



COVID-19 Phase III Needs Assessment Report

October 2021

INTRODUCTION

Jewish Federation of St. Louis conducted COVID-19-focused community needs assessments in March and July of 2020. The findings of those assessments, which focused on basic human needs and organizational capacity challenges, have informed Federation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in its roles as funder, convener, and communicator.

The circumstances of the pandemic, and its impacts on our local Jewish community, continue to change. Widespread availability of effective vaccines provided a window of near normalcy in early summer 2021, while at the time of this writing, in late summer 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and local municipalities have once again recommended a higher level of caution due to the highly contagious delta variant of the virus. Like all of Federation's needs assessments, this one reflects a snapshot in time just before the delta variant

Given these ongoing shifts, the goal of this third COVID-19 needs assessment is to update Federation's understanding of the St. Louis Jewish community's challenges around both basic human needs and organizational capacity as we continue to navigate the extended challenges and uncertainty of the pandemic. The primary approach of this assessment was to gather information about community and organizational needs from the leadership of local Jewish organizations, and compliment those findings with data from other sources. This needs assessment has been overseen by two key groups of lay leaders: Federation's Assessment & Planning Subcommittee, and a subset of the Subcommittee that is specifically focused on this work, the COVID-19 Working Group.

Data Sources

Source 1: Community Leadership Survey

Respondents: Federation emailed a request to complete COVID-19 needs assessment survey to the leadership of every local Jewish organization, as follows:

- Organizations with executive staff leadership: CEO/Executive Director
- Volunteer-led organizations: Board Chair/chief volunteer
- Congregations: Senior Rabbi and Executive Director (we encouraged the Senior Rabbi and ED to complete the survey together).

Timing: The survey was open from June 17, 2021-July 1, 2021, just before the COVID-19 surge driven by the delta variant hit the St. Louis area.

Response rate: We received 46 responses from 44 unique organizations, out of 66 organizations that were invited to respond. The response rate was 67%.

Questions: Respondents answered two sets of questions. If they indicated that their organization or their constituents are experiencing a particular challenge or need, they were asked to answer follow-up questions as follows:

<i>Organizations' Challenges/Needs</i>	<i>Constituents' Challenges/Needs</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is your organization currently experiencing the following need/challenge? (<i>prevalence among organizations</i>) <p>If yes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what degree is your organization currently experiencing this challenge/need due to the pandemic? (<i>severity</i>) • How has this challenge changed for your organization since June 2020 (one year ago)? (<i>improvement over time</i>) • Do you anticipate this challenge to last through the rest of 2021? (<i>longevity</i>) • Open-ended opportunities to explain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you aware that your constituents are currently experiencing this need due to the pandemic? (<i>awareness of need</i>) <p>If yes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How widespread is this need among your constituents, due to the pandemic? (About what proportion of your constituents are experiencing this need?) (<i>prevalence among constituents</i>) • Are there specific groups or types of people within your constituents who are particularly experiencing this need? (This may include age/life stage, geography, program type, etc.) • How would you describe the severity of this need/challenge among your constituents who are experiencing it? (<i>severity</i>) • How does the severity of this need/challenge compare to June 2020 (one year ago)? (<i>improvement over time</i>) • Do you anticipate this need/challenge continuing through the rest of 2021? (<i>longevity</i>) • What specific resources do you think would be helpful in addressing this need/challenge?

Source 2: Leading Edge Survey

As a supplement to the community leadership survey data, we also have data directly from staff of a group of local Jewish organizations that we utilized in this needs assessment through the 2021 Leading Edge Employee Experience Survey. This survey, administered annually to thousands of people employed by Jewish community organizations across the U.S., asks employees to provide feedback about their work experiences. The resulting data identifies strengths and opportunities for improvement in workplace culture.

