COVID-19 and the Status of South Carolina’s Nonprofit Sector:
Greenville County
Top Line Survey Report

The Riley Center for Livable Communities at the College of Charleston conducted this survey in partnership with Together SC, the South Carolina Grantmakers Network, the United Way Association of South Carolina, the Greenville Partnership for Philanthropy, the Community Foundation of Greenville, and the NonProfit Alliance Greenville.

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The Riley Center and Together SC
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Background and Objectives
South Carolina, like many states, has been significantly affected by COVID-19, with more than 2,900 deaths and serious economic consequences across most sectors of the economy. Greenville County has not been spared as it has had 281 COVID-19 deaths (as of 9/14/2020) more than any other county in the state of South Carolina. The goal of this research is to more completely and more deeply understand the current status of the nonprofit sector, specific to Greenville County, during the pandemic.

The Riley Center for Livable Communities at the College of Charleston conducted this survey in partnership with Together SC, the South Carolina Grantmakers Network, the United Way Association of South Carolina, Greenville Partnership for Philanthropy, the Community Foundation of Greenville, and the NonProfit Alliance Greenville. Study objectives include:

1. Assess the financial health and status of nonprofits in Greenville.
2. Understand operational and programmatic changes made by nonprofits in Greenville as a result of COVID-19 and needs they may have going forward.
3. Learn if Greenville nonprofit organizations have changed, expanded or revised their mission or methods of service delivery as a result of COVID-19.

Participating Organization Profile
• Data were collected from September 1 through September 8, 2020 via an online Qualtrics survey consisting of 33 questions. Only one response per organization was requested/allowed.

• Lists of nonprofit organizations and grantees of the survey sponsors were compiled by Together SC, yielding an effective mail-out of 2,954 statewide. The Community Foundation for Greenville provided the contact information of 179 nonprofits and 66 completed surveys were received. Statewide a total of 566 respondents completed the survey, a 19% response rate. The response rate specific to Greenville was 37%.

• Similar to the state as a whole, respondents are most likely to be the Executive Director or President. Eight three percent of respondents are leaders in Greenville compared to eighty-six percent statewide.

• Eighty-six percent of Greenville respondents indicate their service area is solely Greenville county. Fourteen percent report they operate statewide.

• All sectors of the Greenville nonprofit community participated in the survey with Human Services being the largest sub-sector (35%), followed by Arts, Culture and the Humanities (27%), Education (17%) and Health (11%). Other sectors represent less than 10% each.

• Three quarters of the nonprofits responding statewide have 25 or fewer employees as of March 2020. Similarly, 78% have fewer than 25 employees in Greenville. Nearly half (49% statewide) have five or fewer employees, 42% in Greenville. Statewide eleven percent report no employees compared to just 5% in Greenville.

• The sample is diverse by size. See annual budget distribution below, with most being in the $1.1M-5M range but also 21% in the 51K-250K range and 20% in the $251K to $500K range.
Financial Health

- Greenville’s nonprofits are slightly healthier from a financial perspective compared to the state as a whole. Statewide, nearly two thirds (63%) of nonprofits responding indicate they can survive for only six months or fewer without additional funding. The comparable number for Greenville is 52%.

- Two percent of Greenville’s nonprofits indicate they are out of funds now and 29% say they can only operate for three more months without additional funds, very similar to the state as a whole.

- Another indicator of the financial challenge of Greenville nonprofits is that 56% indicate that one source accounts for more than 40% of their revenue stream pre-COVID-19. Statewide the number is slightly higher (63%). Lack of diversified funding is a key risk factor for nonprofits, especially during the pandemic.

- By far, the federal government, especially the Payroll Protection Program (PPP), is the most often cited source of COVID-19 relief related funding. This is true statewide and in Greenville; 37 organizations responding to the survey indicated they received PPP awards. Other federal efforts like the Economic Injury Disaster Loan Advance (5 organizations in Greenville) and Emergency Solutions resources and CARES act funds are also cited (17 organizations in Greenville).

- Respondents were asked to rank their top three sources of funding. Individual giving has the highest aggregate ranking, followed by foundations and the federal government at statewide level. In Greenville, foundations rank first and individual giving second.

- Graph 2 presents change in funding by three sectors in Greenville (Arts, Culture and Humanities (n=15), education (n=11), and Human Services (n=23). In addition, all organizations in Greenville county (n=66) are compared to “All Others” (n=465).
  
  - The data by sector is striking with Arts, Culture and Humanities showing the greatest decrease in funding, while Human Services has seen an increase.
Overall, Greenville County nonprofit organizations have fared slightly better than the remainder of the state with a lower level of decrease and slightly higher level of increase.

**Graph 2**

*Increase/Decrease in Funding*  
*Greenville by Sector and Greenville County versus All Other SC Counties*

Q14: Has your organization experienced an increase or decrease in funding since Mid-March, the beginning of COVID-19 in the USA?

Impact on Staff
- Statewide, one in five of the organizations responding indicate they have furloughed staff as a result of COVID-19. This compares to only 14% in Greenville. Similarly, statewide 19% indicate they have cut staff hours compared to 15% in Greenville.

- The single most frequently mentioned impact on staff in Greenville is that 29% report they have needed to hire staff to address service demand. This compares to only 16% of organizations statewide.

