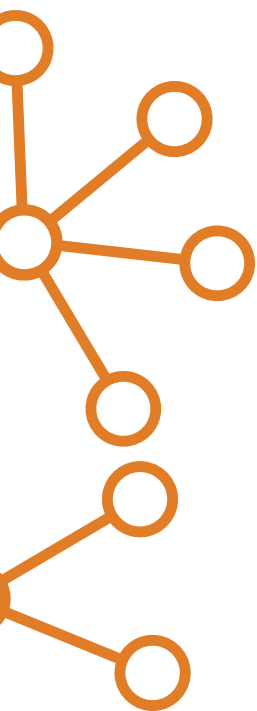


April 2020

# THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

ON ALBERTA'S NONPROFIT &  
VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS

**EDMONTON REGION**



**ABNN**  
Alberta Nonprofit Network



Edmonton Chamber  
of Voluntary Organizations

# About this Report

In an attempt to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on Alberta's Voluntary Sector, the Alberta Nonprofit Network (ABNN) developed a Flash Impacts Survey. The purpose of the survey was to learn how Alberta-based non-profit and charitable organizations were being impacted during this pandemic and economic downturn.

A total of 474 survey respondents from across Alberta completed the survey between March 30 and April 5, 2020. Of these 474 respondents, 188 were from organizations serving the Edmonton region. **The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the impacts on voluntary organizations serving the Edmonton region.**

If you are interested in the findings outside the Edmonton region, you can access the full report on the ABNN's website at [albertanonprofits.ca](http://albertanonprofits.ca).

The report has been developed by the Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations (ECVO). ECVO is a member-based non-profit organization serving the nonprofit and charitable organizations in the Edmonton region. Through a variety of programs and services, ECVO helps organizations build and sustain their volunteer programs and services through resources, networking, and skill development opportunities.

ECVO will share the information in this report with voluntary organizations, governments, and funders, as well as use the data to inform strategies on how to best support Edmonton's charitable and non-profit organizations now and in the future.

## Acknowledgments

ECVO would like to thank the ABNN for their collective vision during the development and distribution of the survey. Echoing the acknowledgements in the ABNN report, we would also like to thank all of the respondents who, despite challenges during these extraordinary circumstances, took the time to complete this survey. Thank you to ABNN members and partners for sharing this survey with their networks and encouraging organizations to participate. We would also like to thank the Ontario Nonprofit Network for sharing their survey design, which was adapted by ABNN.



# Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	4
<b>Survey Results</b> - Edmonton Region .....	6
<b>Section 1</b> - Immediate Impact .....	7
<b>Section 2</b> - Anticipated Impacts .....	12
<b>Section 3</b> - Resources & Supports .....	16
Conclusion .....	23



# Executive Summary

## Background

Challenges from COVID-19 continue to grow. Alberta's nonprofit organizations and charities are facing loss of revenue from the cancellations of programs and events, as well as a decrease in donations. At the same time, they are dealing with human resource challenges related to paid staff and volunteers.

With more than 25,000 active organizations, the sector is diverse, organized, self-governing, and continually evolving. The sector is comprised of a continuum of organizations that range from informal, volunteer-based with no formal resources to organizations with paid staff, abundant resources, and structured legal forms. All these organizations contribute equally to the quality of life of Albertans and are a crucial part of Alberta's community fabric.

Governments, organizations, and funders need information about the impacts of the pandemic and what is most needed by the sector at this time. The ABNN conducted a survey between March 30 and April 5, 2020 to learn about current and potential impacts and needs of the sector. This report provides an overview of the impacts on voluntary organizations serving the Edmonton region.

## Findings

### What are the impacts and challenges?

Organizations working within the Edmonton region expect to be dealing with the impacts of COVID-19 for months to come. Although the majority of organizations have been able to remain open, they are currently challenged by new ways of working remotely, staff absences due illness or childcare requirements, and an inability to engage with and/or effectively manage volunteers.

Reduced revenues due to a decrease in donations, limited fundraising opportunities, and a reduction in organizational services are also major concerns for the majority of organizations. Most organizations anticipate revenues will continue to be an issue, estimating their financial reserves would not last longer than six months.

### How can governments and other funders help?

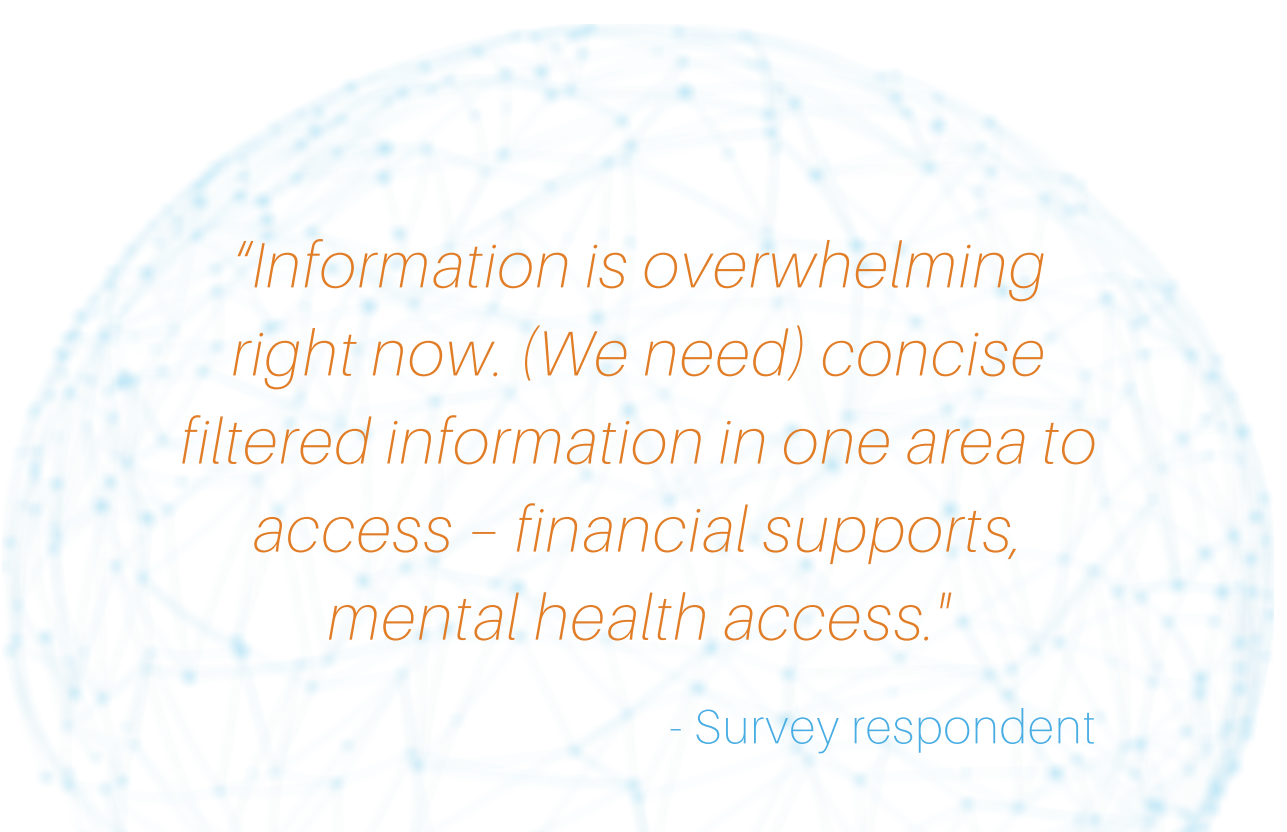
Organizations have asked governments and other funders for increased funding, greater clarity, and ongoing flexibility. Increased funding would be used for a number of operational activities including wage assistance, rent support, technology upgrades, and supports for frontline workers. Organizations requested greater clarity in relation to funding programs, employee/employer rights, and other organizational processes (e.g., hosting AGMs). Organizations also asked that governments and other funders provide extensions in reporting and allow for greater flexibility with fund allocation (e.g., using program funding for operations).

