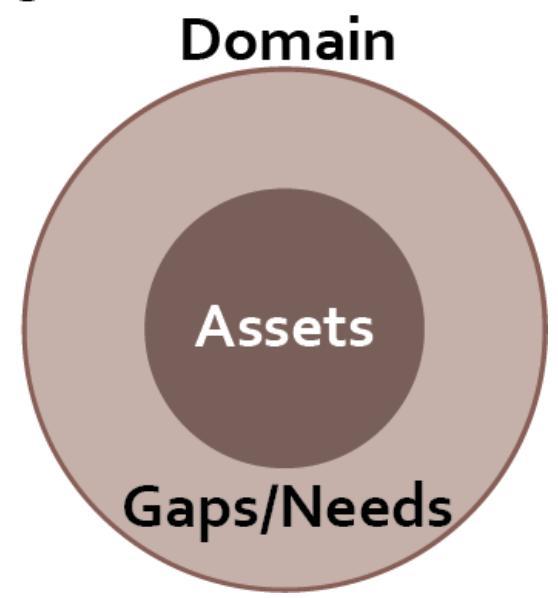# Asset Map Guide

- The asset map on the following page maps the assets and gaps/needs for each of the six capacity building domains identified in the capacity building framework.

- For each domain, assets are on the inside of the circle; gaps/needs on the outside.

- The relative size of the gap/need space for each domain is reflective of the relative level of need expressed in the organizational survey.

- The relative size of individual assets and gap/needs captured on the map are also roughly reflective of their level of importance as expressed by study participants.

- If assets and gap/needs are related, every attempt has been made to place them next to each other on the map.

- The map is interactive. Click on the individual assets and gaps/needs for a more detailed description of each.

- While this map is structured around the six domains, we have noted (in the individual asset and gap pages) where there were notable differences between urban and rural or small and large organizations' responses.
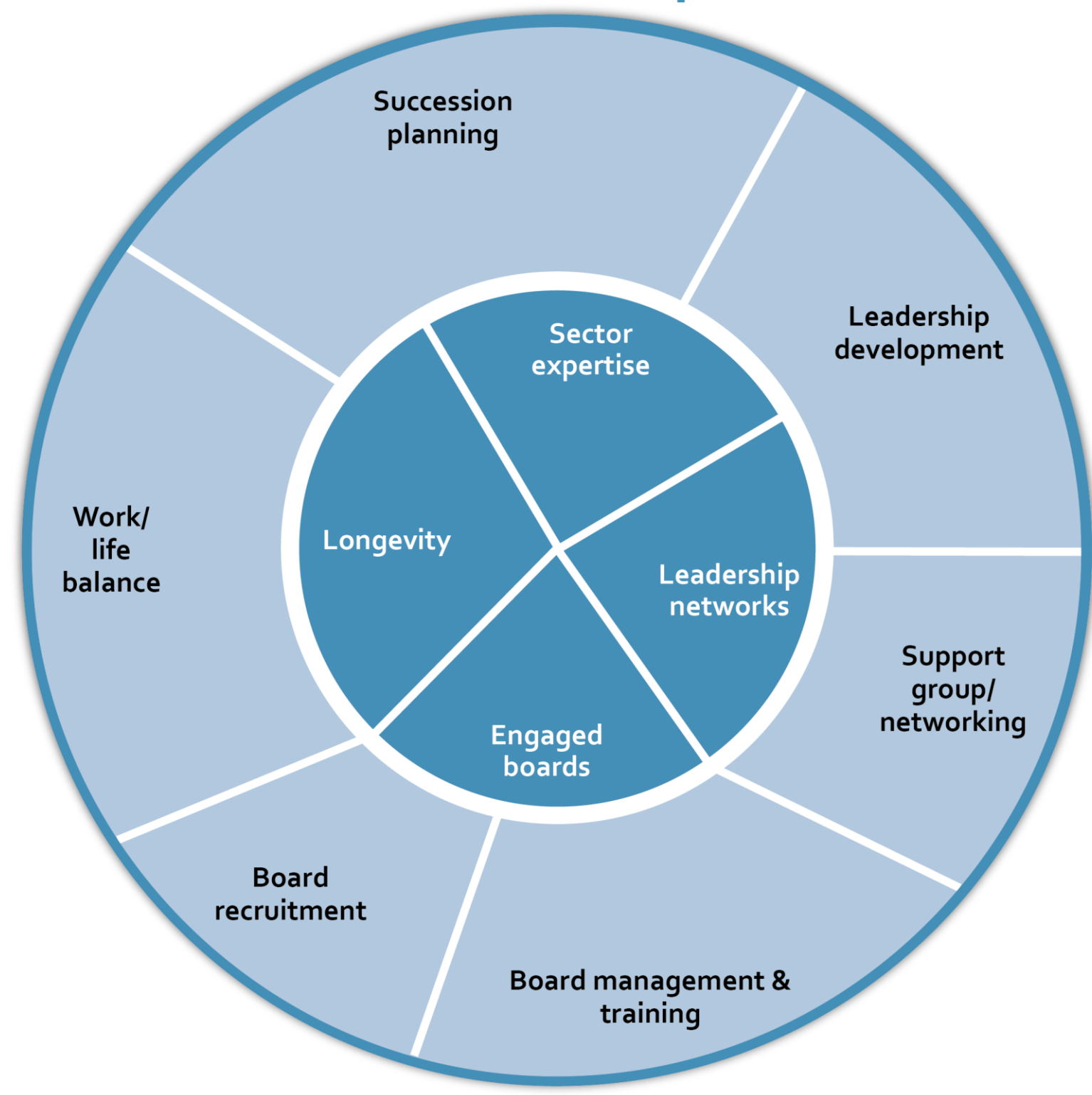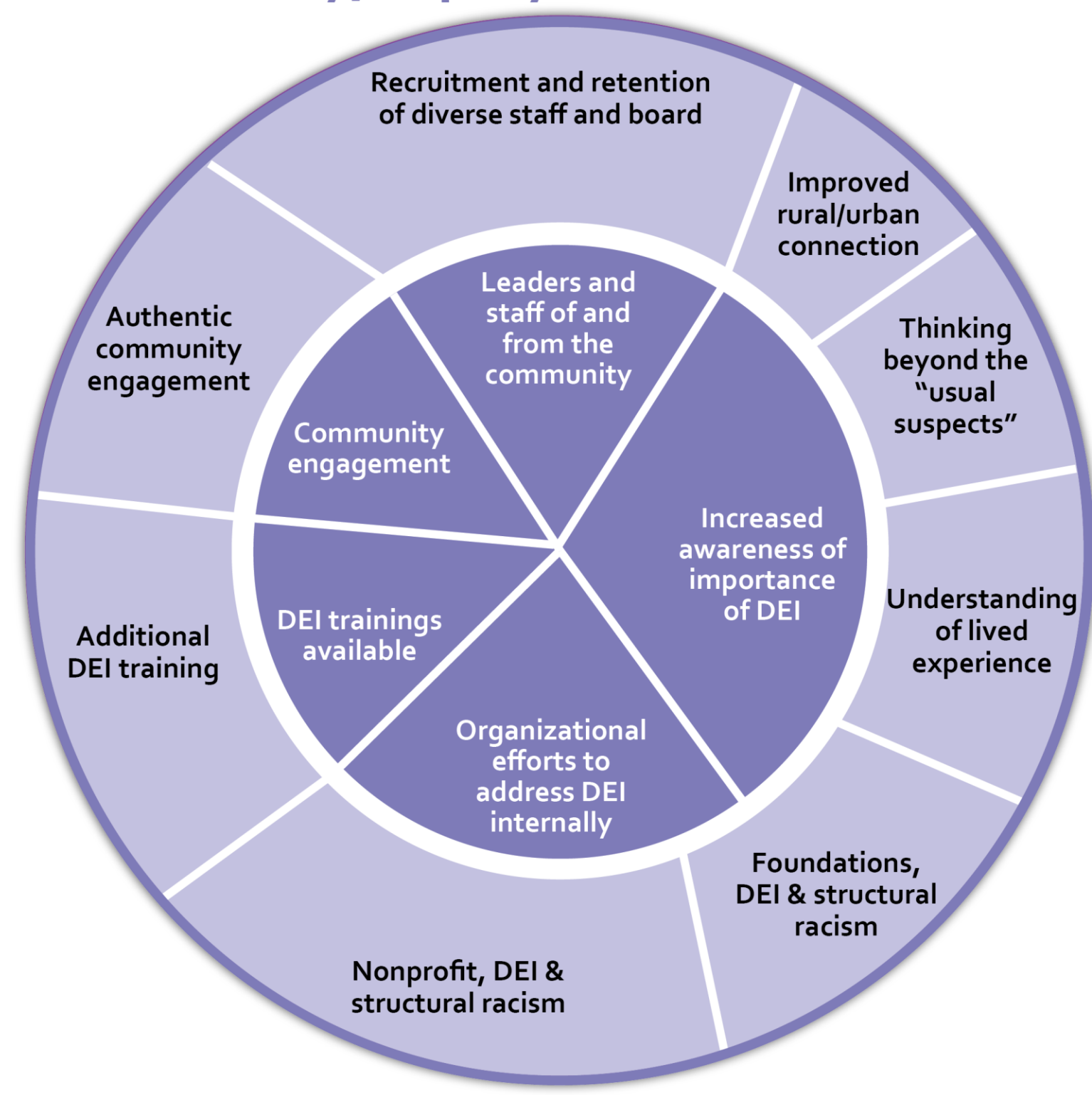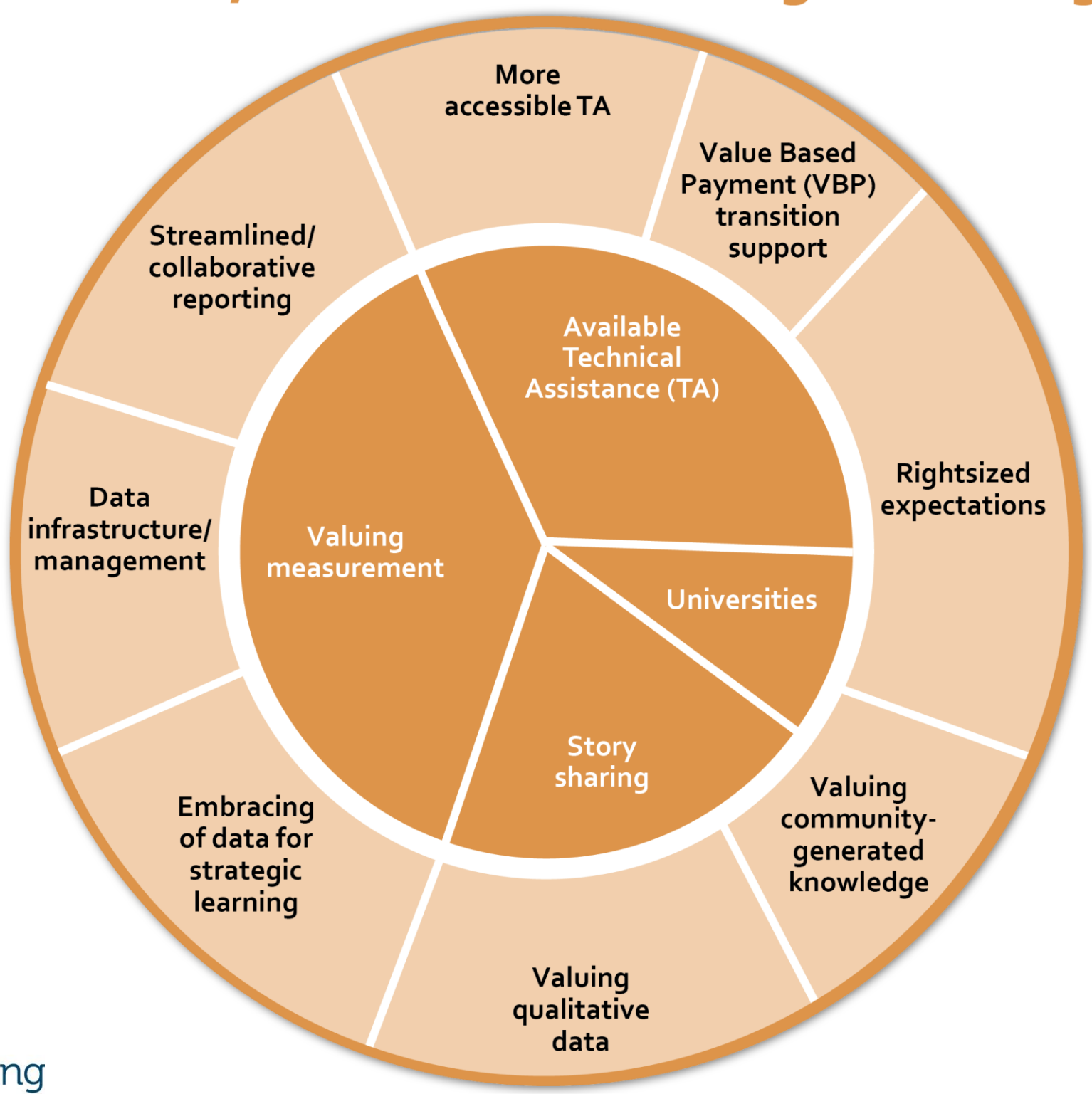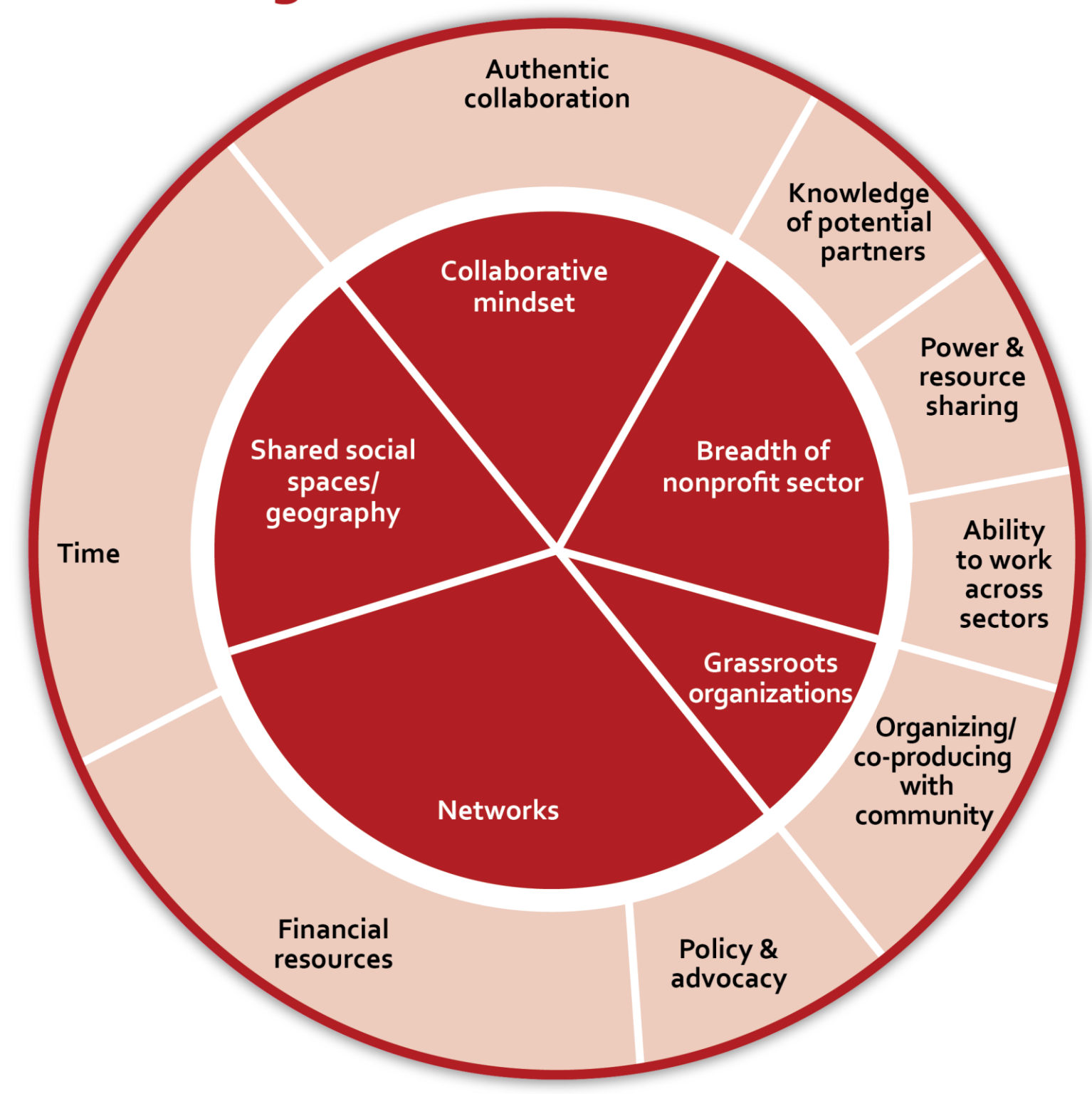
WNY ASSET MAP