In May 2021, nine local Jewish organizations (two day schools, three congregations, two social service organizations, and two broad community organizations) participated in the Leading Edge Employee Experience survey and agreed to allow their employees' data to be compiled into a composite report of St. Louis Jewish community employee engagement. 392 people who work at these organizations completed the Leading Edge survey.

While the Leading Edge survey is not specifically focused on COVID-19, it was administered around the same time as the community leadership survey and reflects employees' experiences during the same COVID context. In this report, it is used as a supplemental data source that complements and affirms organizational leaders' perceptions of the wellbeing of their employees.

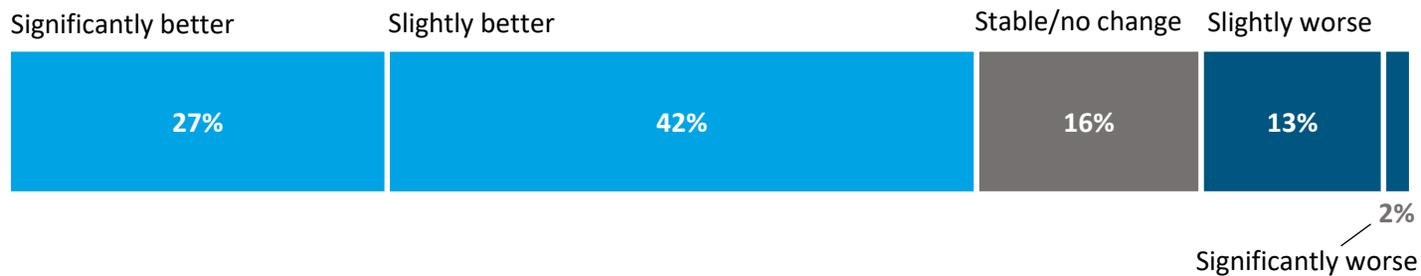
FINDINGS

ORGANIZATIONAL NEEDS & STRENGTHS

Overall functioning: Respondents were asked to describe the overall functioning of their organizations, in terms of operations and service/program delivery, as compared to June 2020 (one year ago). Most are doing better.

The majority of respondents' ability to deliver programs & services has improved

Respondents' indication of overall organization functioning as compared to June 2020



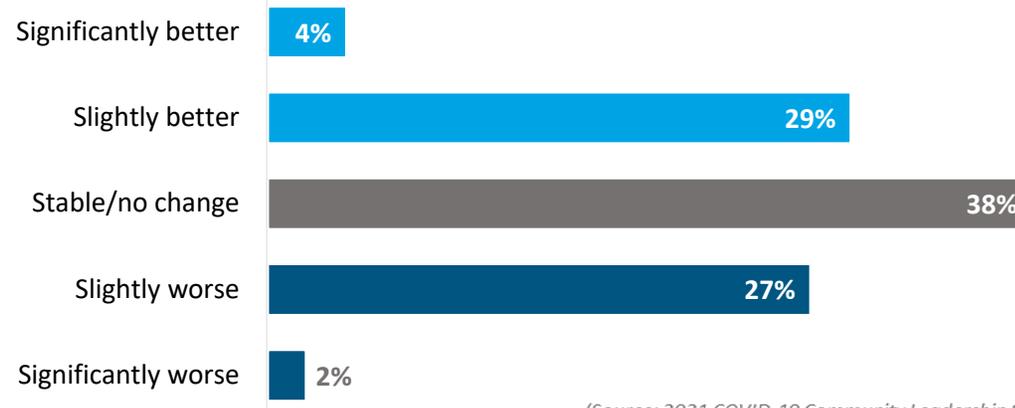
(Source: 2021 COVID-19 Community Leadership Survey)

When invited to explain their selection, the most common positive response were that respondents had been successful in constantly adapting to challenges (8 respondents), that they were getting back toward normal operations (7 respondents), and that they have improved at running programs online (4 respondents). The most common negative response was that respondents' organizations don't have enough staff (3 respondents).

