	Heldt	Executive Director	A Woman's Place	Weld
Traci	Hiatt	Donor Engagement Manager	Yampa Valley Community Foundation	Routt
Heather	Hiebsch	Executive Director	Teach United	Larimer
Roy	Horvath	Board Chairperson	Southwest La Plata Library District	La Plata
Erin	Ivie	Executive Director	Speak Up Reach Out	Eagle



Lynne	Jones	Executive Director	Colorado Commission on Family Medicine	Denver
Amy	Kaiser	Executive Director		Garfield
Kaye	Kasza	Secretary	5 Loaves Pantry	Bent
Amy	Kimberly	Executive Director	Carbondale Council on Arts and Humanities	Garfield
April-Dawn	Knudsen	Executive Director	Boys and Girls Club of South Park	Park
Katelyn	Lammie	Program Officer	Caring for Colorado Foundation	Denver
Beth	Lavelly	Care Coordination Team Manager	NCC Health Partnership	Routt
Gillian	Laycock	Founder	The Garage Workspace	Lincoln
Melanie	Leaverton	Project Coordinator	2M Investment, LLC	Jackson
Megan	Ledin	Executive Director	Grand Foundation	Grand
Alejandra	Major	Program Officer	Adolph Coors Foundation	Denver
Tiffany	Maldonado	After School Activities Coordinator	Center K12	Saguache
Paula	Medina	Program Manager	Center for Restorative Programs	Alamosa
Amber	Middleton	Transition Manager	San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition	La Plata
April	Montgomery	Vice President of Programs	Telluride Foundation	San Miguel
Amy	Mund	Public Information Officer	USDA	Denver
Dominique	Naccarato	Executive Director	Greater Arkansas River Nature Association (GARNA)	Chaffee
Jessica	Nelson	Operations and Grant Manager	Chinook Fund	Denver
Erica	Oakley-Courage	Grants Manager	El Pomar Foundation	El Paso
Doug	Palmer	Senior Program Associate and Deputy Director of Regional Partnerships	El Pomar Foundation	El Paso
Kimberly	Parker	Executive Director	Full Circle Restorative Justice	
Amanda	Pearson	Development Director	La Puente Home	Alamosa
Jill	Pidcock	Executive Director	Arc Central Mountains	Garfield
Bailey	Rico	Volunteer		Moffat
Elena	Rees	Program Associate	Cooking Matters Colorado	Denver
Alisha	Roles	Executive Director	RSVP Grand Junction	Mesa



Brenda	Roush	Development Director	Rocky Mountain MicroFinance Institute	Denver
Jon	Royal	Assistant Grants Manager	El Pomar Foundation	El Paso
Lisa	Rucker	Program Officer	Gates Family Foundation	Denver
Sue	Samaniego	Foundation Director	Colorado Northwestern Community College	Rio Blanco
Susie	Schmitz	Grants and Data Manager	YouthZone	Garfield
Kurt	Schweigert	Director	Friends of Twin Lake	Lake
Ruth	Seedorf	Executive Director	Baby Bear Hugs	Yuma
Deborah	Shaffer	Executive Director	Grand Mesa Arts and Events Center	Delta
Karen	Sherman Perez	Civic and Development Coordinator	Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition, CIRC	Montrose
Dwayne	Smith	Administrator	Elbert County	Elbert
Jill	Smola	Executive Director	Chaffee County Habitat for Humanity	Chaffee
Michelle	Stecher	Executive Director	Mountain Youth	Eagle
Kate	Steichen	Chair	Crestone Baca Resiliency	Saguache
Amy	Swiatek	Director of Rural and Statewide Networks	Philanthropy Colorado	Jefferson
Cindy	Willard	Program Officer	Kenneth King Foundation	Denver
Briggen	Wrinkle	Executive Director	Community Foundation Serving Southwest Colorado	La Plata