## What are the Next Steps for the Voluntary Sector?

Results of this survey provide some direction on how to best support the voluntary sector in the Edmonton region. Recognizing that ongoing communication and capacity building opportunities are key to addressing both immediate needs and future recovery, ECVO is committed to taking collaborative action in the four identified areas:

- 1) Collecting and distilling information;
- 2) Convening conversations;
- 3) Exploring the possibility of sharing resources, and;
- 4) Continuing to advocate for the voluntary sector.

As the situation continues to evolve, it is important for all levels of government and other granting organizations to recognize the needs of the non-profit sector as they consider how to respond to the pandemic in both the short and long term.



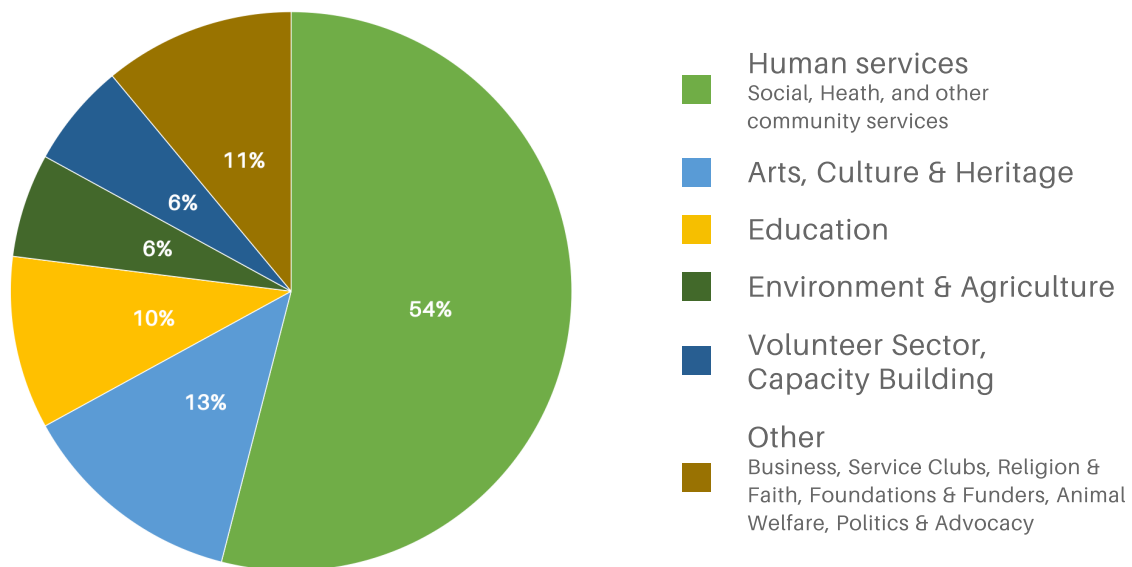
*"Information is overwhelming right now. (We need) concise filtered information in one area to access – financial supports, mental health access."*

- Survey respondent

# Survey Results

## Edmonton Region

Representatives from a total of **188 non-profit and charitable organizations** working in the Edmonton region completed the survey. The majority of the respondents (**85%**) were in a leadership position within their organization (i.e., CEO, Executive Director, Board Member, or Management Team member). Other respondents included staff members (**13%**) and volunteers (**2%**). A breakdown of the various areas of the voluntary sector represented throughout the report is provided in the chart below.



The survey results have been organized into three sections. The first section provides an overview of the immediate impacts reported by organizations in the Edmonton region. The second section provides an overview of the anticipated (or longer-term impacts) due to COVID-19. The third section provides an overview of desired resources and supports. In each section the respective questions are listed. Supporting data is also presented using charts (for the quantitative, closed-ended questions) and quotes (for the qualitative, open-ended questions).

# Section 1

## Immediate Impact

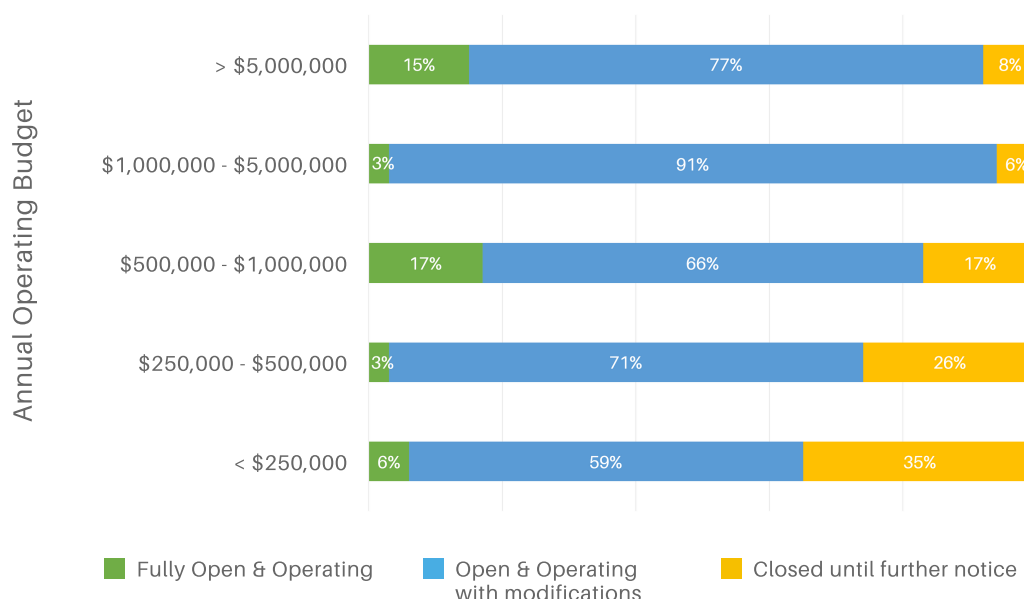
The purpose of section is to provide an overview of the immediate impacts due to COVID-19. Four quantitative questions (each with a set of pre-defined responses) have been included in this section:

- 1) Is your organization open and operating?
- 2) If you are open and operating, what level of emergency funding do you need to maintain operations and meet the demand for services?
- 3) If you have closed until further notice, how long are you able to sustain your organization financially?
- 4) What are the current impacts of COVID-19 on your organization?

Each question focuses on organizational activities between March 30 and April 5 (two to three weeks after Alberta declared a public health emergency). The results are presented in bar charts that detail the percentage of respondents that answered each question. In order to highlight any differences that may exist due to the size of the organization, the charts have been filtered using the organizations' annual operating budget.

### Question 1: Is your organization open and operating?

The majority of organizations (78%) have been able to remain open. While some of these organizations reported being "fully open" (7%), a much larger percentage (71%) have had to make modifications to when and how they operate. Of the organizations that reported being "closed until further notice" (22%), 79% had an operating budget of less than \$500,000. A detailed breakdown of the responses, which have been filtered using the organizations' annual operating budget, is presented in the chart below.