Overall financial situation Respondents were asked to give a similarly high-level description of their organizations’ financial situations as compared to June 2020 (one year ago). There is a fairly even split among those who are doing better and those who are doing worse. About 40% are stable.

A similar number of organizations are doing better and worse financially

Respondents’ indication of overall organizational financial situation as compared to June 2020



(Source: 2021 COVID-19 Community Leadership Survey)

When invited to explain their selection, the most common positive response focused on how helpful the PPP loan was (6 respondents) and the most common negative response focused on decreased revenue (8 respondents).

Budget reforecasting: 40% of respondents reported that their organizations went through a significant budget reforecast over the last year, and 60% reported that they had not. When invited to explain their selections, the most common responses were that the organization’s budget had decreased (4 respondents) and that the organization is experiencing a budget deficit (3 respondents).

One-time pandemic-related revenue: Respondents reported receiving the following one-time revenue:

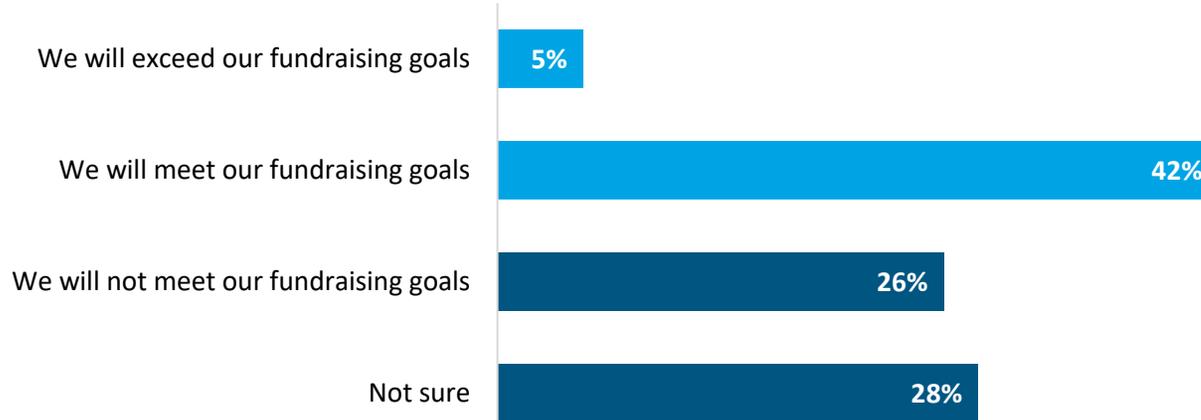
PPP Round 1	32 organizations
PPP Round 2	14 organizations
Emergency fundraising campaign	6 organizations
Increased donations to address specific COVID-related needs (not part of an emergency fundraising campaign)	9 organizations
Other one-time pandemic-related revenue from the government	7 organizations
Other one-time pandemic-related revenue (not specified)	7 organizations

When invited to explain how the lack of any one-time/time-limited revenue will impact their budgets in the next fiscal year, the most common responses were: don’t expect any impact (5 respondents), unsure of impact (4 respondents), and will result in staff reductions (3 respondents).

Fundraising: Respondents were evenly split about whether they expect to achieve their fundraising goals this year.

Half of respondents are uncertain whether they will meet/exceed fundraising goals

Respondents' indication of their anticipated fundraising results at the end of their current fiscal year



(Source: 2021 COVID-19 Community Leadership Survey)

Cash reserves: The survey asked if respondents' organizations currently had cash reserves equal to at least three months of operating expenses. This same question was asked in the organizational capacity survey that was fielded in early 2020, before the pandemic. The results were very consistent across both surveys: about 70% of respondents said yes, about 20% said no, and about 10% said they were not sure.

Organization needs and challenges: The table below shows a summary of the specific needs/challenges about which we asked organizations. The rows are arranged in order from most prevalent issue among respondents to least prevalent. The first column shows the number of organizations that expressed that they are experiencing that need/challenge, and the other three columns show the average rating for each of the follow-up questions.