Legend:

Domain

Assets

Gaps/Needs

Resources

- Rural Gaps/ Needs:
  - Appreciation of scale
  - IT support/infrastructure
- Diverse networks
- Communications/ marketing
- Professional development/ training
- Other nonprofits
- Boards
- Staffing:
  - Levels
  - Pay
  - Retention
- Local philanthropy
- Staff
- Local businesses
- Volunteers
- Make it work mentality
- Financial management/ operational efficiency
- Fundraising infrastructure
- Financial resources

Leadership

- Succession planning
- Sector expertise
- Leadership development
- Work/ life balance
- Longevity
- Leadership networks
- Engaged boards
- Support group/ networking
- Board recruitment
- Board management & training

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI)

- Recruitment and retention of diverse staff and board
- Improved rural/urban connection
- Authentic community engagement
- Leaders and staff of and from the community
- Thinking beyond the "usual suspects"
- Community engagement
- Additional DEI training
- DEI trainings available
- Increased awareness of importance of DEI
- Understanding of lived experience
- Organizational efforts to address DEI internally
- Nonprofit, DEI & structural racism
- Foundations, DEI & structural racism

Research, Evaluation & Strategic Learning

- More accessible TA
- Value Based Payment (VBP) transition support
- Streamlined/ collaborative reporting
- Available Technical Assistance (TA)
- Data infrastructure/ management
- Valuing measurement
- Rightsized expectations
- Universities
- Embracing of data for strategic learning
- Story sharing
- Valuing community-generated knowledge
- Valuing qualitative data

Alignment and Collaboration

- Authentic collaboration
- Knowledge of potential partners
- Collaborative mindset
- Power & resource sharing
- Shared social spaces/ geography
- Breadth of nonprofit sector
- Ability to work across sectors
- Time
- Grassroots organizations
- Organizing/ co-producing with community
- Networks
- Financial resources
- Policy & advocacy

Vision and Mission

- Management to strategic plan
- Staying true to mission
- Articulation of vision & mission
- Dedication to vision & mission
- Community-level vision & mission

cgr Promising Solutions

Community Health Worker Network of Buffalo

Alignment and Collaboration

Back to: Full Map

Authentic collaboration

Knowledge of potential partners

Power & resource sharing

Ability to work across sectors

Organizing/ co-producing with community

Policy & advocacy

Financial resources

Time

Collaborative mindset

Shared social spaces/ geography

Breadth of nonprofit sector

Grassroots organizations

Networks

Asset: Networks

Nonprofits use networks, collaboratives, and committees of all kinds (both informal and formal) to get to know other nonprofits, to help stay abreast of critical industry issues, and to keep apprised of advocacy and funding opportunities.

Informal networks tend to be built on personal relationships and connections and are critical to under-resourced communities in particular.

Formal networks vary in structure and size; examples include local CEO groups, local councils and coalitions, and discipline-specific state and national associations.

"Foundations have the power to help support continued connection among organizations and leaders. It doesn't cost a lot of capital and it's hugely valuable."

Related Gap/Need
- Diverse networks (Res.)
- Thinking beyond the usual suspects (DEI)

Asset: Shared geography & social spaces

Organizational leaders say that shared geography and social spaces make it easier for organizations in the region to collaborate. Shared spaces mentioned included informal places such as churches, grocery stores, and children's sports leagues.

"I've found collaboration can succeed when you're located near each other – defined geography, common interest -- that makes a difference when trying to collaborate."

Rural distinction
Rural leaders in particular, held up the importance of relationships, both formal (i.e. with the sheriff) and informal (i.e., people at church).

"It's easier to collaborate when our kids play on same softball teams, know each other."

Asset: Collaborative mindset

Leaders highlighted that organizations understand the need to collaborate to create change. In the organizational survey, respondents ranked "collaborating with other organizations" and "sharing and learning from peers" as top areas of strength (and lowest priorities for support). The sector clearly values collaboration.

"If you're trying to help the community you're serving—how do you do it if you don't know and work with the other organizations and services in your community?"

"We can only do the work through collaboration."

"We can do our jobs better when we talk and work together."

"Both as a COO and now as a CEO, I feel that attending to external events, partnerships and collaborations is part of my responsibility. The community needs to see more of us. It brings us recognition and support from the community. People look to us as a leader."

Rural distinction

Rural organizations feel that their collaborative mindsets and successes are driven by having fewer resources to draw on and less competition in the nonprofit sector.
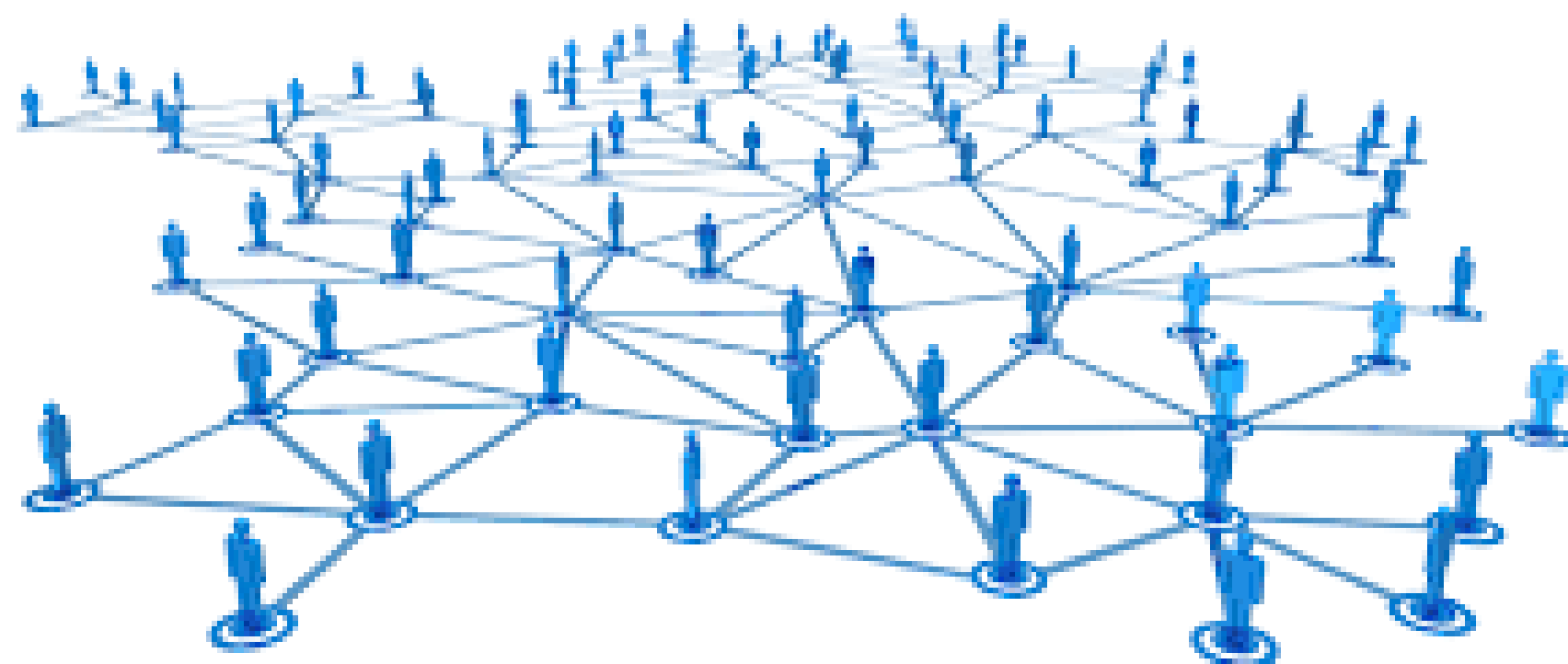
Related Gap/Need
- Authentic collaboration

Asset: Breadth of nonprofit sector

Across communities, nonprofit leaders spoke about the number and variety of nonprofit organizations. The breadth of the sector provides organizations with a broad set of partnership and learning opportunities as well as a high level of nonprofit sector expertise.