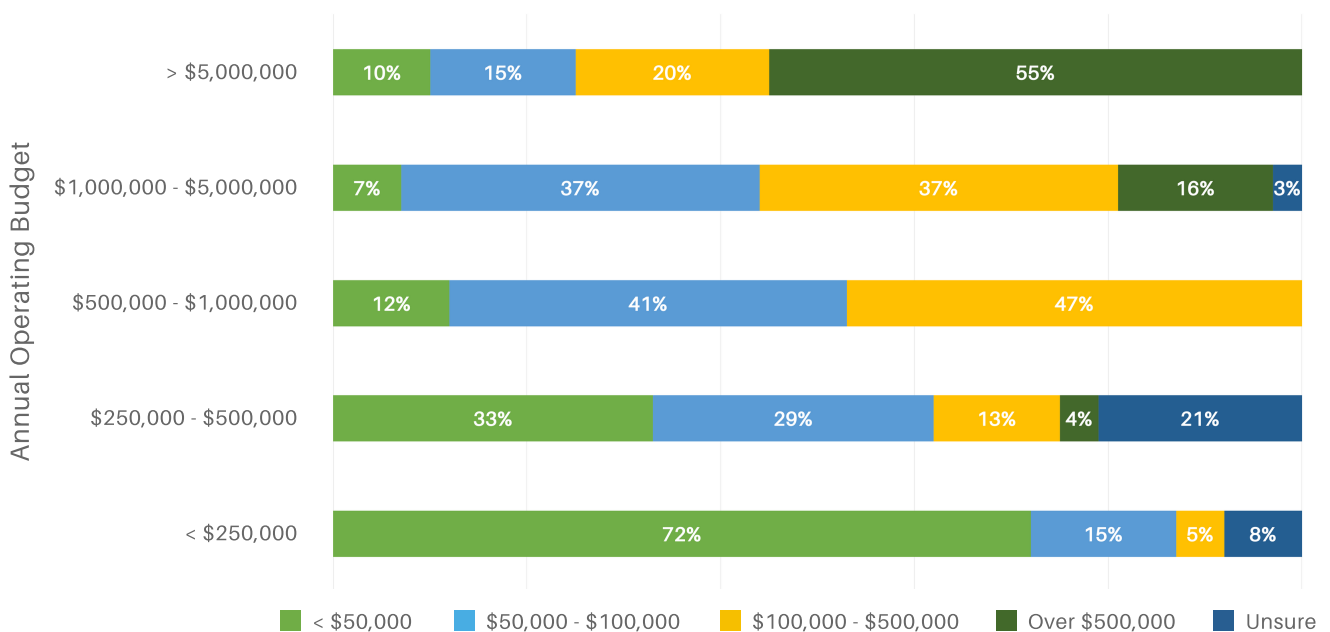
## Question 2:

### If you are open and operating, what level of emergency funding do you need to maintain operations and meet the demand for services?

Of the organizations that are open and operating, **33%** indicated they required less than \$50,000 in emergency funding; **26%** indicated they required between \$50,000 and \$100,000; **21%** reported needing between \$100,000 and \$500,000; and **13%** reported needing over \$500,000.

The amount of emergency funding required by the various organizations appears to align, to some degree, with their annual operating budget. As demonstrated in the chart below, the majority of organizations with an operating budget below \$250,000 reported that they required less than \$50,000 in emergency funding (**72%**), while the majority of organizations with an operating budget over \$5 million indicated they required over \$500,000 in emergency funding (**55%**).

Those that were unable to estimate their level of emergency funding (**7%** of organizations) felt there were still too many unknown factors to accurately answer this question. A detailed breakdown of the responses to this question, which have been filtered using the organizations' annual operating budget, is presented in the chart below.

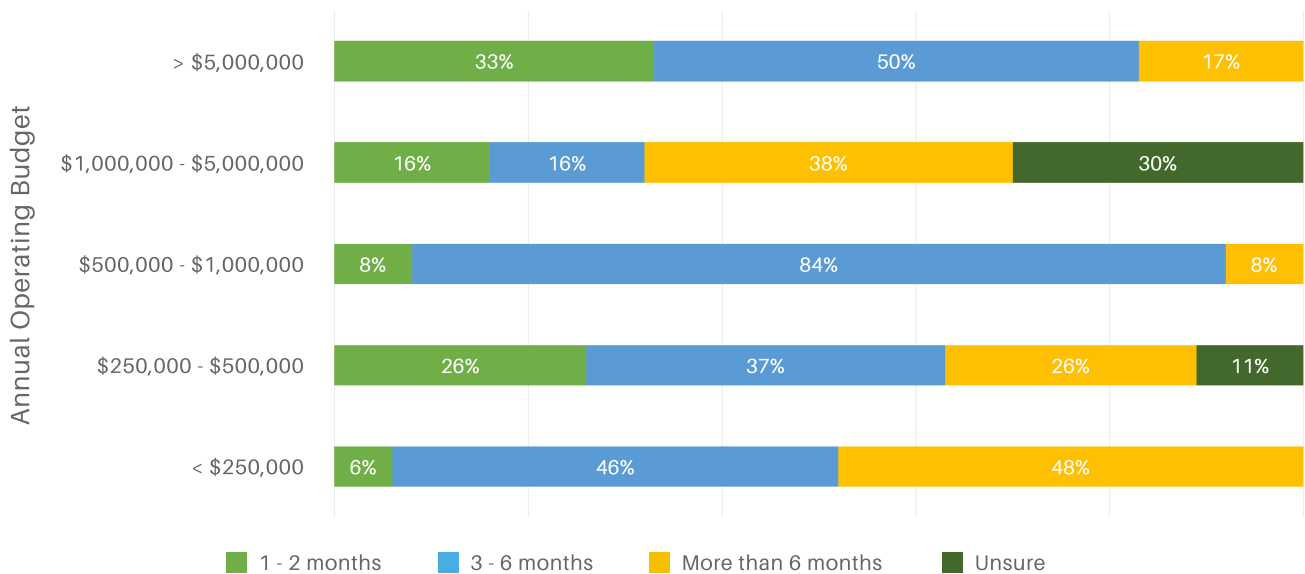




### Question 3:

#### If you have closed until further notice, how long are you able to sustain your organization financially?

Of the organizations that have had to close, 14% indicated they could sustain their organizations for one to two months; 45% for three to six months; and 34% for over six months. A total of 7% of respondents were unable to answer this question, reporting a variety of unknown factors. A detailed breakdown of the responses, which have been filtered using the organizations' annual operating budget, is presented in the chart below.