This table is a heat map. Here is how to interpret it:

More red = more significant challenge

More yellow = moderate challenge

More green = less significant challenge

	Prevalence of Organizational Need / Challenge Higher number of organizations and percentage = more widespread	Average Severity Rating Scale: 1— minor 2—moderate 3—significant 4—severe	Average Improvement Over Time Rating Scale: 1—significantly better now 2—slightly better now 3—stable/no change 4—slightly worse now 5—significantly worse now	Average Longevity Rating Scale: 1—definitely not anticipated to last through 2021 2—probably not 3—may or may not 4—probably yes 5—definitely yes	Top Themes in Open-Ended Responses (# of respondents)
Need for additional staff	26 (57%)	2.2	3.6	3.8	Staff needs relating to schools/students (7) Lack of quality applicants to job openings (5)
Reduced earned income (e.g., tuition, program fees, membership fees, café/catering, etc.)	25 (54%)	2.1	2.8	3.6	Greater need for financial aid for tuition (4) Members not paying or paying less dues (3)
Challenges with reaching/engaging constituents	24 (52%)	2.1	2.9	3	Inability to hold in-person events (6)
Challenges related to returning to in-person programs/activities	24 (52%)	2.2	2.9	3.6	Organization being cautious before returning to in-person (5) Different people have different safety preferences (3)

Reduced number of constituents (e.g., members, students, participants, etc.)	22 (48%)	2.2	3	3.2	Caution regarding returning to in-person for safety reasons (2)
Staff morale/burnout	22 (48%)	2.3	3.4	3.2	Increased stress during pandemic (7) Reduced staff has led to more pressure on employees (4)
Challenges with meeting constituents' needs	22 (48%)	1.9	3	3.2	Challenges due to lack of in-person interaction (4) Different people have different preferences about safety (4)
Reduced fundraising income (e.g., from individual donors, larger funders, etc.)	20 (44%)	2.2	2.9	3.8	Inability to hold in-person fundraising events (5)
Inadequate technology resources to support organizational functioning	16 (35%)	2.1	3.3	4	Need appropriate technology to provide hybrid programs (4) Cost of upgrades is prohibitive (4)
Inadequate cybersecurity	11 (24%)	2.4	3.4	4.3	Can't afford appropriate level of cybersecurity (5)
Burdensome pandemic-related costs	10 (22%)	2.7	2.7	3.5	Additional staffing costs (2)
Difficulty maintaining current staffing due to budget cuts	7 (15%)	2.1	3.7	4	(n/a – no comments)
Challenges related to staff not wanting to return to in-person work	6 (13%)	2	2.8	4.2	Staff prefer to work from home (2) Will remain a fully or partially work-from-home organization (2)
Protecting the health and safety of staff	5 (11%)	1.8	2.8	3.8	(n/a – no comments)

Interest in training/consultation: The survey asked whether the respondent’s organization's staff or lay leadership currently have a short-term need (i.e., over the next 6 months) for additional information, consultation, or expertise in 16 areas.

Employee wellness and morale was the top area of interest for staff support

Number of respondents that indicated interest in information, consultation, or expertise in each area for staff



(Source: 2021 COVID-19 Community Leadership Survey)

Board mentorship was the top area of interest for lay leadership support

Number of respondents that indicated interest in information, consultation, or expertise in each area for lay leadership



(Source: 2021 COVID-19 Community Leadership Survey)

Employee well-being: St. Louis community data from this year’s Leading Edge Employee Experience Survey (conducted in May 2021) reinforce that staff morale and burnout is a key issue of concern. According to Leading Edge, employees feeling that their place of work prioritizes their well-being is a factor that has significant positive impact on employee engagement.

Over one-third of employee respondents feel neutral or negatively about whether employee well-being is a priority at their place of work.

Responses to the statement "I believe that employee well-being is a priority at my organization."