"Compared to other communities we are blessed to have so many entities."

"There is a tremendous level of expertise in leadership out here."

Urban distinction

Urban organizations were more likely to highlight the large number of organizations and the breadth of the sector.

Related Gap/Need
- Knowledge of potential partners
- Ability to work across sectors
- Power & resource sharing

Grassroots organizations

In talking with grassroots organizations, they demonstrated a deep level of knowledge and familiarity with communities, residents and organizing practices and tools. These organizations are often overlooked and untapped as an asset for the sector and in collaborative settings.

"We have an organizing department and a street team. We walked to every home on the west side. We prioritize communities we want to focus on and get involved. It's a mixed bag -- a lot of people don't have the capacity to work with their clients, but the people closest to the problem have the best solutions."

Related Gap/Need
- Organizing and co-producing with community
- Understanding of lived experience (DEI)

Gap/Need: Time

Organizations most commonly mentioned the need for time to make alignment and collaboration work well. Often overwhelmed by the day-to-day work of running their organizations, staff must find time away from their programmatic work to build relationships and work externally.

"Sometimes there are too many meetings and collaboratives and I can't get to them all. I have to divide and conquer with staff."

"It does cost me something to be out of the office though. I come back to work and I might be couple of days behind on the day-to day-work. But you have to do it."

"We talked about the possibility of sharing a staff person, but then we could not find the bandwidth to do it."

"It takes a lot of energy to collaborate. There is a misunderstanding that collaboration makes life easier."

Gap/Need: Financial resources

Related to time is the need for financial support to collaborate. Whether in the form of general operating funds or project specific funds, organizations see a clear need for financial support to underlie the often unfunded mandate of collaboration.

Nonprofit leaders emphasized that while true alignment and collaboration was an important way to further their missions, the process of collaboration was resource- and time-intensive enough that it often did not save them money, though it might result in stronger programming or results.

Nonprofit leaders highlighted that typically, any cost savings achieved through collaboration or improved alignment resulted in decreased overall funding, rather than new opportunities for strategic investments.

"Collaboration should be about increasing the capacity of what we get out of the money, not how much less money we need to get it done."

Gap/Need: Authentic collaboration

While organizations see the value of collaboration and alignment, and many are already engaged in collaborative efforts, they need help with engaging in authentic partnerships in which organizations are less territorial, willing to change the way they work, and understand how to manage disagreement. There is also a need for funders to be aware of how collaborative funding requirements can feel like "forced collaboration" when there is insufficient shared understanding and trust among the partners.

"When [collaboration] is done organically, it's wonderful. Some organizations are forced into collaborations because funders like to see that. This leads to wrong partnerships based on organizations trying to fit it into the grant request."

"Oftentimes people come to us with a finished idea and just want us to get on board. That's not real collaboration."

"Non profits can't be so territorial – we have to understand that we can't be this way if we're going to survive."

"There are lots of opportunities and venues to collaborate but everyone has to give up a bit. Not everyone is willing to do that."

"We all mean well, but we need help in understanding how we can disagree with each other - help us identify where collaboration breaks down and how to address it."

Related Asset
- Collaborative mindset

Gap/Need: Knowledge of potential partners

While organizations named the breadth of the nonprofit sector as an asset, the sheer number of organizations and the silos in which they work makes it difficult to identify the most strategic partners. The desire to discover new potential partners is high, with organizations eagerly using this study's focus groups as networking opportunities.

"Address why no one knows what everyone is doing."

"The challenge isn't always collaboration. One issue we have is with navigation and finding one another amidst all the nonprofit service providers."

"There are a lot of options but it is not always clear who does what."

Organizational distinction

Nonprofit leaders feel that it is especially difficult for **new and some grass-roots organizations** to know who is out there.

Related Asset
- Breadth of nonprofit sector

Gap/Need: Ability to work across sectors

Currently, networks and collaborations tend to be sector- or geography-based, and include either more intuitional nonprofits or grass-roots organizations. Organizations identified needing assistance in working with other sectors and disciplines in a variety of ways that included:

- Improved knowledge of organizations in other nonprofit sectors to help identify potential partners and areas of alignment.

- Help understanding language and jargon

- Being clear about what success looks like

- Creating shared evaluation measures beyond "numbers reached" that are useful and "speak to" the missions of different sectors and disciplines involved

Related Asset
- Breadth of nonprofit sector

Gap/Need: Power & resource sharing

Nonprofits identified the need to be mindful of how power and resources are shared in collaborations and partnerships, stating that often the larger, more well-known, mainstream organizations often control the work and possibly the money.

"Each of us is providing different services, and big organizations can gobble up the little ones."

"Who gets the bigger pot should be based on needs and resources, not who is more well known."

Organizations also discussed frustration with unfunded requests to partner.

"Other organizations call wanting to work with our population or our clients because they have a grant, but don't share the resources of the grant with us. They expect us to partner for free."

"We are sometimes written into a grant proposal by another organization and we don't even know it."

Related Asset
- Breadth of nonprofit sector

Gap/Need: Organizing and co-producing with community

Nonprofit leaders highlighted that levels of community engagement vary and indicated that few organizations are authentically co-producing with their local communities and clients. For more aligned and collaborative work, deeper relationships need to be built.

"We are just getting into community engagement with everyday residents. We sometimes do focus groups and we hope to do more. We can be top-down and try to catch ourselves as much as possible. We try to be mindful of need to engage the community."

"Organizations and funders are not necessarily speaking to the clients. How can we build capacity to help organizations engage the community? I see a lot of community scans and needs assessments, but I don't see the people who need the service engaged in designing the service…it's better to have the clients help with design. They know what they need."

"One of basic concepts bubbling up in health care is co-production. Community has to help design the solution."

Related Gap/Need
- Authentic community engagement (DEI)
- Understanding of lived experience (DEI)

Related Asset
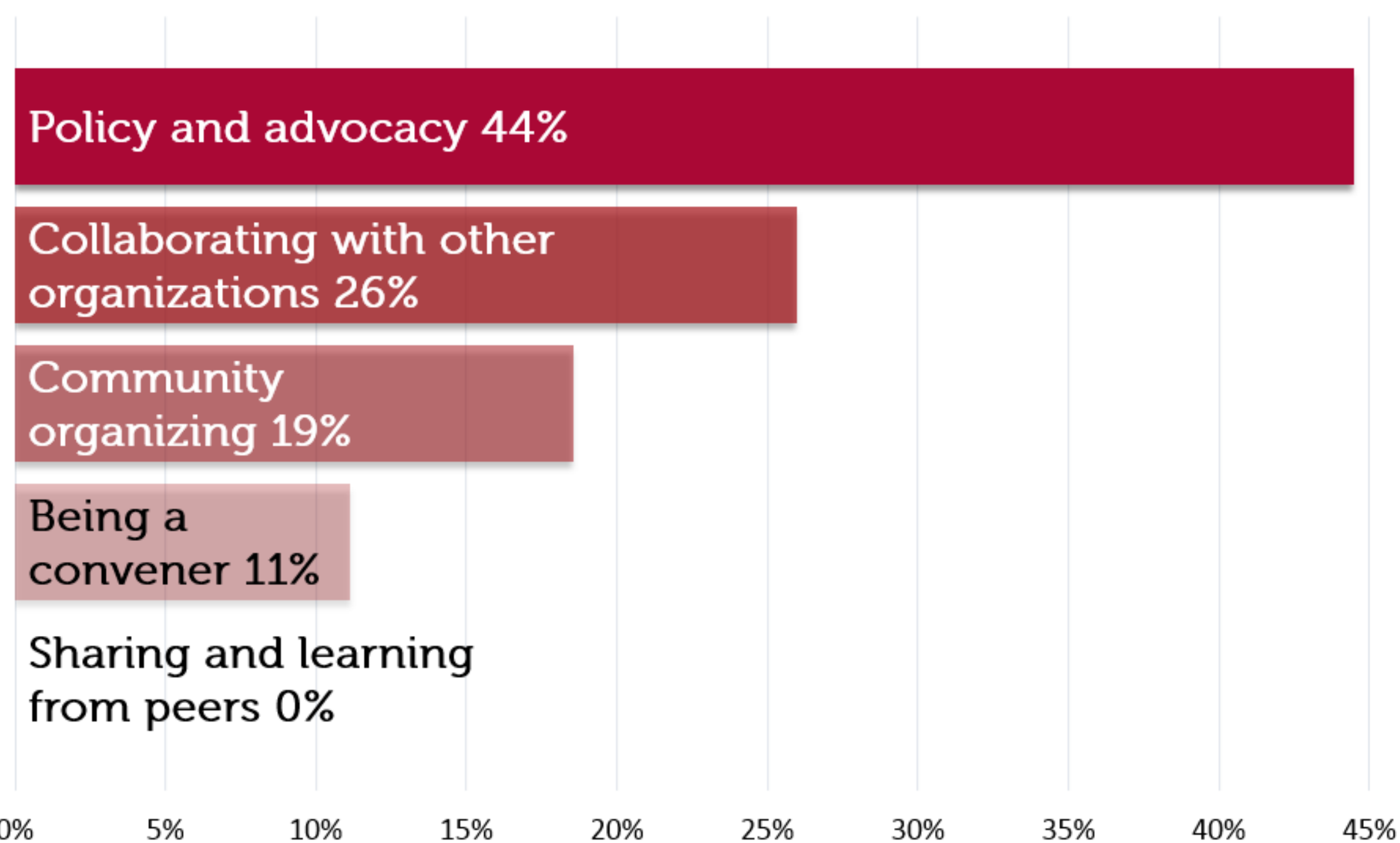- Grassroots organizations

Gap/Need: Policy & advocacy

In the organizational survey, nonprofit leaders selected policy and advocacy support as their top priority within the alignment and collaboration domain, a need not frequently expressed in interviews or focus groups. Several interviewees, however, highlighted that they rely on networks for much of their policy and advocacy work.