### Question 4:

#### What are the current impacts of COVID-19 on your organization?

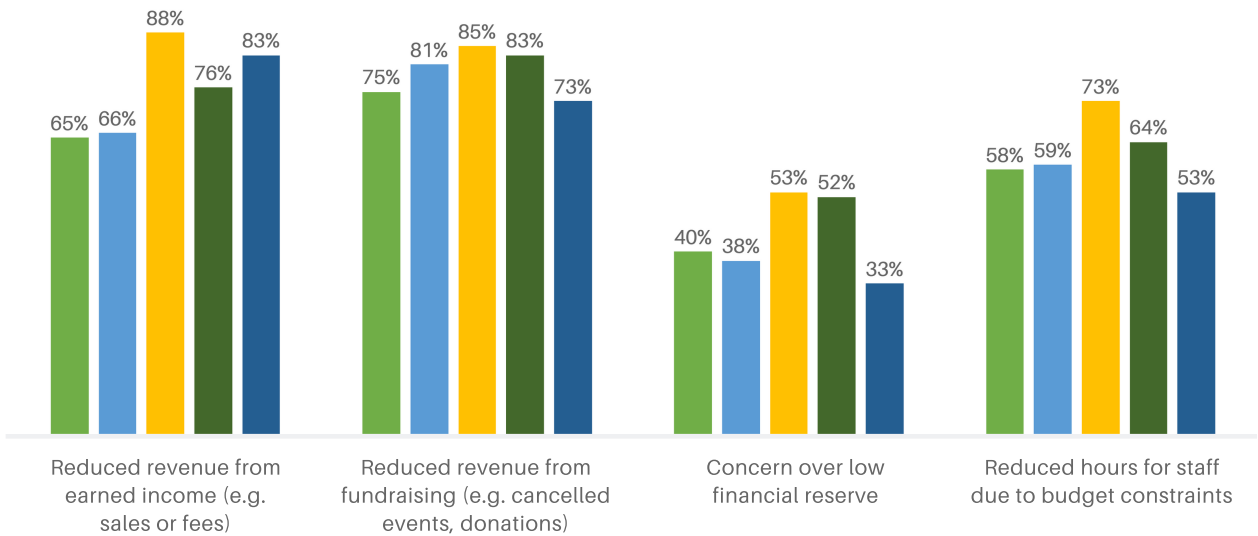
The responses to this question have been divided in four areas:

- 1) Financial Impacts
- 2) Impacts on Services and Events
- 3) Staff Challenges
- 4) Volunteer Challenges

#### Financial Impacts

Reduced revenue from both services and fundraising was a primary concern for the majority of organizations. A total of 73% of respondents reported reduced revenue from services, while 77% reported reduced revenue from fundraising. A concern over having a low financial reserve was also reported by 42% of organizations. Furthermore, reduced staff hours due to budget constraints was reported by 61% of organizations. A detailed breakdown of the responses, which have been filtered using the organizations' annual operating budget, is presented in following chart.

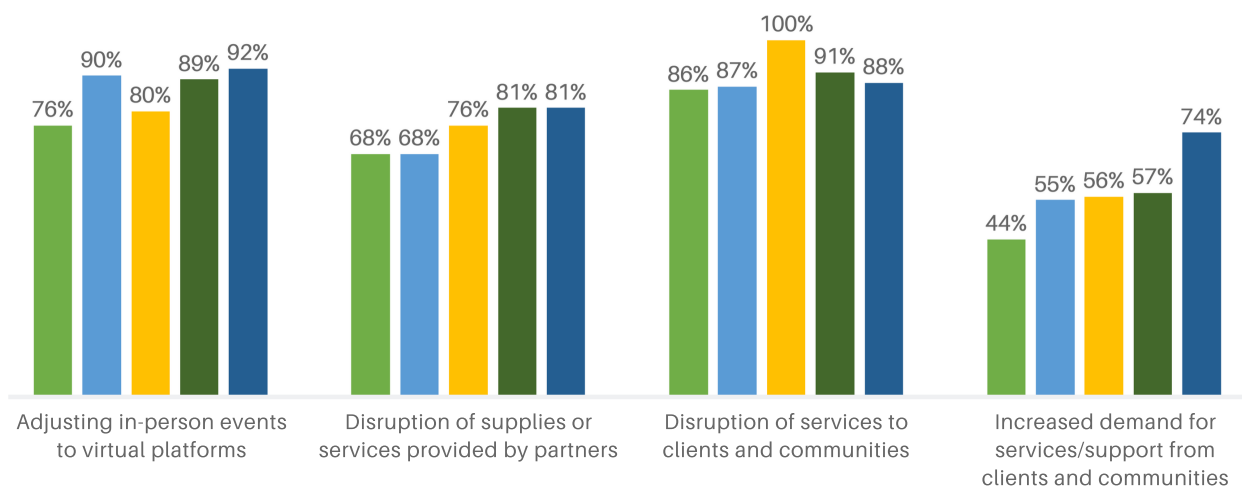
■ < \$250,000   
 ■ \$250,000 - \$500,000   
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### Impacts on Services and Events

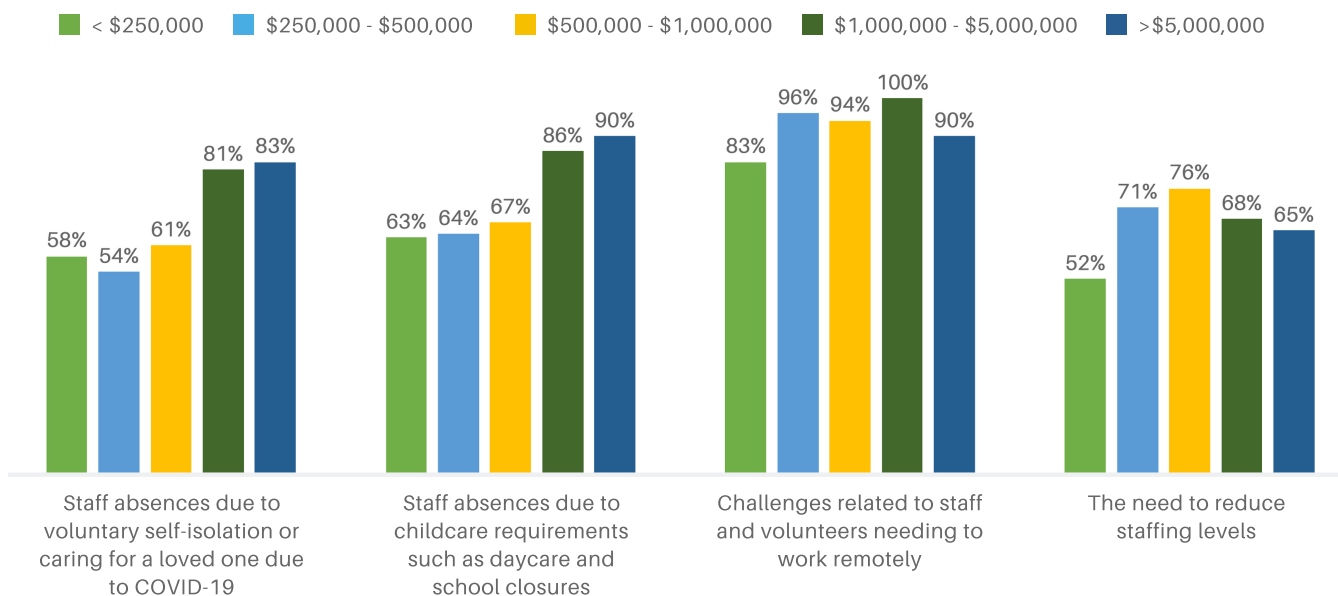
The disruption of services and events caused by COVID-19 was a major concern for the majority of organizations. A total of **84%** of organizations reported challenges related to moving in-person events to online platforms. Furthermore, **74%** of organizations reported disruption of services provided by partners as a challenge, while **89%** of organizations reported disruptions to their own community services. An increased demand in services due to COVID-19 was also reported by **57%** of organizations. A detailed breakdown of the responses, which have been filtered using the organizations' annual operating budget, is presented in the chart below.

