

# STATE OF THE SAFETY NET: 2020- 2021 REPORT

In a time of crisis, the Montgomery County safety net system responded with agility and a call for long overdue investments.

Over 60 respondents to the Montgomery County State of the Safety Net Survey, conducted in 2020 and again in 2021, provided their feedback on the impact of the pandemic on their nonprofit's operations, programs, staff, and board. The survey was fielded by HealthSpark Foundation and included a representative group of the county's social safety net providers.

"The pandemic changed much of how we operate. It will take time to stabilize operations, programs and finances. We will need time and support to stabilize and to move forward."

*Nonprofit survey respondent*

Read on for highlights, and [click here for the full report](#).

## KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE SURVEY



### FLEXIBILITY

Nonprofits exhibited tremendous adaptability during the pandemic. 90% of service providers shifted services in some way- reducing, expanding, or otherwise altering service delivery models to respond to changing consumer needs, staff and volunteer capacity, financial resources, and safety protocols.



### UNDERINVESTMENT IN BIPOC-LED ORGS

Nonprofits led by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) directors report less access to capital and cash reserves than those led by non-BIPOC leaders, 46% of non-BIPOC led organizations report at least 6 months of cash reserves in 2021, while none of BIPOC-led orgs do- a strong call to action for funders.



### INCREASED COORDINATION

Networks and partnerships are commonly understood to be essential for providing effective services and for sustaining increased demand. 73% of nonprofits have built new partnerships or expanded on existing collaborations in order to better respond to pandemic challenges.

"We're seeing people who have never interacted with the benefits system before and who are furious at the way that it operates."

*Nonprofit survey respondent*



of nonprofits reported serving populations that they historically did not serve (primarily people accessing safety net services for the first time)



report moderate to extreme increases in the need for services

Burn-out and emotional wellness are front and center, and providers are responding by doing more to support their staffs. Yet, wages and healthcare benefits remain low for the sector, decreasing morale and impacting retention and hiring.



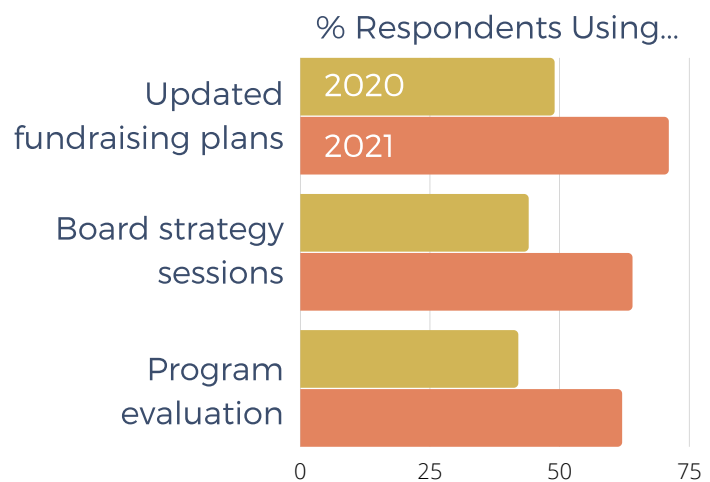
83% of respondents have invested in supporting mental health, such as flexible schedules, wellness events, and employee assistance programs

**"Recruitment and retention of qualified staff continues to be a threat to quality services. Paying a livable wage across all positions remains challenging with rates set at the state level as insufficient."**

*Nonprofit survey respondent*

Organizations that invested in strong policies and practices prior to the pandemic were better positioned to respond.

In 2021, there was a notable uptake in planning and strategy work.



**"We used the opportunity to question things we were doing pre-pandemic and challenged ourselves to do them differently, with success. Letting go of preconceptions and attachments to old ways of doing things created exciting opportunities for real change."**

*Nonprofit survey respondent*