Pressing Needs:
Alignment and Collaboration

Policy and advocacy 44%

Collaborating with other organizations 26%

Community organizing 19%

Being a convener 11%

Sharing and learning from peers 0%

0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35% 40% 45%

They also discussed the need for more opportunities to participate in coordinated advocacy and policy work to address structural challenges and the difficulty of finding funding for these types of activities.
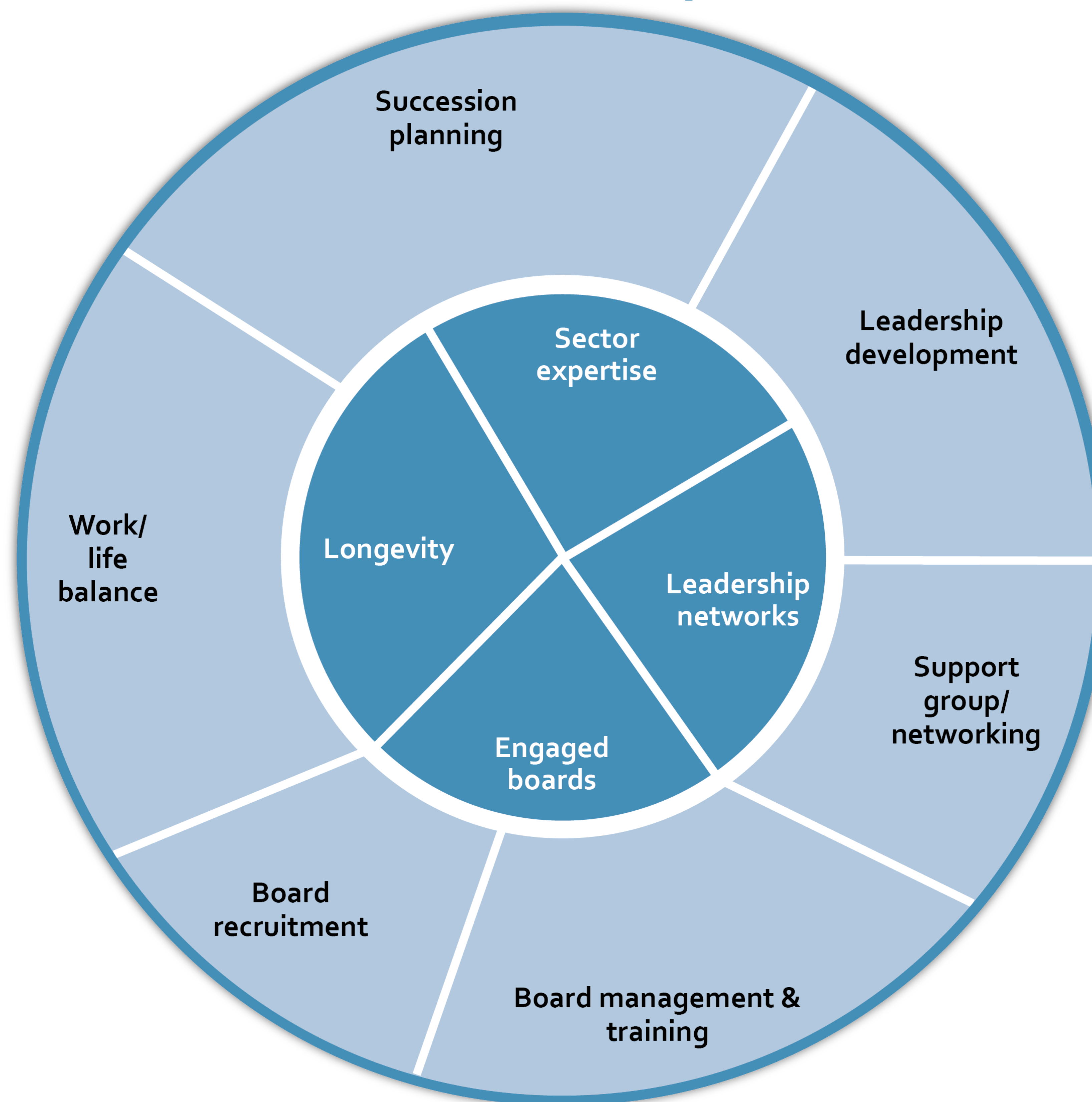
"We have to take the funding for advocacy out of unrestricted funds (can't lobby with government funds). It's worth it, but a hard sell to the people who care about the agency. Funding for this is incredibly difficult – but it's a way to address structural elements that won't be fixed through programs and services."

Related Gap/Need
- Financial Resources (Res.)

Asset: Sector expertise

On the whole, the nonprofit sector is comprised of leaders with deep expertise in their fields and in running nonprofit organizations.

"We have highly experienced executives that are willing to help new leaders and share their time."

"There are very effective leaders – running agencies with finesse, serving the people that need services, educated in their fields, and responsive to needs of their staff and the people they serve."

"We have tremendous expertise in our communities."

Related Gap/Need
- Succession planning
- Leadership development

Asset: Longevity

Nonprofit leaders noted that WNY is home to many committed professionals th have worked in WNY for a long period of time allowing for relationships to bloom and trust to be built.

"There has been longevity within a core group of people – people have been able to ride the wave for many years – they have worked together for over 30 years."

"Cattaraugus County has really committed people in place. A lot of nonprofits with a lot of institutional memory which makes a big difference for people's experiences with those organizations."

Participants also noted that this asset had its related drawbacks (see related gaps/needs).

Related Gap/Need
- Succession planning
- Leadership development

Asset: Leadership networks

Nonprofit leaders identified the value of leadership networks, both formal and informal, in making connections, sharing lessons, and learning about and creating new opportunities.

"There is a nice executive directors group in the state facilitated by NYSCAA. It took me a while to get my name in that group, but I've met people and learned from their blog."

"Locally (Rochester) there are several programs that all provide solid education and localized programming for organization and board leaders."

Related Gap/Need
- Leadership development
- Support group/networking

Asset: Engaged boards

On the whole, leaders felt that the sector benefits from passionate and engaged board members from all walks of life. From setting policy to fundraising to providing professional expertise, a high-functioning board is crucial to creating strong organization by providing foresight, oversight and insight to the executive staff and the organization.

"A strong board is a strong organization. Their role is unique and powerful value to management."

"Ultimately the board is responsible for the success of the leadership."

While leaders felt that their board members cared and were engaged, many held up related challenges around board governance (see related gaps/needs).

Related Gap/Need

- Board recruitment
- Board management/training

Gap/Need: Succession planning

Nonprofit leaders noted that while many organizations are discussing the challenges of succession planning, few have succession plans in place.

"We don't have a lot of bench strength. We have one person in operations and no one fills in. We don't have a whole lot of cross training. People know their jobs but it's a little scary if they leave."

"We saw a lot of leadership transitions this year and there are more coming, but I'm not seeing a lot of succession planning."

"The pipeline for executive directors is difficult to attract here because pay level is not as good as Buffalo. We lose mid-level managers to Buffalo too. No one has full package…there is a lot of rotating around."

Rural distinction

Rural organizations highlighted that they have particular challenges with their leadership pipeline.

Related Asset
- Longevity

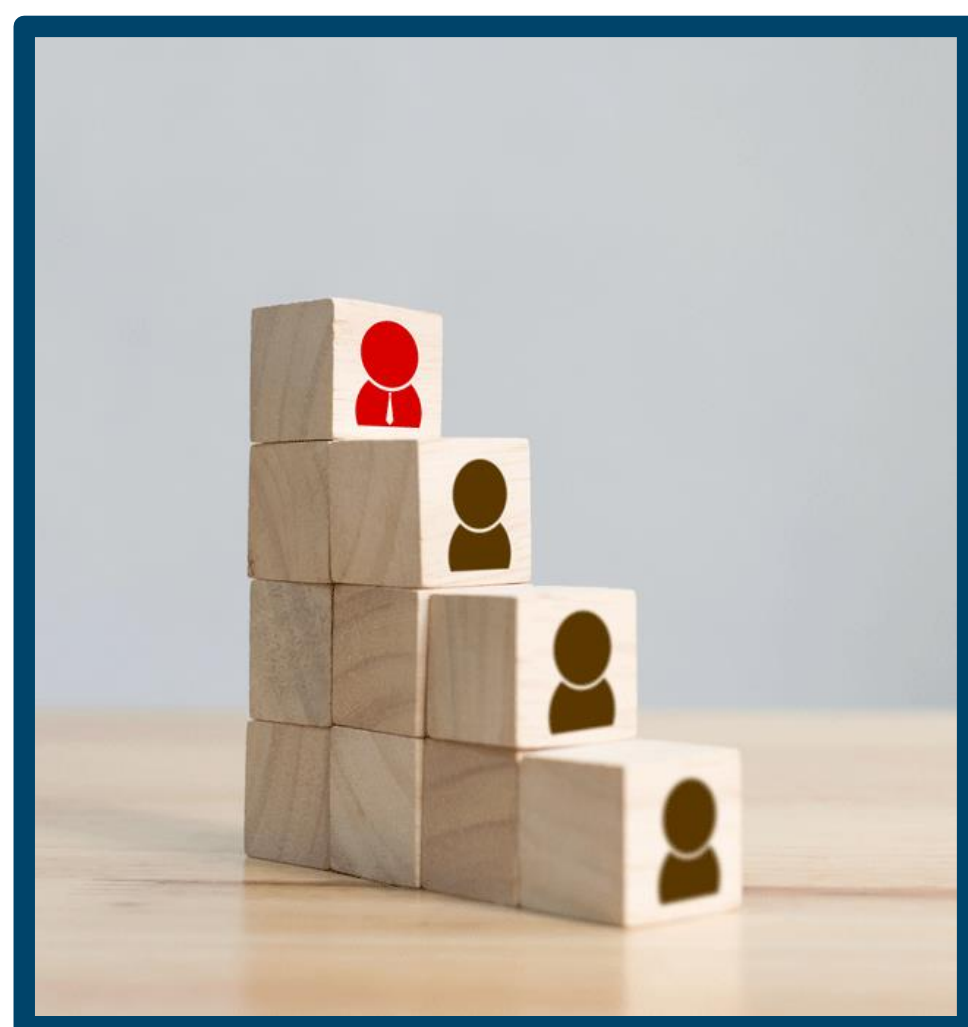# Gap/Need: Leadership development

Organizations take advantage of local fellowships and programs to develop leadership skills but identified a need for more strategic and systemic leadership development efforts within the their organizations.

"We need some help in figuring out how to build the bench and spread leadership among the agency."

"I need a more a solid management structure so I can spend more time on board recruitment and management and other pressing issues."

"We are seeing some midlevel staff that would like to move up, but don't know how."

"Some true leadership development where people become very open to allowing people in and to learn and understand other opportunities would help. So would assistance in documenting processes."

Related Gap/Need
- Professional Development (Res.)

Related Asset
- Sector expertise
- Longevity
- Leadership networks

Gap/Need: Work/life balance

Nonprofit leaders identified the danger of burnout among executive and front line staff. Some organizations offer non-monetary supports or implement policies to help enforce self-care, but acknowledge the difficulty in managing self-care and work/life balance, especially when it came to themselves.

"There is a lot of turnover in front line staff. Our outreach folks burn out fast. People are aware of need for self care, but I'm not sure they can afford it."

"You are trying to making every day count, doing your best—but when you are working 8 gazillion hours you can't do it. You tell your staff to take care of themselves, but you can't do it for yourself. "

"It's getting to the breaking point where you can no longer do more with less, feels risky, everyone is so stretched. Someone is going to get hurt. Something will go wrong."

Gap/Need: Support group/networking

While several leaders noted the existence of local networks for leaders, they have a desire for more opportunities for support groups/networks for leadership for peer learning.

They also noted that opportunities to network with other leaders tended to follow traditional organizational silos and that membership tends to lack diversity. Leaders also noted challenges for newer and grass-roots organizations to access many of the traditional networking groups.

These traditional divisions can lead to missed opportunities to collaborate and reduce leaders' ability to tap more diverse networks when recruiting and hiring staff.

"Why don't we use experienced executive directors as executive coaches for new executive directors?"

Related Gap/Need
- Ability to work across sectors (A&C)
- Knowledge of potential partners (A&C)
- Recruitment/retention of diverse staff and board (DEI)

Related Asset
- Leadership networks

Gap/Need: Board recruitment

Recruiting board members from diverse backgrounds and with needed skill sets is a significant challenge for many organizations, particularly small and rural organizations.

"The ability to think strategically and creatively – that is real capacity. At fault: aging boards, lack of term limits, and lack of diversity -- not being inclusive. Building a board that thinks like you just creates an echo chamber. The Board hires the CEO and sets the tone for the organization. Recruiting diverse voices to the Board is hugely important."

"In general, our board is a nice group of people, but they can't necessarily provide me with the types of support that I need for the organization. I don't have the bandwidth or a deep enough management structure to spend more time on board recruitment and development."

"Recruiting board members is difficult. Ours is not a glamorous board seat. Some people are on a lot of boards. It's hard to say no to them, but it is more difficult to find new people."

"Small organizations need help in understanding how to get the right board members. But also, they could use a 'virtual board' hotline to call and get info about topics that other executives would call their board members for."

Rural/organizational distinction

Board recruitment challenges were highlighted more often by smaller and rural organizations.

Related Gap/Need
- Board management/ training

Related Asset
- Engaged boards

Gap/Need: Board management & training

While a few nonprofits highlighted their success with alternate models of board governance and how that has helped them engage the board in more helpful ways, many leaders held up board training and management as a pressing regional need.

"Good governance is one of the greatest needs in this region. People are not born knowing what good board service looks like. Boards get engaged in all sorts of bizarre behavior when they don't know their role."