■ < \$250,000   
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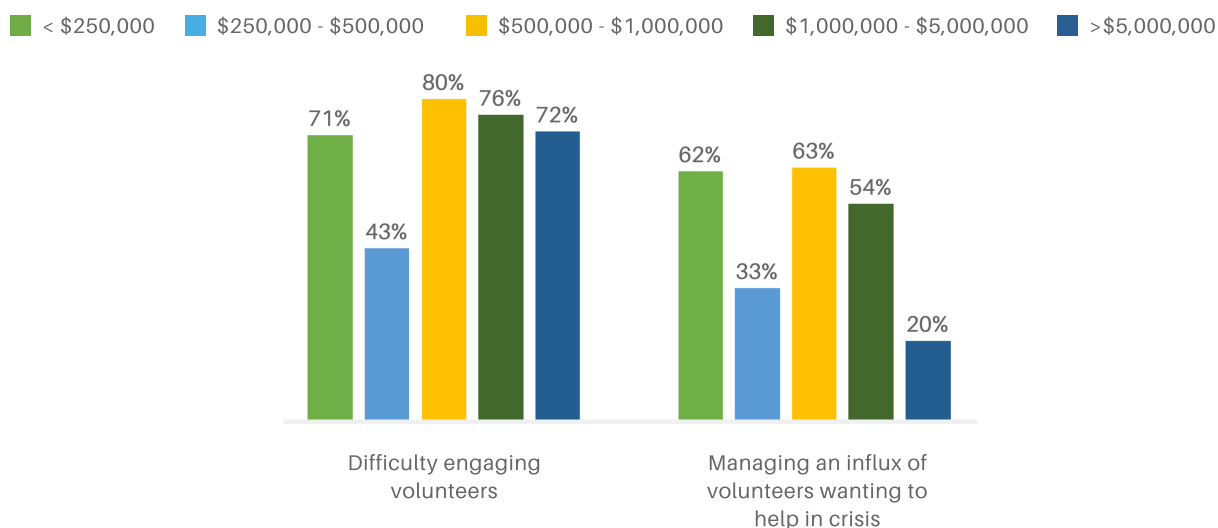
## Staff Challenges

The biggest challenge in relation to staff was the need to work remotely. A total of **92%** of organizations listed this as a challenge. Other challenges included staff absences due to illness (**67%**) or childcare requirements (**78%**). The need to reduce the number of staff working in the organization was also a challenge reported by **66%** of organizations. A detailed breakdown of the responses, which have been filtered using the organizations' annual operating budget, is presented in the chart below.



## Volunteer Challenges

Engaging volunteers was a reported challenge for **69%** of organizations, while managing an influx of volunteers wanting to contribute during the crisis was a reported challenge for **48%** of organizations. A detailed breakdown of the responses, which have been filtered using the organizations' annual operating budget, is presented in the chart below.



# Section 2

## Anticipated (Longer-Term) Impacts

The purpose of section is to provide an overview of the anticipated longer-term impacts due to COVID-19. Three quantitative questions (each with a set of pre-defined responses) have been included in this section:

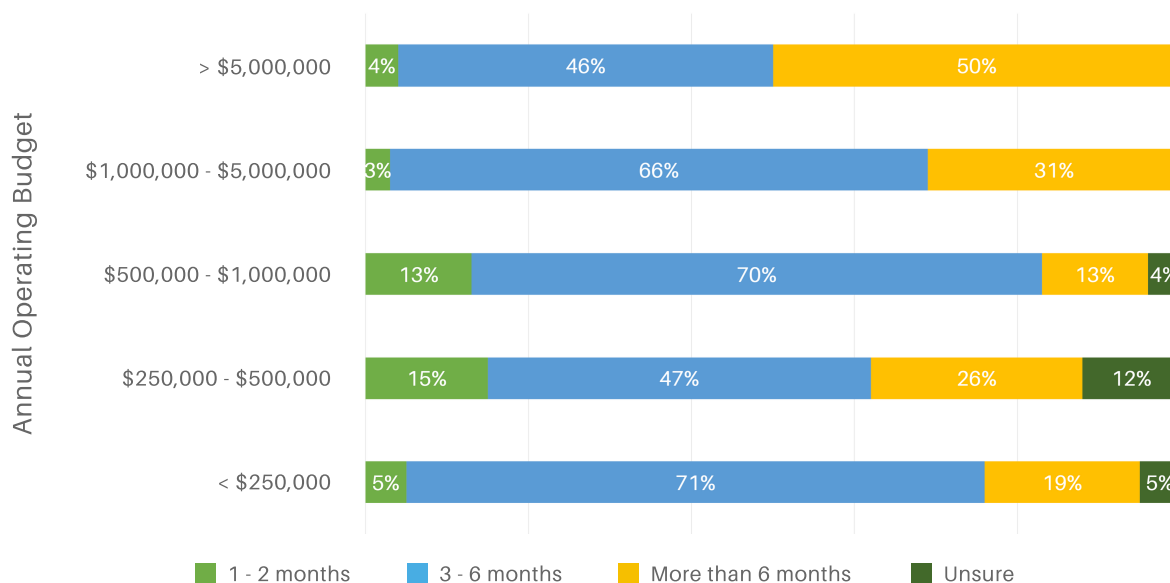
- 1) How long do you anticipate your organization will have to deal with the impacts of COVID-19?
- 2) What are the anticipated impacts of COVID-19 on your organization?
- 3) In total, please estimate the total financial impact COVID-19 will have on your organization this year.

Each question focuses on the future (or anticipated) organizational activities. The results are presented in bar charts that detail the percentage of respondents that answered each question. A summary of the findings is provided under each question.

### Question 1:

#### How long do you anticipate your organization will have to deal with the impacts of COVID-19?

When anticipating how long COVID-19 would impact their organizations only **8%** of organizations reported that they would be dealing with the impacts of COVID-19 for 1-2 months. The majority of organizations (**62%**) reported that the impacts would last 3-6 months, with **26%** of organizations suggesting the impact would go beyond 6 months. A total of **4%** indicated they were unsure how long the impacts would last due to a number of unknown factors. A detailed breakdown of the responses, which have been filtered using the organizations' annual operating budgets, is provided in the chart below.