(Source: 2021 Leading Edge Employee Engagement Survey St. Louis Report.)

Our St. Louis community composite score for this area shows that a significant proportion of employees do not feel their organizations prioritize their well-being. **10% fewer** of our community’s respondents agree that employee well-being is a priority at their workplaces compared to the all national responses to the Leading Edge survey – indicating that this is a greater challenge in our community.

CONSTITUENT NEEDS & STRENGTHS

The table below shows a summary of the specific needs/challenges about which we asked organizations regarding their constituents, i.e., the people the organization engages/serves in our local St. Louis Jewish community. This might include members, non-member participants, people who they see as part of their organization’s community, etc.

The rows are arranged in order from most prevalent issue among respondents to least prevalent. The first column shows the number of organizations that expressed that they are experiencing that need/challenge, and the following four columns show the average rating for each of the follow-up questions.

This table is a heat map. Here is how to interpret it:

More red = more significant challenge

More yellow = moderate challenge

More green = less significant challenge

	Prevalence of Constituent Need / Challenge Higher number of organizations and percentage = more widespread	Average Reach Rating Scale: 1—very few 2—less than half 3—about half 4—majority	Average Severity Rating Scale: 1— minor 2—moderate 3—significant 4—severe	Average Improvement Over Time Rating Scale: 1—significantly better now 2—slightly better now 3—stable/no change 4—slightly worse now 5—significantly worse now	Average Longevity Rating Scale: 1—definitely not anticipated to last through 2021 2—probably not 3—may or may not 4—probably yes 5—definitely yes	Specific Groups Known to Be Affected
Mental health challenges	25 (61%)	2.2	2.3	3.1	4	Unemployed, income impacted by pandemic, single people, older adults, college students, young adults, teens, isolated/live alone
Challenges related to returning to in-person programs/activities	18 (44%)	2.6	2.2	2.5	3.6	People with anxiety/other mental health challenges, school-age children, older adults, people with unvaccinated children, people who are infirm or immunocompromised, people with mobility/transportation issues
Concerns related to isolation	17 (43%)	2.1	2.2	2.3	3.6	Older adults who live alone across the community, people with technological issues, single people

Need for direct cash assistance or loans	14 (35%)	1.4	2.5	3.5	4.3	Unemployed, income impacted by pandemic, college students whose parents were hurt by the pandemic, older adults, LGBTQ+, single parents, conversion candidates
Job loss/need for career support	11 (27%)	1.6	2.3	3.5	3.8	Single parents
Need for groceries	10 (24%)	1.7	2	3.1	3.9	People with financial insecurity/who are out of work, older adults, people with mobility/transportation issues
Need for technology	10 (24%)	1.7	2.4	3.1	4.3	People who are seeking employment, older adults, people who are isolated, low income, children attending school remotely
Need for prepared meals	8 (20%)	1.6	2.1	3.3	4.3	Older adults with limited financial resources and/or physical impairments, lacking familial supports and transportation
Challenges related to childcare	7 (17%)	1.8	2	2.3	3.3	Parents of young children, single parents, people with financial insecurity
Domestic violence	0 (0%)	0.0	0	0	0	n/a – no comments

Vaccine access: The survey asked whether respondents were aware of any specific populations among their constituents were having trouble accessing COVID-19 vaccines. The majority said no (73%) and the rest said they did not know (27%).

CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

The data that inform this needs assessment were collected during a unique period of optimism and reopening, just before the delta variant of COVID-19 hit the St. Louis area and brought with it renewed concerns and challenges. Nonetheless, these data are still valuable in offering a snapshot of the areas in which our community's organizations and constituents have been struggling, and those areas in which our community has been doing well at this mid-2021 moment in the pandemic.

The following emerged as the top areas of challenge and strength, taking into account the prevalence, severity, improvement over time, and longevity of each need/challenge area in the tables above, as well as cross-referencing with other questions in the community leadership survey and the 2021 Leading Edge Employee Engagement Survey.