"We need education around here about what a board member does. People are not aware."
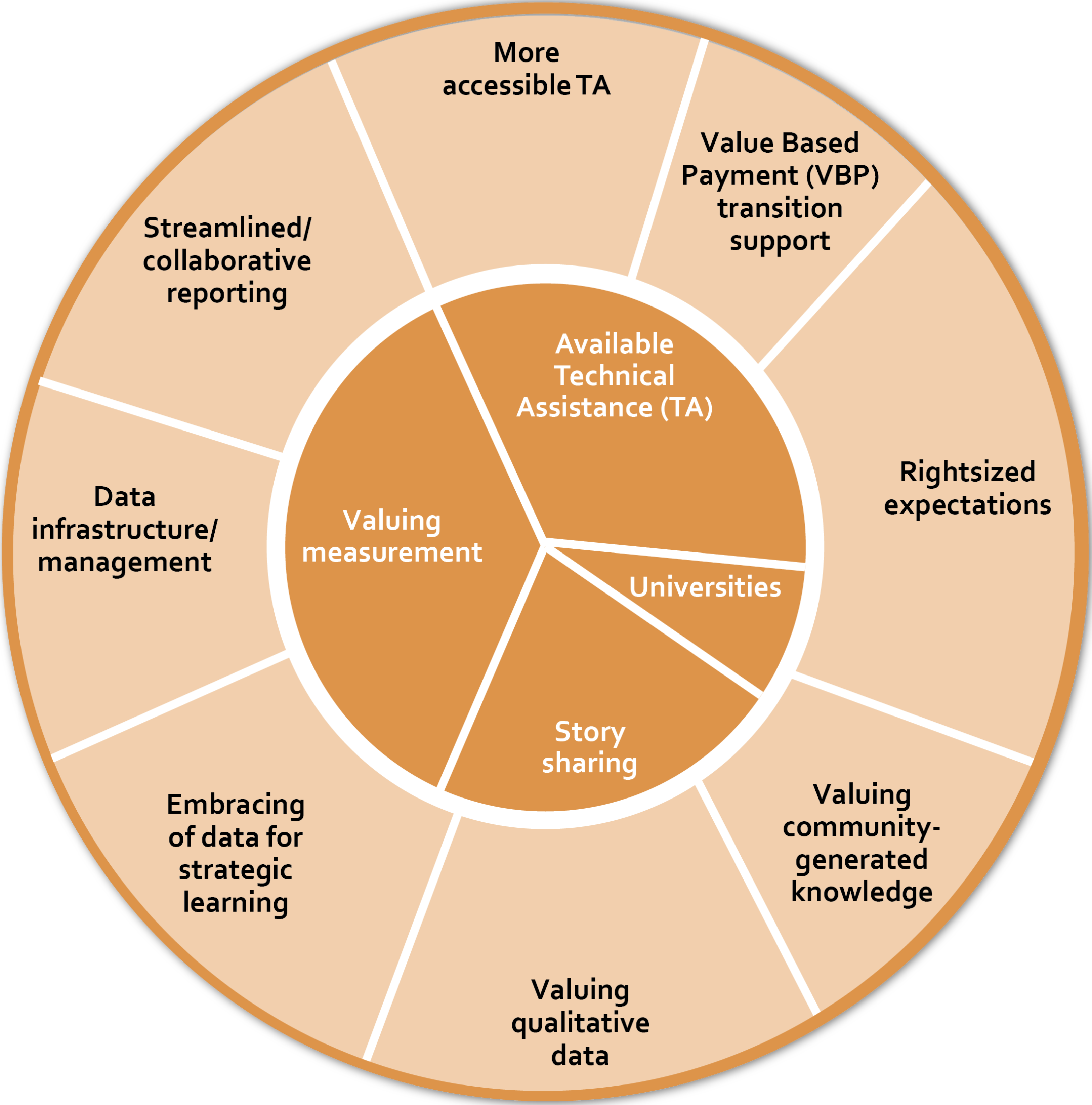
Related Gap/Need
- Board recruitment

Related Asset
- Engaged boards

Research, Evaluation & Strategic Learning

Back to: Full Map

Available Technical Assistance (TA)
- More accessible TA
- Value Based Payment (VBP) transition support
- Rightsized expectations

Valuing measurement
- Streamlined/ collaborative reporting
- Data infrastructure/ management
- Embracing of data for strategic learning

Universities

Story sharing
- Valuing qualitative data
- Valuing community-generated knowledge

Asset: Story sharing

Nonprofit leaders discussed their ability to identify and share stories of individual and community change and success as an asset to:

• Changing the narrative and perception of communities

• Engaging in advocacy

• Motivating donors

• Spurring communities to action

"We have the ability to advocate, tell stories and relate the experiences of our community."

Related Gap/Need
• Valuing qualitative data

Asset: Valuing measurement

Organizations understand the value in collecting data to help make their case and inform funder priorities.

"We do a pretty good job of measuring outcomes. We monitor outcomes from national county health rankings outcomes and collect them on every person we serve."

Participants also noted that much of the measurement they currently engage in is fairly superficial and more compliance oriented than targeted at helping them make data-driven decisions (see related gaps/needs).

Related Gap/Need
- Embracing data for strategic learning
- Data infrastructure/management
- Streamlined/collaborative reporting

Asset: Available Technical Assistance (TA)

Study participants acknowledge that there are quality technical assistance resources available to help organizations with their research, evaluation and strategic learning needs ranging from universities to independent nonprofits to individual consultants.

"We work closely with several national entities, universities and collaboratives for research in our field."

"We've hired a contractor to assist us in doing community surveys to assess the population and their needs for tobacco control. The state provides us with additional insight on how to assess the community and the impact of our work."

"The Population Health Collaborative Keys to Health and their assistance with community needs assessments is very beneficial."

Related Gap/Need
- More accessible TA

Asset: Universities

Several participants pointed to local universities as assets and potentially under-utilized assets in terms of knowledge-sharing and potential partnerships to support nonprofit research and evaluation efforts.

"Universities should provide professors to do evaluations and such."

"Our collaboration with PhD Researcher from local university has been integral to our program evaluation efforts for past 10 years."

Others noted that accessing and utilizing university support often ended up being cost-prohibitive or challenging in terms of coordination. See related gap/need.

Related Gap/Need
- More accessible TA

Gap/Need: Valuing qualitative data

Many organizational leaders felt that the sector undervalues results that are not easily quantifiable and that qualitative data should be more accepted as evidence of impact.

"Funders are looking for quantifiable results, but it can't only be about that. You can't read a grant application or a report and understand what we do. It's the community's experience with us that we care about. It's how we are addressing issues related to community life, community pride, social cohesion but that is difficult to track and to quantify so funders ignore, write off, or misunderstand it. This is especially problematic in communities of color."

"We could use more guidance from funders on qualitative data that would suffice for the grants. We want to paint a picture – not numbers."

Related Asset
- Story sharing

Gap/Need: Valuing community-generated knowledge

Nonprofit leaders emphasized that community experience and knowledge was often devalued while "best practices" and "evidence-based" models from other communities were held up as the gold standard. Leaders shared their frustration with being required to take on models from elsewhere that had been published (which often then need to be adapted for the local context) rather than being supported in establishing a local evidence base of successful practices and programs that built on local programs' innovation and adaptability.

"A lot of funding is around evidence-based models. We have organizations locally that are putting together good things, but we have to go to other communities and buy their trainings and their programs to implement here."

"We could use assistance developing and measuring new models and approaches so that they can become evidence-based, and thus be eligible to be supported by mainstream funding."

Gap/Need: Streamlined/collaborative reporting

Nonprofit leaders shared that required funder reporting uses up much of their current organizational capacity in terms of data analysis, tracking, and evaluation. They noted that there is a lack of consistent measures used in the community and this also creates less clarity in terms of a shared understanding of success.

They argue that if community funders were more aligned and reporting was more streamlined across funders and organizations, organizations would have additional capacity to dedicate to deeper engagement in research, evaluation, and strategic learning.

"We are too busy just putting data in and using it for reports and grants."

"Every time we partner with a different organization or program, each group wants to do its own survey for their funders. We all get data fatigue and survey fatigue. Can't we do one evaluation and benchmark it? There has got to be a more streamlined way."

"What funders ask us to evaluate isn't what we think adds the most value to our work. It's paperwork. It's not as meaningful as it could be. I know the funders…they mean well. It's just a little bit of a disconnect."

Related Asset
- Valuing measurement

Gap/Need: Data infrastructure/management

Nonprofit leaders highlighted that many organizations struggle with and need support in the areas of data management and infrastructure before they are ready to engage in higher level outcome tracking or evaluation.

"We are struggling with data management. It's a sophisticated issue as we move into managed care. All decisions will be need to be data driven and we don't know how to synthesize the data. Who is the expert? I'm not sure who to talk to. We have data in million places."

"Organizations don't have the infrastructure to track outcomes. The demand for outcomes without paying for the related infrastructure weakens the organization overall."

"We collect a lot of data on the programs we provide. We have a serious challenge with developing/finding a data system that is efficient and effective in entering and retrieving the information."

"There is very little capacity among small organizations for data management. They don't have the money to bring in an outside evaluator."

"Small organizations don't have the necessary technology or ability to do quantitative reporting. Executive directors do everything in very small organizations."

Organizational distinction

Data infrastructure was held up as a particular challenge for smaller organizations where staff wear many hats and have less specialization.

Related Asset
- Valuing measurement

Gap/Need: Embracing of data for strategic learning

While organizational leaders appreciate the need to collect and use data to show impact and make their case, many feel that the sector needs more assistance with embracing and using data for strategic learning and continuous quality improvement, including using data to make decisions, change their operations, and inform planning and program management activities.

"Nonprofit organizations accustomed to using data for accountability and reporting must think and manage differently to create an organizational culture that values real learning."

"Data can be scary. We need to find simple ways to find and use data. Lots of times you may have human service agencies that don't connect well with data. We need culture change. Leadership has to have a passion for data, and even if it isn't the executive, you need an internal champion that keeps data accessible and part of the decision making."

"We have data, but are we using that data effectively? We are too busy just putting it in and using it for reports and grants. But are we using it for predictions? No. Should we be collecting different data? Probably. We only tend to collect what we have to report on."

Related Asset
- Valuing measurement

Gap/Need: More accessible TA

While many organizations felt a need for external technical assistance (TA) to support research, evaluation and strategic learning efforts, many noted that cost made many sources of such TA inaccessible. Finding culturally responsive TA was also named as a challenge.

"The universities aren't always an asset. Often they are more expensive."

"If funding were not an issue, I would get help with evaluation. It's expensive, difficult, and time consuming."

"We're all in existence to make an impact. One of the growing needs is the ability to quantify and to demonstrate what value you bring to the table. It's becoming vital for sustainability. Technical assistance is something that this collaboration of funders could offer – we all want to be able to have the infrastructure in place to show what we do best."
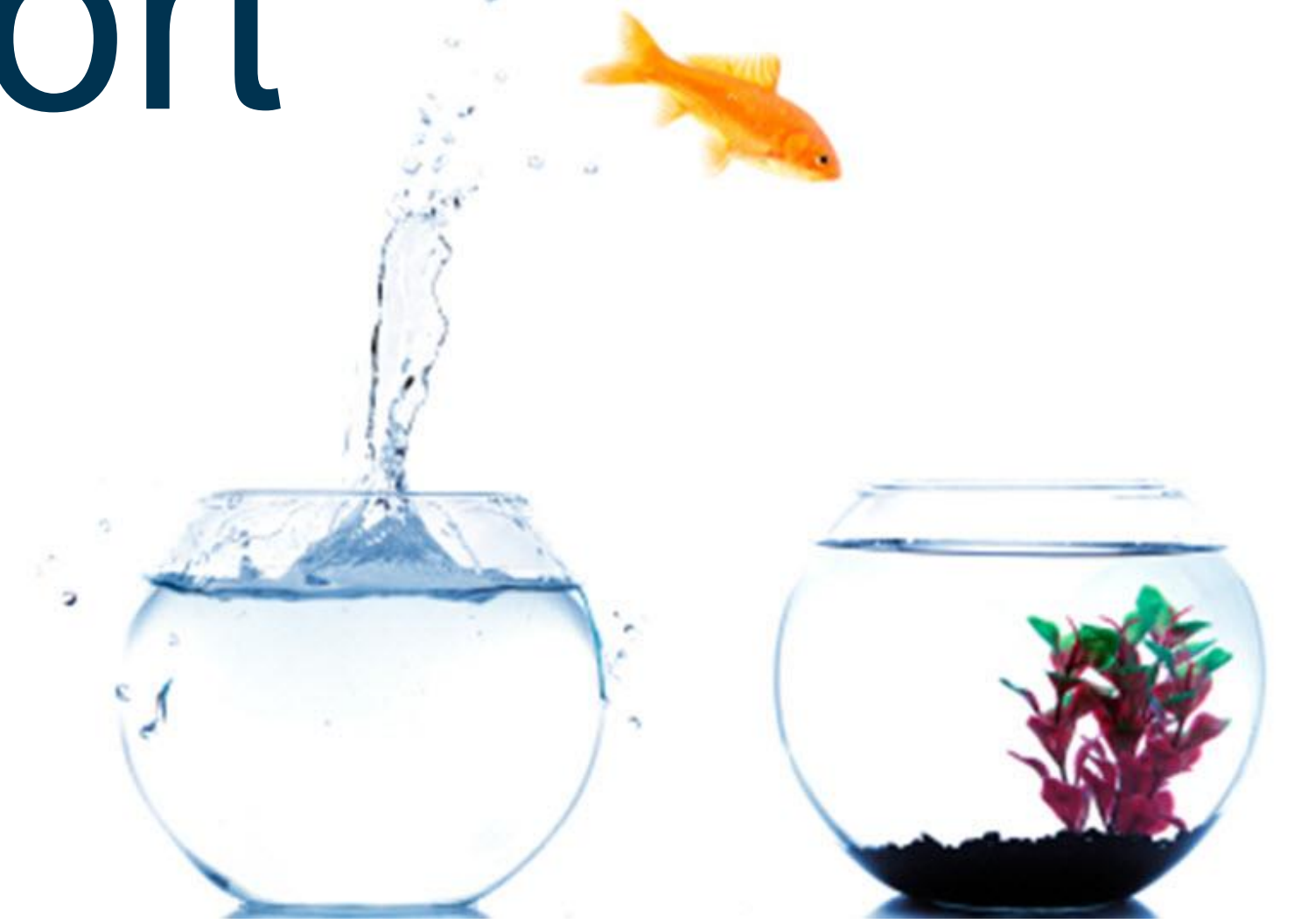
"One huge challenge is diversifying the consultant pool. Good luck finding an evaluator of color."