## Question 2:

### What are the anticipated (longer-term) impacts of COVID-19 on your organization?

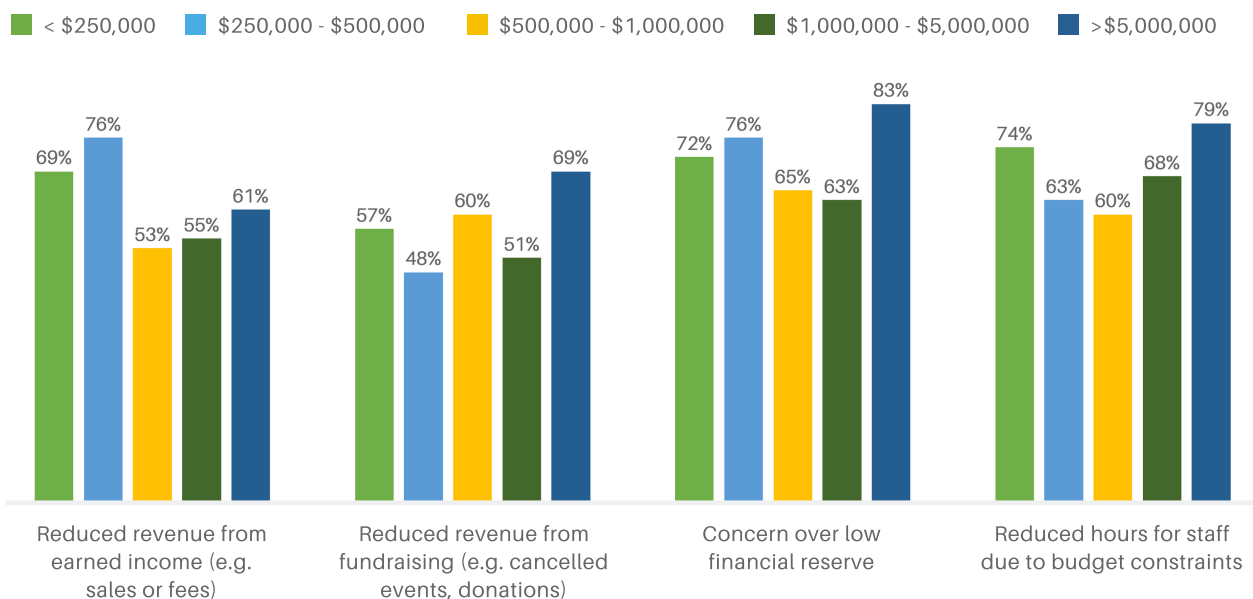
The responses to this question have been divided in four areas:

- 1) Financial Impacts
- 2) Impacts on Services and Events
- 3) Staff Challenges
- 4) Volunteer Challenges

An overview of each area is provided in the following pages.

#### Financial Impacts

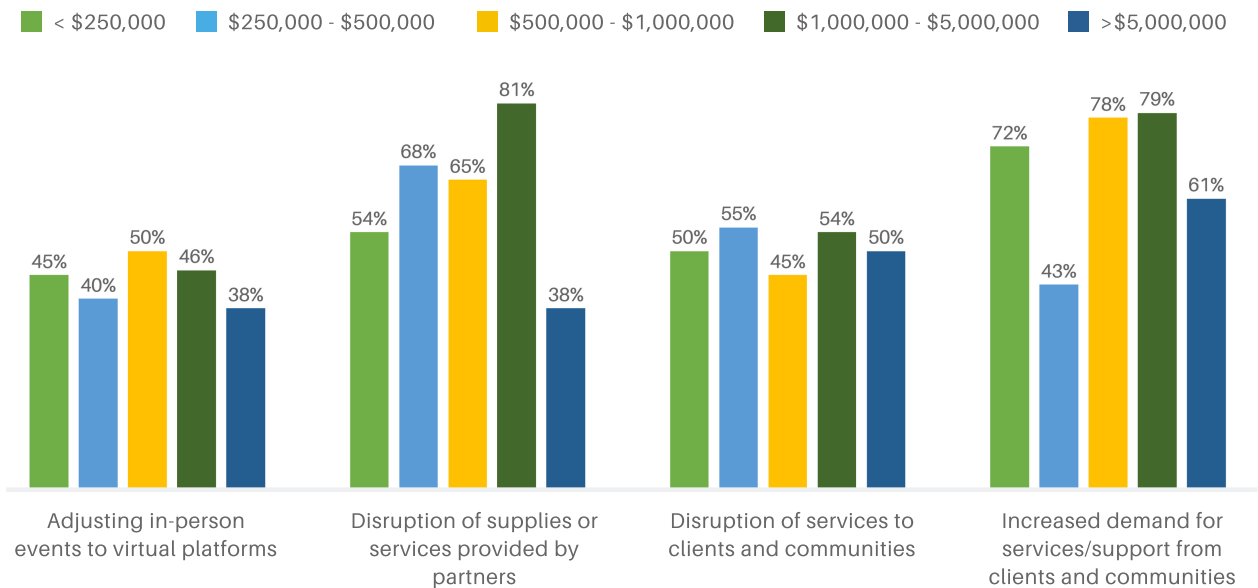
Reduced revenue from both services and fundraising was anticipated to be an ongoing challenge for the majority of organizations. A total of **64%** of respondents anticipated reduced revenue from services, while **57%** anticipated reduced revenue from fundraising. A concern over having a low financial reserve was anticipated by **73%** of organizations. Furthermore, reduced staff hours due to budget constraints was anticipated by **69%** of organizations. A detailed breakdown of the responses, which have been filtered using the organizations' annual operating budgets, is provided in the chart below.



#### Impacts on Services and Events

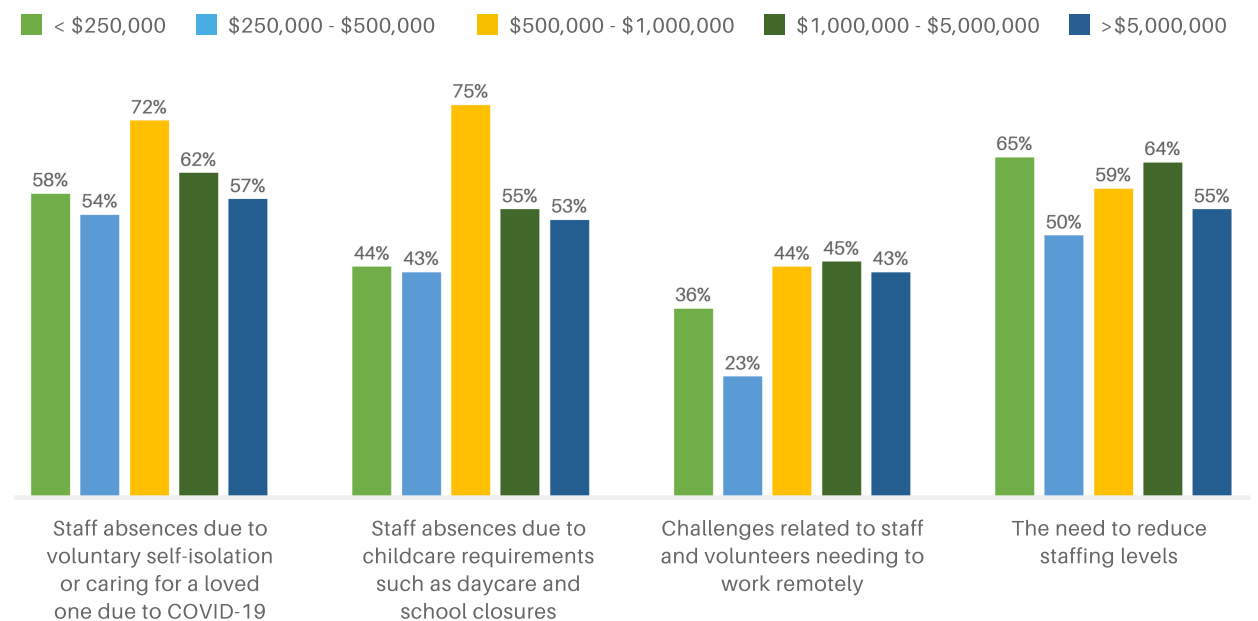
The disruption of services and events caused by COVID-19 was anticipated to be an ongoing challenge for some organizations. A total of **43%** of organizations anticipated challenges related to maintaining virtual platforms. Furthermore, **58%** of organizations anticipated the ongoing disruption of services provided by partners as a challenge, while **48%** of organizations anticipated ongoing disruptions to their own community services. The majority of organizations (**69%**) also anticipated an increased demand for their services in the coming months.

