



Resilience Convening

MEETING NOTES



COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
SONOMA
COUNTY

November 28th, 2017, 9:00 – 11:30 am
DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, 1 Doubletree, Rohnert Park, CA





BACKGROUND

In October 2017, Sonoma County was devastated by one of the greatest fire disasters in California history. More than 6,000 homes were lost and economic damages exceeded \$3 billion dollars, making the fires the most costly in United States history.

In the midst of the fires, and in the aftermath, our nonprofit partners acted as ‘second responders’, providing emergency food and shelter, mental health crisis counseling, transportation and cash assistance to help the tens of thousands of evacuees and fire survivors deal with the trauma and devastation inflicted by the fires.

At the same time, our community witnessed an incredible outpouring of support from generous people within and far beyond Sonoma County’s borders. Tens of millions of dollars were raised very quickly through new funds established to support fire relief, recovery and rebuilding.

Community Foundation Sonoma County saw an opportunity to bring the nonprofits and philanthropic organizations with fire funds together, recognizing that nonprofits were stretched thin by the surge in demand for their services and were eager to learn about available funds to support their fire relief and recovery work. Additionally, funders were developing their grantmaking strategies and were interested to know what the emerging needs and opportunities were from those who were working directly with people impacted by the fires. As a result, the Community Foundation organized the Resilience Convening on November 28th.

FUNDER SURVEY

Prior to the Resilience Convening, Community Foundation invited fifteen philanthropic entities focused on providing financial assistance to Sonoma County communities impacted by the recent wildfires to participate in an online survey. The purpose of the survey was to gather information from funders who have allocated or intend to allocate resources to address immediate and/or long-term community needs related to the recent wildfires. The full results of the survey are on our website.

MEETING PURPOSE

The purpose of the Resilience Convening was to create an opportunity for leaders in the local nonprofit and philanthropic communities to learn from one another in order to successfully move forward together.

MEETING PARTICIPANTS

Approximately 250 community leaders from primarily nonprofit and philanthropic organizations in Sonoma County participated in the Resilience Convening. The following is a breakdown of the attendees by sector:

| ORGANIZATION FOCUS | ATTENDEES | PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ATTENDEES |
|----------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|
| Animal Welfare | 2 | 1% |
| Arts | 14 | 6% |
| Education | 33 | 13% |
| Environment | 18 | 7% |
| Health & Human Services | 121 | 48% |
| Philanthropic Organization | 41 | 16% |
| Other | 23 | 9% |
| Total | 252 | 100% |





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It is important to note when reviewing the summary of the small group discussions that the information provided is a reflection of organizations represented at the convening, and is not necessarily a comprehensive collection of community needs post-fire.

FUNDER PANEL

Each of the funders listed below provided an overview of their organization's current and future funding activity. The PowerPoint slides for each funder and a recording of the panel are available on the Community Foundation's website.

- **Mike Kallhoff, CEO, United Way of the Wine Country**
- **Susan Shaw, Co-Director, North Bay Organizing Project/UndocuFund**
- **Matt Martin, VP of Community and Government Relations, Redwood Credit Union/North Bay Fire Relief Fund**
- **Daniel Lurie, CEO and Founder, Tipping Point**
- **Darius Anderson, Founder, Rebuild NorthBay**
- **Elizabeth Brown, CEO, Community Foundation Sonoma County**

Questions were collected from meeting participants throughout the funders' presentations. Given limited time, the panelists were not able to address many of the questions posed. Since the Resilience Convening, Community Foundation has been in communication with the funders about the questions and will share their responses once they are compiled.

Questions collected from meeting participants centered on the following topics:

- **Coordinating among funders**
- **Collecting accurate data**
- **Grantmaking processes**
- **Supporting specific populations and issue areas**
- **Supporting long-term recovery efforts**
- **Supporting nonprofit capacity**
- **Ensuring equity**
- **Including community voice**
- **Addressing indirect impacts of the fires**





THEMES FROM SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Meeting participants were asked to discuss three questions in small groups. Themes from 23 small group discussions are provided below.

1. What is the core value or key guiding principle that guides your organization's relief, recovery and/or rebuilding work?

EQUITY

Over half of the small group discussions noted the value of equity as one their organization holds and also a value they expect will be held during disaster recovery and rebuilding efforts. Equity was described as resources being equitably distributed and an intention to ensure everyone, especially the most vulnerable community members (e.g. people with low-income), has access to support.

MEET IMMEDIATE AND LONG-TERM NEEDS

Over half of the small group discussions noted their organizations' values related to meeting the immediate and long-term needs of their clients and community members. Several meeting participants noted their organization's mission would not change because of the fire, rather the organization now needs to be even more responsive, nimble and flexible with service delivery. In addition, several meeting participants noted concern about being able to preserve services given threats to funding (e.g. loss of tax revenue = reduced services) and the additional strain on nonprofit employees. One meeting participant wrote:

"[There is] worry about 'compassion drain'. Many of the nonprofit employees are at a tipping point of being marginalized. They are working for \$12-\$15 per hour and cannot absorb rental increases. The ability for staff to envision the American Dream here is gone. Vulnerable people helping vulnerable people."