Related Asset
- Available TA
- Universities

Gap/Need: VBP transition support

Nonprofit leaders noted that shifting to new funding systems, including managed care and Value-Based Payments (VBP,) strained organizational resources and capacities in terms of measurement and evaluation and in some cases went beyond what organizations are currently capable of measuring or knowing.

> *"We have come to realize with future of managed care and VBP, we clearly need support around how we put data together and evaluation. Evaluation has not been funded in a while. "*

Even organizations that had received technical assistance to support the transition noted that they were still working on their ability to evaluate and measure their impact.

> *"We were selected to participate in Get Set. We're not a direct service organization but it's important to evaluate our effectiveness. We are still working on that. That box has not been checked. It's a work in progress."*

Focus group participants shared that this felt like this was another example of being asked to do more with less and was not necessarily a "value add" to them as it further stretched their resources on the ground.

Gap/Need: Rightsized expectations

REALITY CHECK AHEAD

Many organizational leaders discussed both a misunderstanding among funders of how much work is required to engage in quality research, learning and evaluation and the outsized expectations of some funders about what organizations can achieve with limited time and funds.

"You can't evaluate when you only get a one year grant. Once you figure out how to do it, the funding ends."

EXPECTATIONS

"Bigger foundations have very large expectations for their dollars. They want to be extremely transformational, but that's not going to happen on a $10,000-15,000 grant, and not going to happen in a year. It's hard to manage expectations. Funders have lost sight that a grant may not cure poverty or homelessness, but it is still going to make a huge impact on the life of someone's family."

Resources

Back to: Full Map

Rural Gaps/ Needs:
• Appreciation of scale
• IT support/infrastructure

Diverse networks

Communications/ marketing

Professional development/ training

Other nonprofits

Boards

Local philanthropy

Staff

Staffing:
• Levels
• Pay
• Retention

Local businesses

Volunteers

Make it work mentality

Financial management/ operational efficiency

Fundraising infrastructure

Financial resources

Asset: Make it work mentality

Nonprofit leaders pride themselves on their adaptability and creativity in providing services in the face of limited funding and constantly changing circumstances.

"You do what you have to do to deliver the services most days. If you believe in the mission, you make it happen."

"We specialize in adaptability, in doing more with nothing."

"We get through on a day-to-day basis."

"We have a responsibility to manage the resources. Sometimes you have to manage with less. Have to be comfortable with uncertainty."

Making it Work

Related Gap/Need
- Financial resources
- Financial management/ operational efficiency

Asset: Staff

Nonprofit leaders identified their dedicated and passionate staff members as valuable assets to getting the work done and "going above and beyond."

"We have incredible staff. They stretch themselves everyday. They believe in the work and are incredibly committed."

"Our staff do this work because it is their passion. It is as much as a calling as it is a job."

"Our people are a huge asset. They are willing to do whatever needs to be done."

Related Gap/Need
- Staffing: levels, pay & retention

Asset: Volunteers

Nonprofit leaders also identified the time and talents of volunteers of all kinds as a key asset that helps increase the capacity of organizations and their staffs to get their work done and to fulfill their missions.

"Community volunteerism is an asset, this includes corporate and church-based . . . .there are lots of people willing to give their time and coordinate with others."

Asset: Other nonprofits

Other nonprofits serve as critical networks of support for one another and potential partners for collaboration. Nonprofits help one another by sharing knowledge and skills, and helping each other access collaborative networks.

Related Gap/Need
- Diverse networks

Asset: Boards

Board member skill sets serve as an important resource that nonprofits can turn to to increase their capacity to raise funds as well as to address critical internal functions not covered by staff.

> *"My board is a big resource. They help with fundraising. One board member is from an IT vendor, so he helps us with IT."*

> *"I need to recruit strategically for certain skill sets on the board like communications and marketing or legal advice."*

Some organizations noted that they utilized their board members more than is appropriate/sustainable given their volunteer status, especially in smaller organizations due to limited staff capacity and financial resources (see related gap/need).

Related Gap/Need
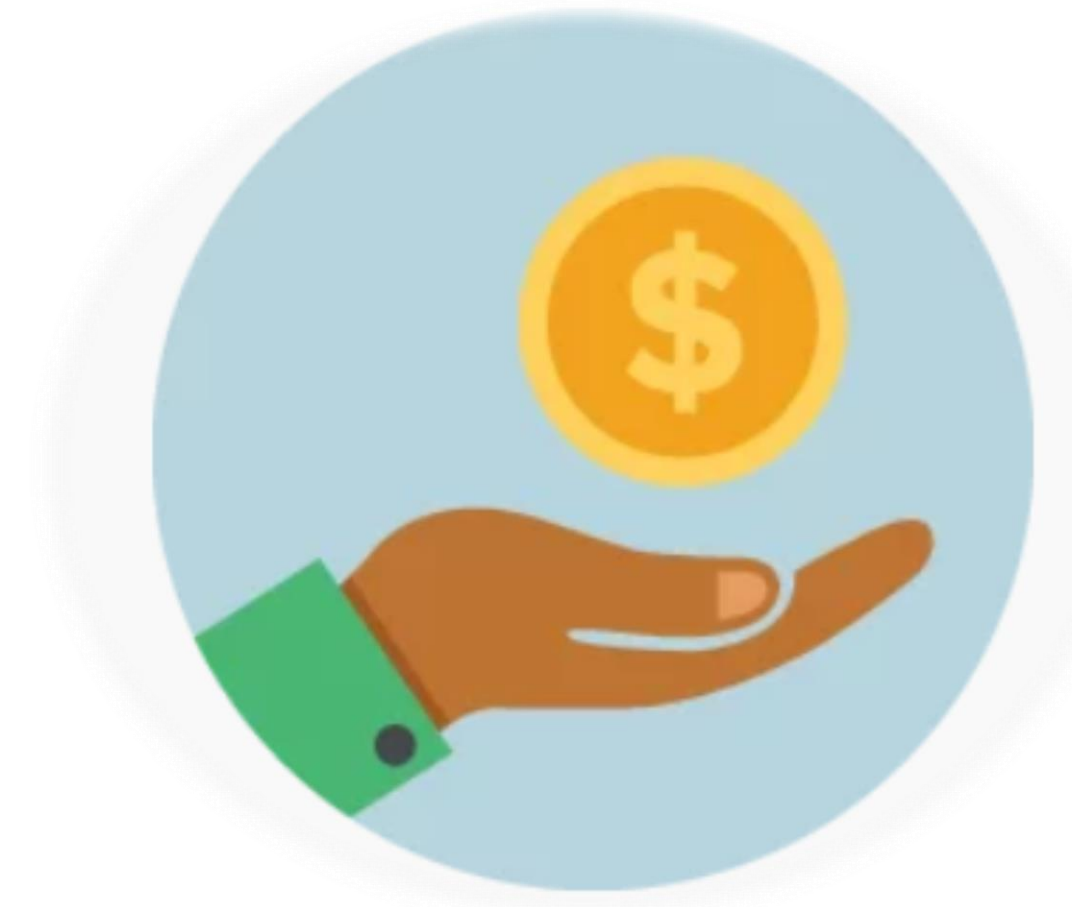- Staffing: levels, pay & retention

Asset: Local businesses

Nonprofit leaders cited the generosity of local businesses in providing in-kind support and strategic partnership opportunities.

"Our membership fee funds the organization. Merchants in the area give a discount to our members . . . this offsets the cost of membership."

"Our strongest asset is that we partner with business to help build some health and wellness around substance abuse prevention."

Asset: Local philanthropy

Nonprofit leaders named the generosity of individuals, businesses and foundations as assets in supporting their work financially and expanding their organizational capacity by increasing their resources, both in terms of funding and in-kind support and training. They noted that this spirit of giving helps support them in their work.

"The community is very philanthropic."

Gap/Need: Financial resources

Nonprofit leaders overwhelmingly identified the need for additional financial resources and for funders of all kinds to structure this funding in more supportive ways including unrestricted support, multi-year funding, and appropriate support for overhead. They noted that their financial restrictions were often the limiting factor for organizational growth, innovation, and capacity building across all domains.

"We have a lot of funders who like to fund program and projects but want to see unrealistically low administrative overhead."

"Everyone wants every dollar to go to service delivery. No one gives money to fund administrative functions."

"We've grown horizontally by adding programs/services that everyone wants to fund. We haven't grown vertically. We have the same three people doing HR and finance as we did when we were a smaller organization. No one will fund the administrative functions. The core has not grown at all and we are weaker for it."

"We don't have the ability to take risks – want to try something new, but we can't innovate if there is no financial cushion to take risks."

Related Gap/Need
- Fundraising infrastructure
- Policy & advocacy (A&C)

Related Asset
- Make it work mentality

Gap/Need: Financial management / operational efficiency

Some nonprofit leaders lifted up a need for assistance with long-term financial management and operational efficiency assessment and advice.

"We have a facility that we're proud of, but we are property poor and don't have cash flow to maintain all of our properties. It's costing us operationally. No one wants to fund an organization where cash flow isn't where it should be. How do we get ourselves to a better place so funders would look more favorably at us? When I was in the corporate world, we would bring in a consultant to look at the organizational structure to identify where we could shed some expense or how we could restructure some of the ways we allocate our funding to get our cash flow to better place. We are trying that ourselves and have made some small incremental steps to get there, but it is not the same has having an expert come in."

"Smaller and mid-sized organizations need help with finances. They need help with the concept of balance sheets. Things like building reserves and funding depreciation are often new to them. They need help in managing all of their assets. Many small, younger organizations can't afford to hire a financial person beyond a part-time book keeper."

"I wish we had someone to come in and evaluate our processes. Tell me what tools are best for us. Don't have time to research options. Project management tools, salesforce, etc."40

"We need help in taking a look at each of our budgets – see what we're buying…spending money on. How can they help us spend more efficiently? "

Related Asset
- Make it work mentality

Gap/Need: Fundraising infrastructure

Nonprofits, particularly smaller and minority-serving organizations and those historically dependent on government funding, cited challenges in their ability to sufficiently build out their fundraising and development functions. Fundraising and development to support organizational priorities was the number one organizational challenge listed by all survey participants.

"We don't have the resources for grantwriting or development staff."

"Our executive writes most of the grants and does most of the follow up work with grants and reporting. We use the free databases at the local library to identify grant opportunities, but it's hit or miss. We have board members with fundraising experience, but the lack of time is a problem."

"We have been reliant on government funding for years. We are trying to get up to speed on fundraising. We are just getting donor software and we hired director of development. It's been a big undertaking."

"Smaller organizations, especially those serving low income communities of color, don't have the resources to hire a grant writer or capacity to do research. In addition, they oftentimes do so much for their communities that it is hard to communicate what they do in grant lingo."

"Many agencies are heavily state and federally funded. They don't get much in the way of unrestricted funds and they need more private individual and foundation donors. However, they can't use federal dollars to fundraise which presents a challenge in building out a development function."