A detailed breakdown of the responses, which have been filtered using the organizations' annual operating budgets, is provided in the following chart.



### Staff Challenges

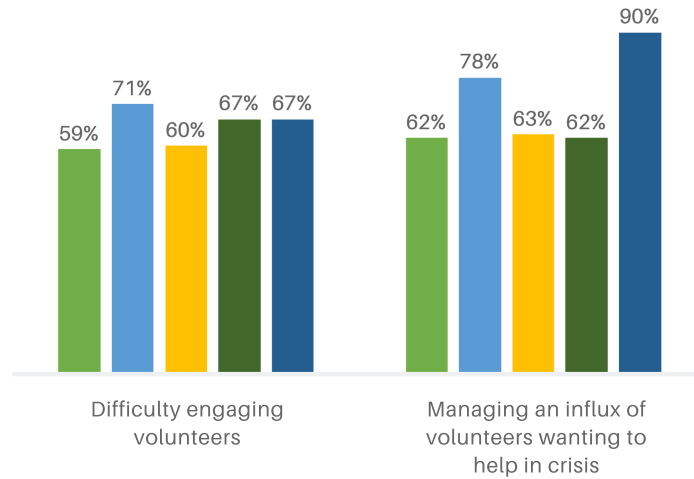
Ongoing challenges related to working remotely were only reported by 37% of organizations. When looking to the future, 57% organizations anticipated staff absences due to illness, while 51% anticipated absences due to childcare requirements. The percentage of organizations anticipating that they would need to reduce the number of staff working in the organization was 58%. A detailed breakdown of the responses, which have been filtered using the organizations' annual operating budgets, is provided in the chart below.



### Volunteer Challenges

Engaging volunteers was an anticipated challenge for 62% of organizations, while managing an influx of volunteers wanting to contribute was an anticipated challenge for 69% of organizations. A detailed breakdown of the responses, which have been filtered using the organizations' annual operating budgets, is provided in the following chart.

■ < \$250,000   
 ■ \$250,000 - \$500,000   
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 ■ > \$5,000,000



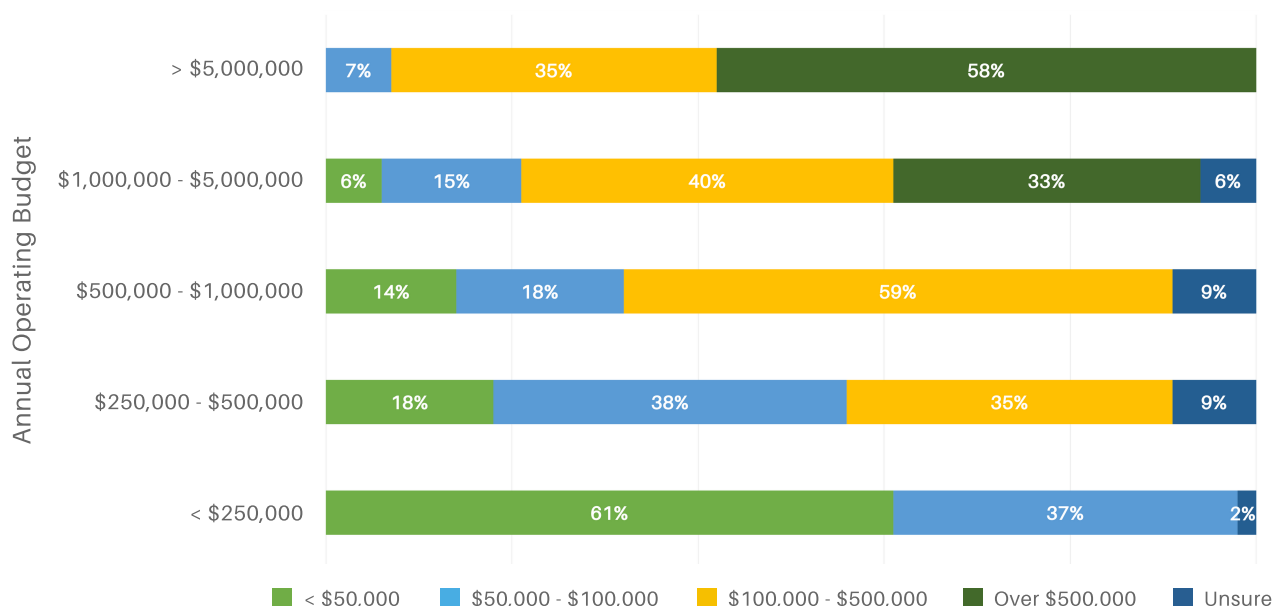
### Question 3:

**In total, please estimate the financial impact COVID-19 will have on your organization this year.**

The financial impact reported by organizations varied. A total of **27%** of the responding organizations estimated it would be less than \$50,000; **26%** estimated it would be between \$50,000 and \$100,000; **27%** between \$100,000 and \$500,000; and **15%** estimated it would be over \$500,000.

The financial impact COVID-19 will have on organizations appears to align, to some degree, with their annual operating budget. As demonstrated in the chart below, the majority of organizations with an operating budget below \$250,000 reported that the financial impact would be less than \$50,000, while the majority of organizations with an operating budget over \$5 million indicated the financial impact would be over \$500,000.

Those that were unable to estimate the financial impact (5% of organizations) felt there were still too many unknown factors to accurately answer this question. A detailed breakdown of the responses, which have been filtered using the organizations' annual operating budgets, is provided in the following chart.



# Section 3

## Resources & Supports

The purpose of section is to provide an overview of desired resources and supports. Four qualitative questions (allowing for open-ended responses) have been included in this section:

- 1) What resources or support could foundations, businesses or government provide to assist your organization during the COVID-19 outbreak?
- 2) If additional provincial funding, related to the COVID-19 outbreak, becomes available, how would you like to see the funding directed?
- 3) Beyond funding, what support does your organization need right now?
- 4) How can the Alberta Nonprofit Network and its member organizations take action to support the sector?

The responses to each question were analyzed using thematic analysis. For each question, an overview of the key themes is provided, along with some of the supporting quotes.



*"Funds need to be spread throughout the sector to keep organizations running. Sector-wide, not just to support Human Service Agencies."*

- Survey respondent



## Question 1:

**In total, please estimate the financial impact COVID-19 will have on your organization this year.**

The responses to this question have been organized using three main themes:

- 1) Funding
- 2) Clarity
- 3) Flexibility

An overview of each area is provided in the following pages.

### Funding

The majority of respondents indicated that funding was the primary way in which foundations, businesses, and governments could assist their organizations. How the funding would be used varied across organizations. The most common responses included:

- Wage assistance (e.g., health benefits, sick leave, child care leaves, wage top-ups).
- Support for rent and utilities.
- Computers, phones, software, and other technological requirements and supports (e.g., online platforms, translation tools).
- Personal protective equipment.
- Program funding for emergency response services.

*“There is no source of income, no fundraising, until we reopen. We have a small reserve for a few months, after that zero money and we still have bills (i.e., employee benefits, phone, etc.).”*

*“Reimbursement for salaries paid to staff for mental health days off as their response is frontline and staff are out of personal days.”*

*“Recovery packages that are not targeted just at programming, but can be used for operations or in the way the organization believes is best to help us get back on our feet.”*

*“Building capacity of the organization to upgrade and train its staff on using technology. Funds can be used to create a database, online platforms, remote working capabilities, and web-based services were possible.”*

## Clarity

A number of respondents indicated that clarity from governments and funders was essential during the pandemic. Specifically, they wanted more information about the funding programs, employee/employer rights, and other organizational processes (e.g., hosting AGMs). It was also suggested that this information be housed in “one clear concise living document.”