TOP COMMUNITY-WIDE CHALLENGES & STRENGTHS

Top organizational needs/challenges:

- Need for additional staff (particularly in educational settings)
- Staff morale/burnout
- Inadequate cybersecurity
- Burdensome pandemic-related costs
- Ability to meet fundraising goals this year
- Mentorship for lay leaders

Top organizational strengths:

- Overall functioning and ability to deliver programs/services has improved for the majority of organizations over the past year
- Protecting the health and safety of staff
- Staff willingness to return to in-person work
- Ability to adaptively deliver programs and services

Top constituent needs/challenges:

- Mental health challenges throughout the community, across a wide range of ages and populations
- Challenges related to returning to in-person programs for specific populations
- Concerns related to isolation
- Need for direct cash assistance or loans

Top strengths regarding constituent needs:

- Prepared meals were not identified as one of the most pressing needs. This may suggest that the prepared meals programs that operate in our community have been successfully meeting this need.
- Accessing vaccines is not a challenge at this time.

NEXT STEPS

Federation as Funder: Federation’s Board of Directors, Investment & Evaluation Subcommittee, and COVID-19 Task Force, as well as Jewish community donors, may consider investing funds to address the top identified needs for both organizations and constituents in our community.

Federation as Convener: Federation’s ongoing Community Leadership Calls, which include both lay and professional leadership of all interested local Jewish organizations, may be used to further explore the challenges raised in this needs assessment and discuss how to address them. Federation and its Community Leadership & Engagement department, in partnership with other organizations and experts, may consider providing capacity building trainings/consultation that address the top areas in which organizations are interested in support for their staff and board during this time (e.g., employee wellness, IT, fundraising, lay leader mentorship). Federation should consider how its in-house IT resources may be able to convene organizations around bolstering their cybersecurity practices.

Federation as Communicator: Federation has already invested significant funds to meet some needs, such as financial assistance; however, community members do not always know that these resources exist or how to access them, leading to them to being used. Federation may consider how its website can play even more of a role as a repository of community resource information and how it might offer communications and marketing support to increase community awareness of resources (including through JBuzzSTL).

DESIRED OUTCOMES

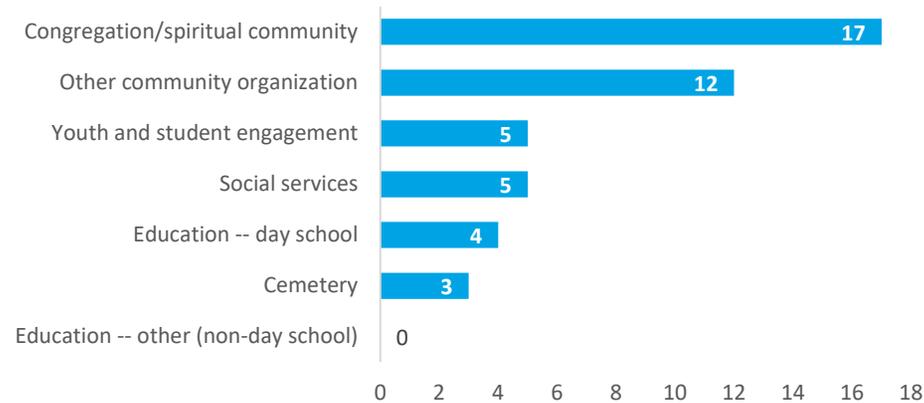
In order to address the needs and challenges in this needs assessment, we need clarity on how we may measure success. The following table outlines desired outcomes for each of the top needs/challenges identified in this assessment. **Desired outcomes are the specific impact in the community that any investments and/or other interventions should aim to create to address identified needs. They are clear and measurable changes in circumstances, awareness, knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes.** The majority of the desired outcomes listed below are drawn from Community Impact’s 2021 Common Metrics and Outcomes document and are utilized as common outcomes in our measurement and evaluation processes. A few new outcomes were developed specifically for needs identified in this assessment. Investments made and other actions taken to address the needs and challenges identified in this needs assessment should aim to achieve these desired outcomes. Specific metrics (i.e., what will be measured to determine whether an outcome is being achieved) and indicators of success (i.e., quantified targets that demonstrate success toward achieving an outcome) will be developed once next steps are determined.