"Fundraising is a huge area for us. We hired someone to do fundraising. I felt like they were only barely earning their salary."

Related Gap/Need
- Financial resources

Gap/Need: Communications/marketing

Nonprofits cited the need for additional help in communications and marketing to help maintain visibility, make their case and raise funds. It was the third highest priority for support or technical assistance identified by survey participants (the first two were fundraising and development and measuring and reporting program outcomes).

"We'd like to invest more in communications."

"We used to have a marketing person on the Board of Directors, and that helped. We applied for a grant to go to a storytelling training. We don't have dedicated communications staff though – just per diem folks that help out from time to time; it is not a resource that we have money for."

"Communications is hit or miss for us. We have had board members who have helped over the years. We received a new planning grant so we have some dollars to fund marketing consultant. This is an area that we struggled with and would like support. If money was not an object we'd focus on communications and marketing, branding and consistent messaging. We would have a plan for what we need to do each month and a dedicated person or simple tools that staff could it. Someone to keep the website up to date. Reporting our value…making sure that we understand all of our audiences and tailor our communications."

Gap/Need: Diverse networks

While many nonprofits have access to networks, these networks tend to follow traditional organizational silos and membership tends to lack diversity. This results in missed opportunities for cross-pollination, reduced linkages, and more-limited access to diversity of human capital. There is a need for more diverse and integrated networks to cut across these lines.

"The Buffalo nonprofit community is insular – relationship based."

"There is more capacity for grass-roots and cultural groups to engage, but people aren't thinking beyond their silos."

Related Asset
- Networks (A&C)

Related Gap/Need
- Thinking beyond the usual suspects (DEI)
- Recruitment/retention of diverse staff & board (DEI)
- Support group/networking (Lead.)
- Knowledge of potential partners (A&C)

Gap/Need: Professional development/training

While nonprofit leaders value their staff and their abilities, they acknowledge the need to provide more professional development opportunities to both help them improve in their roles and grow professionally.

"We need help in providing management training. Just because just because someone is a good frontline staff does not mean they know how to manage people."

"Staff also needs basic workplace skills -- how to use Excel, MS office, how to communicate more effectively, supervision and management training."

"We don't have funds for good personal development training. We need help in getting people to the place where they have a good decorum when they work and know how to handle people professionally."

"We need more resources to develop people in-house that can grow and move into leadership positions."

"We try to send staff to courses as much as possible to develop their skills. I have someone at a grant writing course now."

Related Gap/Need
- Leadership development (Lead.)

Gap/Need: Staffing: levels, pay & retention

While deeply appreciative of the efforts of their staff, nonprofit leaders are keenly aware and sensitive to issues around the ability to fully staff up, to retain staff, and pay them a competitive wage. Additionally, leaders noted that rising healthcare costs and higher minimum wage laws along with fairly flat grant amounts were putting further pressure on their ability to pay and retain staff.

"We are short on people. As a result people have to wear multiple hats. We are short on translation services, program staff and administrative staff. "

"The workforce is tight right now. I wish there were more people to go around and that we had more resources to hire more people."

"Operational expenses have gone up and being able to care for and feed a quality workforce is an issue. Nonprofits tend to lose staff to better paying jobs in government, schools, and private sector therapy."

"We have the resources to keep the doors open; we don't have enough to pay a living wage to our employees."

"We have good people but they are getting frustrated that they are not getting as high an increase as people working minimum wage jobs."

Related Gap/Need
- Recruitment/retention of diverse staff & board (DEI)

Related Asset
- Staff

Rural Gaps & Needs

Rural organizational leaders lifted up some unique gaps and needs in the resources domain that were specific to the rural context.

These included the need for:

- **IT support/infrastructure**

- **Appreciation of rural challenges of scale**

Rural Gap/Need: IT support/infrastructure

Information Technology needs struck a particular chord for organizations in rural areas, where they struggle with the digital divide and in physical access to professional IT services. This limits their access to certain resources urban counterparts take for granted.

"We are hurting with IT. We have people here who are trouble shooters and can maintain the computers, but if there are bigger, deeper problems, we work with band aids until we can afford to address it. IT is just not in the budget, although we did just get a grant for distance learning capability for meetings."
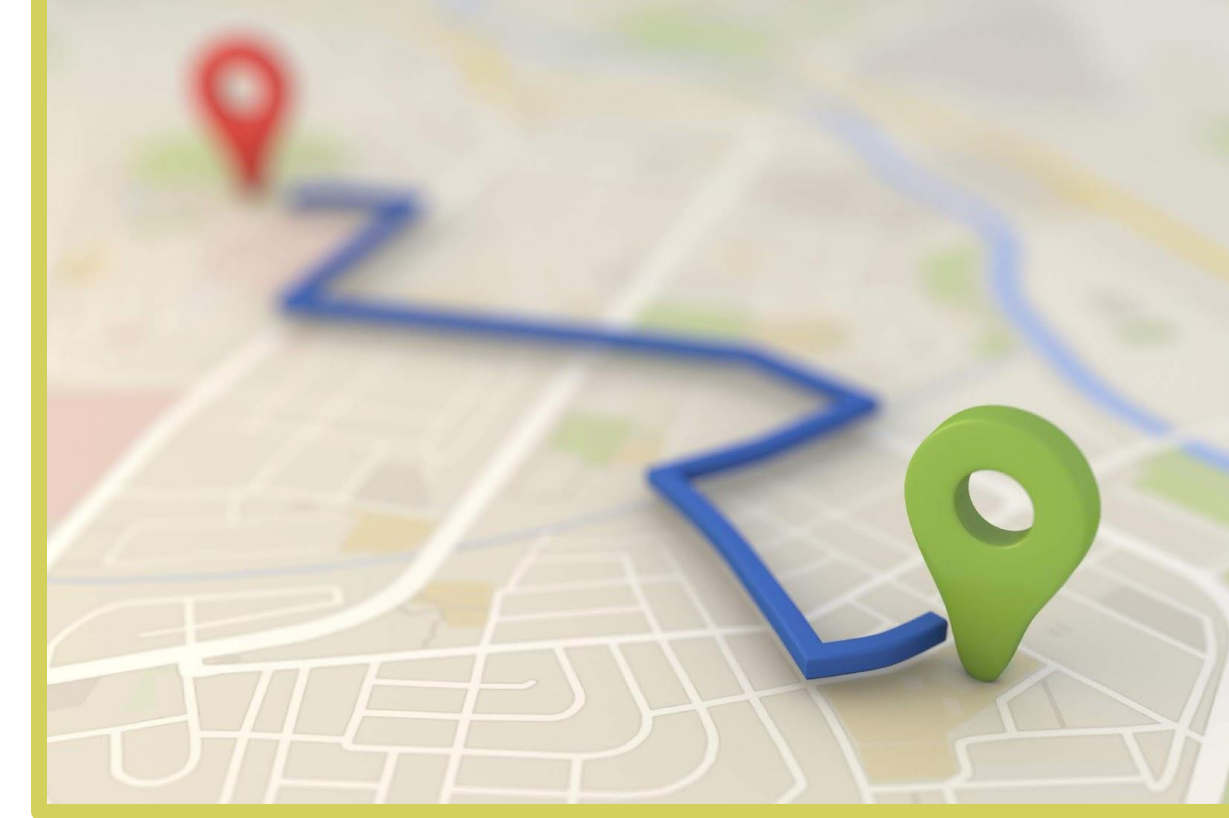
"IT is a huge issue in the rural areas. Some areas still only have dial-up service. They are supposed to be bringing high speed internet, but it's not here yet. Also, we don't have that many local IT specialists."

"We need a technology equipped video conferencing space to help foster and maintain connections for organizations in rural areas. We have written for but were not awarded dollars to create a rural leadership hub."

"The Buffalo paper reported that our rural area is one of five of the slowest internet areas. People still have modems here which inhibits our ability to get things done and to collaborate. It is also difficult to get IT help. There just aren't local IT people and we are too small for our own IT department. Even if we did a joint contract with other nearby organizations, there is no one locally to actually provide the service."

Rural Gap/Need: Appreciation of scale

Nonprofit leaders in rural areas identified a challenge in communicating the differences in scale to urban funders and attracting their interest in working in their communities. In particular, they highlighted that low population density, decentralization of services, and lack of transportation often result in higher program costs per person to achieve impact. Additionally, leaders noted challenges with their ability to implement programs that had been developed for urban settings.

"The cost to deliver anything in rural settings is completely different."

"There is a critical mass that is expected of projects that work for larger cities. South of the Thruway is different than the north. Our types of urban renewal are different. It is difficult to get enough people and mass to float things that work from larger cities. How do you size down what works in urban communities?"

"How do I, in rural Wyoming County, tell the story of the place and position ourselves so that we get noticed by potential partners and funders in Buffalo and Rochester? We can be lean and mean and pilot something and show the effect of it in a smaller scale way to educate the funders for the future."
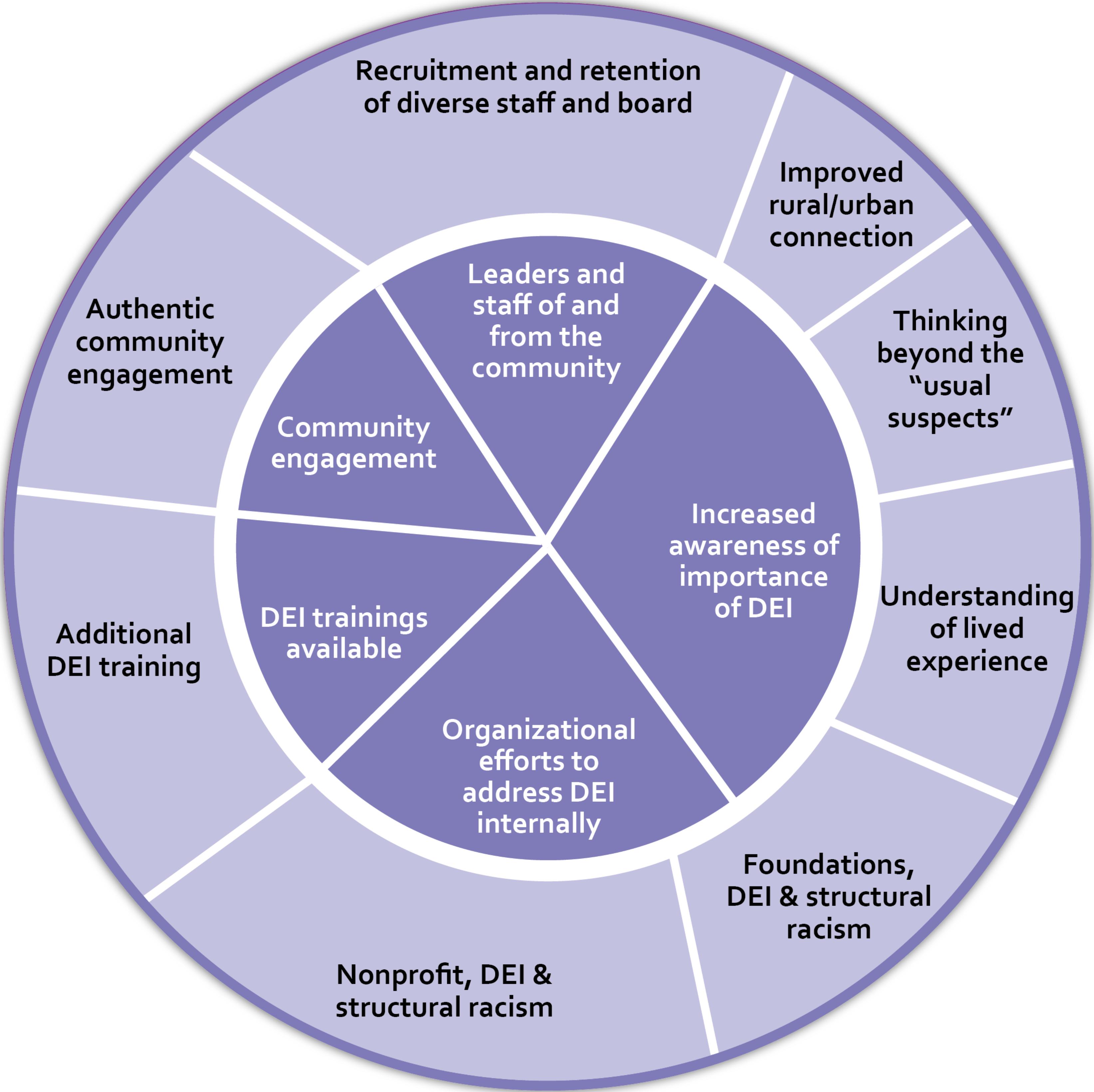
"Getting organizations to the table of VBP has been challenging – it's still going to come down to the number of covered lives. The equation is different for the rural environment. It's not a one size fits all approach. In an urban area if the number is 1, for rural it is 1.5 because it takes more resources to see clients."