*“Need to know what level of reimbursement we are going to get on additional COVID related expenses. We are being told to keep track of expenses, but we don’t know if it will be reimbursed dollar for dollar or 50 cents on the dollar. There is uncertainty.”*

*“Specific information on options for employees (e.g., can someone take leave without pay and still receive government assistance for childcare needs).”*

*“We need up to date information about operational requirements, such as AGM deferrals.”*

*“Information is overwhelming right now. Concise filtered information in one area to access – financial supports, mental health access.”*

## Flexibility

A number of respondents requested that governments and other funders be both flexible and responsive with their funding programs during this unprecedented time. This included providing organizations with extensions in reporting and the ability to use program and funds for operations and other critical services.

*“Existing grants to be used towards critical needs rather than projects originally planned.”*

*“Understanding for upcoming reporting that some outcomes may not be met and extensions to reporting requirements.”*

*“Unrestricted use of ALGC gaming revenue to pay operational expenses.”*

*“Come up with a way to replace revenue due to casino closure, recouping costs from fundraisers.”*

## Question 2:

### **If additional provincial funding related to the COVID-19 outbreak becomes available, how would you like to see the funding directed?**

All organizations indicated that any additional funds allocated to the sector should go directly to organizations to support operational costs. However, there was some discrepancy about which organizations should be prioritized. Some respondents felt that extra provincial funding should be directed to those community organizations that offer frontline services (especially those that work with vulnerable populations). Others felt that all voluntary organizations, regardless of their programs and services, should be funded equally.

*“Funds need to be spread throughout the sector to keep organizations running. Sector-wide not just to support Human Service Agencies.”*

*“I don’t think emergency funding should necessarily include programs that are not essential to life threatening situations.”*

*“Immediate funding should go towards those trying to keep bodies and souls together: food banks, shelters, poverty relief, health care, etc.”*

*“Programs that directly help families and individuals enhance a sense of community. NOT Sports, but B&G Clubs, Scouts, Guides, Cadets, 4H, etc. If nothing else this pandemic has highlighted the need for clubs and groups that build communities.”*

*“Immediate funding relief to charities that work frontline. Families in crisis and children that live in at-risk home require and need our frontline workers to be available.”*

Respondents also asked that if funds did become available that the application process be simple and streamlined in order to reduce the administrative burden during this time.

*“Need a simplified application process, easy to navigate, fast release of funds. Don’t complicate the application.”*

*“If funding comes via grants, streamlined application mechanisms and processes to reduce administrative burden.”*

## Question 3:

### Beyond funding, what support does your organization need right now?

The responses to this question have been organized using three main themes:

- 1) Capacity Building
- 2) Communication with Governments
- 3) Supports for Frontline Workers

An overview of each area is provided in the following pages.

#### Capacity Building

A number of organizations requested capacity building in the areas of technology, grant writing, volunteer recruitment, board governance, and human resources.

*“Training for staff in how to establish and deliver in-person programming and teaching via remote and virtual platforms.”*

*“Our AGM is coming up and we don’t know how to deal with it remotely. Our membership is over 100.”*

*“Extra help recruiting volunteers to foster animals. Recruiting future volunteers.”*

#### Communication with Governments

A number of respondents asked for ongoing communication with the various levels of governments. Specifically, they wanted processes that ensured questions could be asked and answered, and the impacts of COVID-19 could be shared.

*“We need ongoing communication to answer staff concerns.”*

*“We need ways to connect with all levels of government to discuss the impacts and challenges.”*

#### Support for Frontline Workers

The two main supports needed for frontline workers were personal protective equipment and access to mental health support due to the various forms of trauma that have resulted from COVID-19.

*“PPE. We Cannot find any.”*

*“Better access to mental health supports for employees and volunteers. Our management team is exhausted. We have been working 8-10 hour days to respond to changes.”*

*“Ways to deal with the vicarious trauma frontline leaders are facing.”*

## Question 4:

### How can the Alberta Nonprofit Network and its member organizations take action to support the sector?

The responses to this question have been organized using three main themes:

- 1) Collecting and Distilling Information
- 2) Convening Conversations
- 3) Exploring the Possibility of Sharing Resources
- 4) Continuing to Advocate for the Voluntary Sector

An overview of each theme is provided in the following pages.

#### Collecting and Distilling Information

A number of respondents felt that ABNN, and its members, could support the sector by collecting and distilling both formal and informal information. Specific activities included the mobilization of relevant information, the development of shared databases, and sector-wide evaluation and research activities.

*“Continue to gather data from the sector to feed up to government and other funders.”*

*“Collect, distill, and distribute information for nonprofit managers.”*

#### Convening Conversations

Participating in ongoing conversations about the impacts of COVID-19 was important to a number of respondents. It was therefore suggested that ABNN, and other member organizations, host cross-sector dialogues, forums, and other forms of networking.

*“Plan a cross-sectoral dialogue on how COVID is affecting everyone.”*

*“Function as a hub by providing spaces for the voices of the people you represent so that discussion can happen and that ideas can be presented clearly.”*

*“Convene a conversation on the long-term recovery efforts of our sector (include members of the Premier’s Council and ANVSI).”*

### Exploring the Possibility of Sharing Resources

A number of respondents indicated they were interested in exploring the possibilities of sharing resources. Assisting groups interested in sharing space, developing joint initiatives, and job sharing were suggested ways ABNN could continue to support the sector.

*"Help us move to cost sharing, joint initiatives, and even work share between staff."*

*"Act as the bridge between those who need support and those who can offer it."*

*"We need office space as our west end location is losing its space. Looking for office space at this time is very challenging."*

### Continuing to Advocate for the Voluntary Sector

A number of respondents stressed the importance of ABNN continuing to advocate on behalf of the voluntary sector. By providing a collective voice, it was assumed ABNN, and its members, could ensure the various levels of government were familiar with the challenges and needs facing the voluntary sector.

*"Continue to lobby and advocate to support our sector and seek relief funding that is unique to the voluntary sector."*

*"To lobby the provincial and federal governments so that non-profits do not get lost in the scramble to support industry."*

*"Keep the profile raised, thank you for this work."*

*"Programs that directly help families and individuals enhance a sense of community. ... If nothing else, this pandemic has highlighted the need for clubs and groups that build communities."*

- Survey respondent  
on where they would like to see  
provincial funding directed.

# Conclusion

The information presented throughout this report provides ECVO and other partner organizations with direction on how to support the voluntary sector with both immediate needs and long-term recovery. Similar to the findings from the ABNN report, voluntary organizations in the Edmonton region are experiencing revenue loss, cash flow difficulties, and major disruptions to their day-to-day activities.

Results of this survey provide direction about collaborative actions to consider now and in the future. This includes capacity building opportunities; coordinated advocacy efforts; sector-wide research and evaluation; and ongoing outreach and updates.

**As the situation continues to evolve, it is important for all levels of government, foundations, and other granting organizations to consider the voluntary sector. It is also important that members of the voluntary sector continue to work together by sharing resources and advice and supporting each other through these challenging times.**

## **For more information, contact:**

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*"We need ways to connect  
with all levels of government  
to discuss the impacts and  
challenges (of COVID-19)."*

- Survey respondent