Another meeting participant wrote:

"Doing whatever it takes to effectively support staff to stay healthy so that they can do whatever it takes."

INCLUSIVITY

Eleven of the 23 small group discussions noted inclusivity as a value their organization holds and/or one they expect will be held during disaster recovery and rebuilding. Meeting participants noted the importance of an inclusive process to understand needs of various community members, in a broad sense, and others noted the importance of including particular populations in disaster recovery and rebuilding planning. The following notes illuminate the theme of inclusivity as a core value.

"Communities know what they need. People should not just be at the table, they should be in the discussion to help guide where philanthropic funds are distributed."

"True representation at the table of who lives in Sonoma County."

"Oral history is an equalizer; to hear all the stories from as many different survivors as possible."

"Important to bring in youth voice."

"Provide specialized services to various populations."

"We need to more broadly define fire victim/survivor and understand the impact on children/parents who experienced multiple evacuations."



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COLLABORATION

Over half of the small group discussions noted the value of collaboration within their organization as well as a value that should guide disaster recovery and rebuilding. Collaboration was discussed in terms of nonprofits and/or philanthropic organizations coordinating, leveraging, and sharing resources and information. There were notes about the importance of trust, relationships, kindness, communication, transparency, and cooperation. As one meeting participant noted: *"We are in it together."*

HOUSING

The value of housing was expressed at several of the small group discussions. One small group noted: "[It is] overwhelming how many people need housing." Notes about the value of housing included specific populations who are impacted by lack of housing, including farm workers, people who provided child care in their homes, women and children, people who were already experiencing homelessness prior to the fires, and people with disabilities. The following note articulates how a value around housing may guide rebuilding efforts:

"Rebuild better—don't rebuild the same old problems. Better neighborhoods [means residents] are connected socially, with affordable housing, open space, trails. Rebuild with local labor and job training. Balance jobs with [the] housing value [so that] people who work here can afford to live here."

OTHER VALUES

Other values discussed among a few of the small groups included: Communication for emergency preparedness, environmental sustainability, and supporting the local workforce.

2. What community/communities does your organization serve and what are their greatest needs related to the fire recovery?

There were a range of communities and community needs discussed at every table. The most commonly noted 'greatest' needs are presented below.

HOUSING

The majority of the small group discussion touched on housing as being the greatest needs among various communities impacted by the fires. Meeting participants noted particular populations may be especially vulnerable and not able to access affordable, safe, accessible housing, including people who are undocumented, disabled, low-income, older adults, residents of Sonoma Valley, youth, people experiencing homelessness prior to the fires, and victims of domestic violence.

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS AND SERVICES

The other most commonly discussed 'greatest need' among meeting participants was the need for mental health services and supports. It was acknowledged many individuals, and even the collective community, are experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Nonprofits are trying to respond to the increased needs and demand for services while trying to care for employees who are also experiencing their own distress and anxiety. In addition, a medical and mental health facility (Santa Rosa Community Health's Vista Center) was "dismantled and destroyed." The following notes illuminate the challenges and needs associated with mental health care:



“Trauma experienced in underserved communities. [We] need to create safe spaces for families that have arts and are culturally relevant. Need to build mental health into existing services.”

“Our greatest need is for emotional support. Our clients and staff with sight loss are experiencing anxiety.”

“There is a level of hopelessness that is concerning (among clients).”

“Behavioral health services are needed; both immediate and long-term, as a result of the trauma on top of the trauma.”

“[We are] receiving referrals from other agencies for trauma and mental health, [we] need to meet clients needs and recover as an organization. [We] need bi-lingual therapists.”

As the quotes illustrate, there appears to be a gap in bilingual, bi-cultural mental health services for Latino individuals and families. Some meeting participants noted their organizations are creating additional therapeutic groups and services, however there is concern that the support is not sufficient.

LOCAL ECONOMY

A common need discussed among meeting participants was related to the local economy; job loss, low wages, unemployment, and economic instability among individuals, small business owners, and nonprofit organizations. Some meeting participants noted the fires that burned homes where childcare was provided not only impacts the income of the childcare provider, but also impacts the working families who relied on childcare in order to work. Other home-based businesses and small businesses were also noted as experiencing significant challenges. In addition, several meeting participants expressed concern that nonprofits will experience a greater financial strain as donors contribute directly to individuals and families and not contribute to nonprofit organizations.