Domain	Top Needs/Challenges	Desired Outcomes
Organizational	Need for additional staff (particularly in educational settings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Jewish organizations recruit qualified staff to fill open positions. Local Jewish organizations retain qualified staff.
	Staff morale/burnout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees of local Jewish organizations experience increased well-being. Enhance organization leaders’ abilities to recognize and respond to mental health needs.
	Inadequate cybersecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Jewish organizations report improvement in cybersecurity tools, knowledge, and/or practices.

	Burdensome pandemic-related costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Jewish organizations are able to meet or exceed their fundraising goals. Local Jewish organizations report learning new fundraising tools/skills. 	
	Ability to meet fundraising goals this year		
	Mentorship for lay leaders		
Constituent	Mental health challenges throughout the community, across ages and populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lay leadership of local Jewish organizations have increased access to mentorship resources. Jewish community members experience increased well-being. Barriers to accessing mental health services are reduced. Enhance Jewish community members'/leaders' abilities to recognize and respond to mental health needs. 	
	Concerns related to isolation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication to the Jewish community consistently normalizes mental healthcare and provides authentic messages and skills that support mental health and emotional well-being. Jewish community members can easily find opportunities to meaningfully participate in Jewish community. Jewish community members increase their socialization and engagement in community. Jewish community members increase feelings of connection to the Jewish community.
	Challenges related to returning to in-person programs for specific populations	<i>The community leadership survey for this needs assessment was conducted just before the current increase in COVID-19 spread due to the delta variant, when organizations were beginning to host more in-person events. At this time, this area may not be ready to addressed on a community-wide scale.</i>	
	Need for direct cash assistance or loans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effects of financial insecurity are alleviated. Barriers to accessing financial assistance services are reduced. 	

Appendix A: Organizations that responded to the Community Leadership Survey

Respondents' Organization Types



List of Respondent Organizations

Agudas Israel of St. Louis	Congregation Shaare Emeth	MERS Goodwill
American Jewish Committee (AJC)	Congregation Temple Israel <i>(Note: two people from this organization completed the survey, so there are two responses from this organization)</i>	National Council of Jewish Women St. Louis
Ashreinu	Covenant Place	New Mount Sinai Cemetery
B'nai Amoona <i>(Note: two people from this organization completed the survey, so there are two responses from this organization)</i>	Crown Center for Senior Living	Next Dor STL
Bais Abraham Congregation	Epstein Hebrew Academy	Nusach Hari B'nai Zion Congregation
Barbara Mendelson Tomchei Shabbos Food Pantry	Esther Miller Bais Yaakov	Saul Mirowitz Jewish Community School
BBYO	Hadassah	Shir Hadash Reconstructionist Community
Beth HaMedrosh HaGodol Cemetery	Hillel at Washington University in St. Louis (WashU Hillel)	St. Louis Friends of Israel
Central Reform Congregation	JCRC	St. Louis Jewish Light
Chabad Jewish Center of St. Charles County	Jewish Community Center	Temple Emanuel
Chabad of the Central West End	Jewish Family Services of St. Louis	Torah Prep School
Chabad on Campus	Jewish Federation of St. Louis	Traditional Congregation
Chesed Shel Emeth Society/Beth Shalom Cemetery	Jewish Student Union of St. Louis	U. City Shul
	Kol Rinah	United Cemetery Association
	MaTovu	United Hebrew Congregation
		University of Missouri, Columbia Hillel

Assessment & Planning Subcommittee of the Community Impact Committee

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