Operational and Programmatic Changes
- Graph 3 shows the increase or decrease in demand for services since mid-March. (Sample sizes are the same as for Graph 2 above.)
  - There is a dramatic difference in demand comparing Arts, Culture and Humanities with Human Services and Education.
  - Demand for Arts programming has declined significantly, while demand for educational support and especially human services has increased substantially.

- Greenville county organizations as a whole have seen an increase in demand for services just slightly more than all other SC counties.
Graph 3
Increase/Decrease in Demand for Services

Q15: Has your organization experienced an increase or decrease in demand for services since Mid-March, the beginning of COVID-19 in the USA?

Needs Looking Forward Through the End of the Calendar Year
- South Carolina’s nonprofit sector has profound needs as they look to maintain services through the end of the calendar year, and this is especially true for Greenville.
- The single greatest need is cash to meet operating needs due to lost revenue as 37 (58%) of Greenville organizations select this as a need going forward. Slightly higher proportions of Greenville non-profits compared to the state as a whole indicate the need for other cash help:
  - 34% need help or cash to restructure programs or services (compared to 23% statewide).
  - 27% need cash to manage increased demand (compared to 22% statewide).
  - 53% need help navigating potential special funding from philanthropy (compared to 43% statewide).
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Table 1
Needs Through the End of the Calendar Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In the next 4 months, through the end of the calendar year, what are your greatest needs? (multiple response)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Green %</th>
<th>Org #</th>
<th>Green #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash flow to meet operating needs due to lost revenue</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help navigating any special funding resources that exist from philanthropic sources</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectively and safely managing a return to in-person work and service delivery.</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplies (cleaning supplies, hand sanitizer, personal protective equipment, medical equipment, etc.)</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help or cash to restructure programs and/or services</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash flow to meet increased demand</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help understanding what my peers are doing</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with remote work technology or management</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help understanding the laws related to unemployment or HR issues</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help understanding if loans or lines of credit are available to our organization</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• The amount of cash needed to remain afloat through the end of the calendar year varies widely by organization. Of the 37 Greenville organizations indicating they need cash to survive through the end of year, 19 provided usable estimates which total to $3,605,000. This is an average per Greenville organization of $180,250 needed to stay afloat to make up for lost revenue. This average amount is in contrast to the statewide average of $293,850.

• In addition to the cash needs, it is clear that these Greenville nonprofit organizations need assistance:
  o effectively and safely managing a return to in-person work/service delivery
  o procuring cleaning supplies/PPE
  o help with remote work technology and management
  o understanding HR laws and issues in regard to unemployment benefits

• Notably, only 5% of Greenville organizations are interested in loans or lines of credit.

• Organizations in Greenville County expressed significant concern regarding future financial stability, even organizations that have benefited from Federal aid or increased giving in the short term. Federal aid funds are running out, and there is concern that donors are either losing their enthusiasm for giving or are experiencing financial hardship themselves. Additionally, organizations have expenses for which they are not able to utilize relief funds.

“Lots of lost revenue (almost all), but emergency funds did come and fill the gap temporarily but very anxious about how much longer this situation is going to continue because funding is almost gone. No opportunities on the horizon for funding to continue services. It’s like people/foundations are tired of this and there isn’t the passion and urgency to give any more. But the needs of our clients are still just as strong as they were in March. Maybe worse because now they have more problems.”
“My greatest concerns are the future impact on the economy and the ripple effect on philanthropic giving.”

“We have bills/debt that didn’t go away with COVID but emergency funds can’t be used for those expenses.”

“Funding help is focusing on COVID supplies, equipment, and rent. We, along with many other organizations, need to replace the significant revenue lost from lack of in person events, memberships, and class fees. Otherwise we will have to end up laying off staff and downsizing our programs. We worked very hard to get to where we are in our ability to impact our community and lead our mission. I hate to see it slide backwards.”

- Lack of revenue from indoor, in-person events and programming is a concern in Greenville County, just as in the rest of the state. However, organizations from sectors other than Arts, Culture, and Humanities also expressed strong concern about this (though those organizations are undoubtedly hurting, as 53% of them reported a significant decrease in funding since the pandemic began).

“We are a mission-based school servicing families in poverty and below. Our revenue is generated off an annual GALA that has to be postponed, grants/foundations, and personal donations. These opportunities just aren’t there since COVID.”

- Overall well-being of stakeholders is also a concern.

“In addition to our students we are also concerned about the toll that it is taking on our staff as well as the mental health of both our staff, students and their families. The fact that there is not a concerted plan in place for everyone to follow and return to work, school, etc. or even reduce the spread is very concerning.”

Positive Impacts/“Silver Lining”

- Despite the significant challenges wrought by COVID-19, some organizations in Greenville County have experienced silver linings or some positive effects. These have frequently included benefits related to establishing remote technology for staff or clients, increased community awareness of the importance of their work, increase in donations in the short-term, increased ability to be adaptive, and renewed appreciation of the importance of their mission.

“We have reached people through virtual programs and events that were previously not connected with our programs.”

“(COVID-19) has driven us to look at new models for service delivery that we needed to do but had not gotten to”

“Initiation of telehealth services, which potentially helps alleviate transportation challenges (but creates internet access challenges)”

“COVID-19 has required us to think very differently about HOW we operate and further deepen the WHYS of our operation.”

“COVID-19 has increased awareness for the issue of food insecurity in our community.”

“Greater awareness of what we offer to the community and Greenville County.”