LONG-TERM PLANNING

Several small group discussions noted the need for long-term planning that includes “community voice,” “centers on the most vulnerable populations,” and “uses a culturally relevant way to gather information about needs.” The following notes are suggestions made during the small group discussions as a way to address the needs for long-term planning:

“Plan for the earthquake.”

“We need a service provider directory.”

“Compile information from FEMA and State to make informed decisions.”

“Greatest need: Coordinate relief efforts among funders to spend money wisely.”

OTHER NEEDS

Other needs discussed among a few of the small groups included: food insecurity, the environment and poor water quality, the impact of the fires on youth programs and schools, access to legal services and aid, and case management services.

“Concerned that we don’t hear enough about the environment—how do we protect the watershed? Long-term health, economic, and environmental factors.”

“We want to create safe spaces for families.”

“Long term legal aid for vulnerable populations—those who can’t or don’t know how to advocate for themselves.”



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3. Despite the loss, what opportunities has the disaster created?

Eighteen of the 23 small groups submitted discussion notes related to this question. Meeting participants shared a plethora of potential opportunities the disaster created ranging from very concrete ideas (e.g. seniors could be used as a resource for childcare) to high-level concepts (e.g. see everything as connected, think holistically). The most common opportunities discussed are clustered into the three categories below.

SHARE RESOURCES

Meeting participants noted many examples of how resources, including staffing, funding, and information, could be shared across various organizations and residents. While some participants noted an opportunity to assess needs, with an equity lens and consideration of institutional racism, many other participants expressed strategies for sharing resources to address needs. Some of the ideas regarding future opportunities are presented in the notes below.

"[Create] a website for nonprofits to communicate best practices, pitfalls, shared resources, opportunities for shared grants."

"[Provide] population-specific convenings (e.g. bring together providers that serve youth because [youth] require different and specific level of services)."

"Become the kind of community we want to be, greater collaboration, build stronger communities."

"Create regional partners with Bay Area funders."

"Coordinate ALL community service organizations."

"Training (no or low cost) for nonprofit leaders on how to support clients regarding trauma and resilience."

"Free symphony concerts for first time engagement."

"Radical collaboration - Daycare was provided for health center and health center staff provided mental health services for day care."

"This is a chance to think differently about investing and grantmaking. How can we move from meeting immediate needs and shift our thinking to prevention and high-impact investing."

"[There is] unbelievable support [which] has opened [our] eyes to what is possible. How do we maintain connection, momentum, and generosity? [There is a] different notion of resources available [now]."

In addition to examples of sharing resources, one small group discussion noted the importance of shared leadership: *"We need more people of color represented in leadership positions and at the table. Lifting up leadership from residents. Anglo leadership needs to step back to make room for others to be represented."*

HOUSING

The fires create a tremendous need and new opportunity for housing in Sonoma County. Meeting participants noted now is the time to be creative with housing, to redefine 'home' and to build differently and using sustainable materials. A few specific strategies related to increasing the housing stock are presented below.

"Leverage sympathy to overcome NIMBY that impacts access to housing and other services."

"Lobby for opportunity to bring in federal funds to cover costs to build affordable housing. Create affordable housing on public lands."

"Provide support for people who are willing to build on land but can't afford fees (permits/building)."



EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Several small group discussions centered on opportunities for Sonoma County residents and agencies to prevent and/or be better prepared for another disaster (e.g. fire, earthquake). For example, one opportunity is to address environmental issues that may contribute to another fire. Other opportunities discussed related to improving communication methods at the time of the emergency and improving the use of resources (e.g. space for evacuees, mental health services). Finally, an opportunity may be to ensure all renters have the appropriate level of insurance to help mitigate losses as a result of a disaster.

NEXT STEPS

In a time when nonprofits and philanthropic organizations are working around the clock to meet the needs of the people and organizations they serve, Community Foundation was profoundly appreciative of the more than 250 people who took time out of their busy schedules to participate in the Resilience Convening.

After the convening, we sent out a survey to get feedback, and what we heard reflects how we felt: in a time of hardship, the silver lining has been our shared sense that we're in this together. The convening provided an opportunity to connect, to talk, hug, and share—and that, for many, was both welcome and needed.

We are in the process of developing our grantmaking strategy for the Community Foundation's Resilience Fund, as are many of our fellow philanthropic colleagues. Beyond reflecting on the notes from the convening, our next steps include:

- **Sending all of the questions from the funder panel to the participating funders, and compiling responses**
- **Coordinating with other funders to deepen our understanding of the landscape for fire relief and recovery funds**
- **Extensive research into disaster philanthropy**
- **Conducting a nonprofit survey in January of organizational needs post-fire**
- **Ongoing participation in key community initiatives to ensure that we are listening to the voices of those who need resources the most**

We're committed to keeping you informed of our progress with developing our grantmaking strategy for the Resilience Fund and our work beyond grants to support the nonprofit and philanthropic communities as we move forward, together.