Related Gap/Need
- Improved rural/urban connection (DEI)

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI)

Recruitment and retention of diverse staff and board

Improved rural/urban connection

Authentic community engagement

Leaders and staff of and from the community

Thinking beyond the "usual suspects"

Community engagement

Increased awareness of importance of DEI

Understanding of lived experience

Additional DEI training

DEI trainings available

Organizational efforts to address DEI internally

Foundations, DEI & structural racism

Nonprofit, DEI & structural racism

Asset: Increased awareness of the importance of DEI

Nonprofit leaders noted that overall, there is more awareness of and conversations about diversity, equity and inclusion issues.

"Our work in schools and coalitions with more diverse populations has allowed us to learn more about diversity, equity, and inclusion. I would love more training on this - it is something I've been learning through my work with my full time job as well as on the boards for other organizations. It's very important to my work because we're supposed to concentrate on disparate populations."

"We recently created Trauma Informed Coalition- untreated mental health issues, child trauma, etc. Starting to understand and respond to these issues that undercut many of the regional health outcomes."

"I liked that cultural competence and trauma informed care were mentioned in our discussion and people are still getting on board."

However, they also acknowledge the need to make a deeper commitment to DEI and addressing structural racism. (see related Gap/Need)

Related Gap/Need
- Nonprofits, DEI & structural racism

Asset: Organizational efforts to address DEI internally

While more needs to be done to address structural racism in society and with nonprofit organizations themselves, some nonprofits are implementing polices and tools to help address cultural competency and diversity, equity and inclusion.

"We use the CCSI Cultural Strengths Indicator to help with cultural competency. It helps identify cultural trigger points and how people of different cultures prefer to communicate."

"All of our staff are required to participate in cultural competence training that we provide in-house. We have also LGBTQ sensitivity training. We are looking at the needs of the people that we are serving and need to be sure our staff are equipped to deal with different populations."

"We have an active cultural diversity committee comprised of participants from different program areas. They are responsible for education of staff, identifying the tools they need, and where there are needs that aren't being met."

"We worked on cultural competency with FLPPS. It changes your perceptions of things. We never thought about how much of a difference it could make if we changed our questions and behaviors with different populations. We knew there were things we didn't know. We didn't know that there were important questions we weren't asking."

"We are part of a larger program with community foundation training. We have a chief diversity officer and formed a cross functional committee as we implement policies and bring on benefits to make sure it doesn't affect one group unjustly."

Related Gap/Need
- Nonprofits, DEI & structural racism

Asset: DEI trainings available

Nonprofit leaders acknowledge that there are resources and trainings available, both locally and remotely, to help organizations address the way they approach DEI.

In fact, organizational survey respondents listed delivering culturally responsive services and developing policies/practices for cultural competence, diversity, equity, and inclusion as two of the most common professional services they as organizations provide to others.

"We are considering putting our staff and board through an anti-racism training. We are working with a peer organization from Washington DC to do this training."

"We are Deaf led agency that utilizes community advisors for much of our decision making. We had LGBTQ training this year."

"We have received cultural competence training through the United Way simulation events and through two federal grants."

"Our Executive Director is well versed in these areas and has worked with a local organization as a cultural competence consultant."

TRAINING

Related Gap/Need
- Additional DEI training

Asset: Leaders and staff of and from the community

Several nonprofit leaders cite that staff and board members who are of and from the communities their organizations serve as a critical asset in designing and delivering relevant and effective programming.

"More than 50% of our staff have lived in the community or are clients. This builds trust. I think that it is critical that people who serve within the agency also live within the community."

"Peer-focused staff – most of our staff are peers – operate from a place of compassion and empathy"

Others noted that this was often not the case and that they struggled to recruit and retain diverse staff and leadership (see related gap/need).

Related Gap/Need
- Recruitment/retention of diverse staff & board

Asset: Community engagement

Nonprofit leaders, especially in grass-roots organizations, held up their ability to authentically engage and co-create with their community as a critical asset in their ability to be equitable, diverse, and inclusive in their work.

"The people we work with are involved in their community, they give back to their community, the community sees that."

Others noted that this was an asset lacking in many parts of the sector (see related gap/need).

Related Asset
- Grass roots organizations (A&C)

Related Gap/Need
- Authentic community engagement

Gap/Need: Recruitment and retention of diverse staff and board

Nonprofit leaders acknowledged a need to get better at recruiting and retaining diverse staff and leadership (including their boards). Of survey participants, 64% listed diverse recruiting as a challenge for their organization, and 20% included it as a top priority area for support and technical assistance.

"Many organizations say something like 'I need a board member who is black' but don't necessarily understand the breadth of what that means."

"Organizations say they want to have diverse staff but will say they can't find them."

Related Asset
- Leaders and staff of and from the community

Related Gap/Need
- Staffing: levels, pay & retention (Res.)

Gap/Need: Authentic community engagement

Several nonprofit leaders noted that community engagement was often done at the end of processes or on special occasions, rather than being an integrated part of organizations' work and committed to equity and inclusion. Minority-serving and grass-roots organizational leaders noted that they and the community they worked with were often brought in more as tokens than as equal partners.

"I am a big advocate for engaging communities and I don't see this happening with a lot of nonprofits. I see a lot of 'othering' -- well-meaning white people making decisions about what other people need."

Related Asset
- Community engagement

Gap/Need: Additional DEI training

While DEI trainings are available, nonprofit leaders see a need for more organizations and funders to engage in additional diversity, equity and inclusion training and to further deepen their knowledge base in this domain.

"We are still pretty far back in terms of equality. We have a primarily older staff who may not understand or be interested in learning or being patient with an individual who is transgender or homosexual. I'm not sure if this is generational or regional, but a lot goes on after the consumer leaves – a lot of chatter."

"People in this rural area are not exposed to racial diversity, and when they see it, they don't know what to do with it."

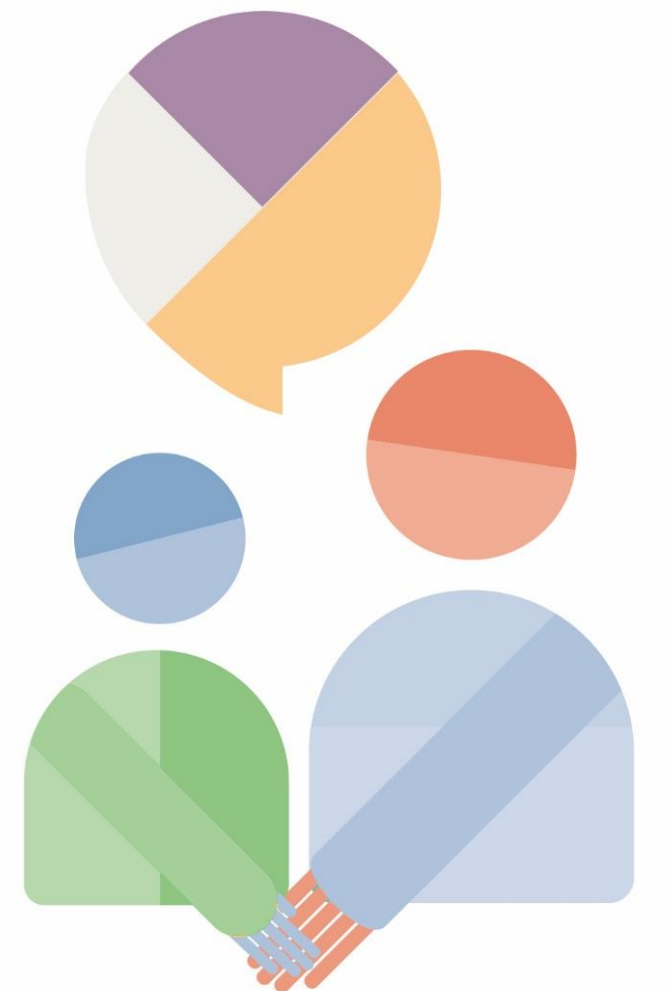*"A lot of people left off at tolerance rather than acceptance."*

Related Asset
- Available DEI trainings

Gap/Need: Nonprofits, DEI and structural racism

A significant portion of nonprofit leaders had not deeply engaged with DEI concepts, describing organizations that thought of DEI as primarily an effort to increase the representation people of color on staff or board. Others called for more intentional efforts to address the underlying structural racism and inequitable structures within their organizations.

"Business as usual is racist, classist, sexist. We are socialized to think certain ways—it's part of the air we breathe. We must consciously try to do things differently. What is 'normal' in an organization are policies and procedures that can exclude the disenfranchised."

"We try to hire of and from community on staff. We never let perfect be enemy of good. We provide deep level training. We are becoming a technical organization and we need more high- level people, but we don't want to be white organization. We are thinking about how to do leadership development differently. How do we remove barriers to provide deep-level education and leadership development?"

Gap/Need: Foundations, DEI and structural racism

Nonprofit leaders also called on funders to be more deliberate in addressing structural racism in their organizations and in their grantmaking. They highlighted that without more intentional work and approaches, the structures of philanthropy reinforce inequitable societal structures.

"Foundations need education about structural racism. Do the boards and staff represent the people they make choices and decisions about? It's an old boys and girls club. It is an unfair expectation that your altruism is necessarily going to play out the way you'd like it."

"There was an initiative where the founder wanted collaboration. We had to come in with larger organization. They got all the money and publicity…the benefits of grantmaking disproportionally accrue to large, white-run institutions."

Gap/Need: Understanding of lived experience

Nonprofit leaders expressed concern over the segregation of poverty and the gap in lived experiences between funders and some nonprofits and those they are working to serve. This leads to a power imbalance, an oversimplification of the issues faced by those in poverty, and overly didactic programs and philanthropic support.

"There are a lot of funders who have no concept of what it is like to live in poverty. They've never experienced it, have never talked to someone in poverty. They are so far removed – anything we can do to show them. There is a lack of opportunity to convey this to funders. It can't all be described and measured – have to experience it on the ground."

"I have offered to have leaders come and eat at the soup kitchen and learn about poverty. Wealthy donors don't understand the first thing about poverty."

"Funders don't come and see the work…they only know their model. They make assumptions and don't learn about you."

Related Asset
- Grassroots organizations (A&C)

Related Gap/Need
- Organizing & co-producing with community (A&C)

Gap/Need: Thinking beyond the "usual suspects"

Nonprofit leaders discussed the insular nature of the nonprofit sector in various regions in WNY limiting its ability to benefit from the experience and talents of "transplants" and non-traditional organizations to engage in creative, cross-sector, community-engaged work. They also see a need for a building of relationships and partnerships outside of the traditional social structures and partnerships that tend to follow lines of race and class.

"The sector has its own cliques, silos, dramas and insular loyalties."

"As an outsider coming in from a different city, I'm trying to network and learn as much as possible. Some are quick to partner, others are more unsure."

"The Buffalo nonprofit community is insular – relationship-based."

"There is more capacity for grass-roots and cultural groups to engage, but people aren't thinking beyond their silos and beyond the usual suspects."

Related Gap/Need
- Knowledge of potential partners (A&C)

Gap/Need: Improved rural/urban connection

Nonprofit leaders lifted up a gap in understanding between urban and rural regions and acknowledged that nonprofits in rural communities have a cultural competence that could be shared as an asset.

"We have tremendous expertise in our communities. We don' t need people to tell us what to do. People think that rural folks don't know what they are doing. People in urban areas don't necessarily have an understanding of the issues that rural regions face."

"Cultural competency is relevant in rural cultures – our competency in rural communities could be an asset that could be shared."

"We have a great strategic plan from a third-party consultant but we do not have the resources to implement much of it. I have come to believe that urban-based organizations do not fully understand the challenges faced by smaller not-for-profit organizations serving rural communities. I worked in Rochester not-for-profits for 30 plus years. It is a whole different world out here in rural Western NY."

Related Gap/Need
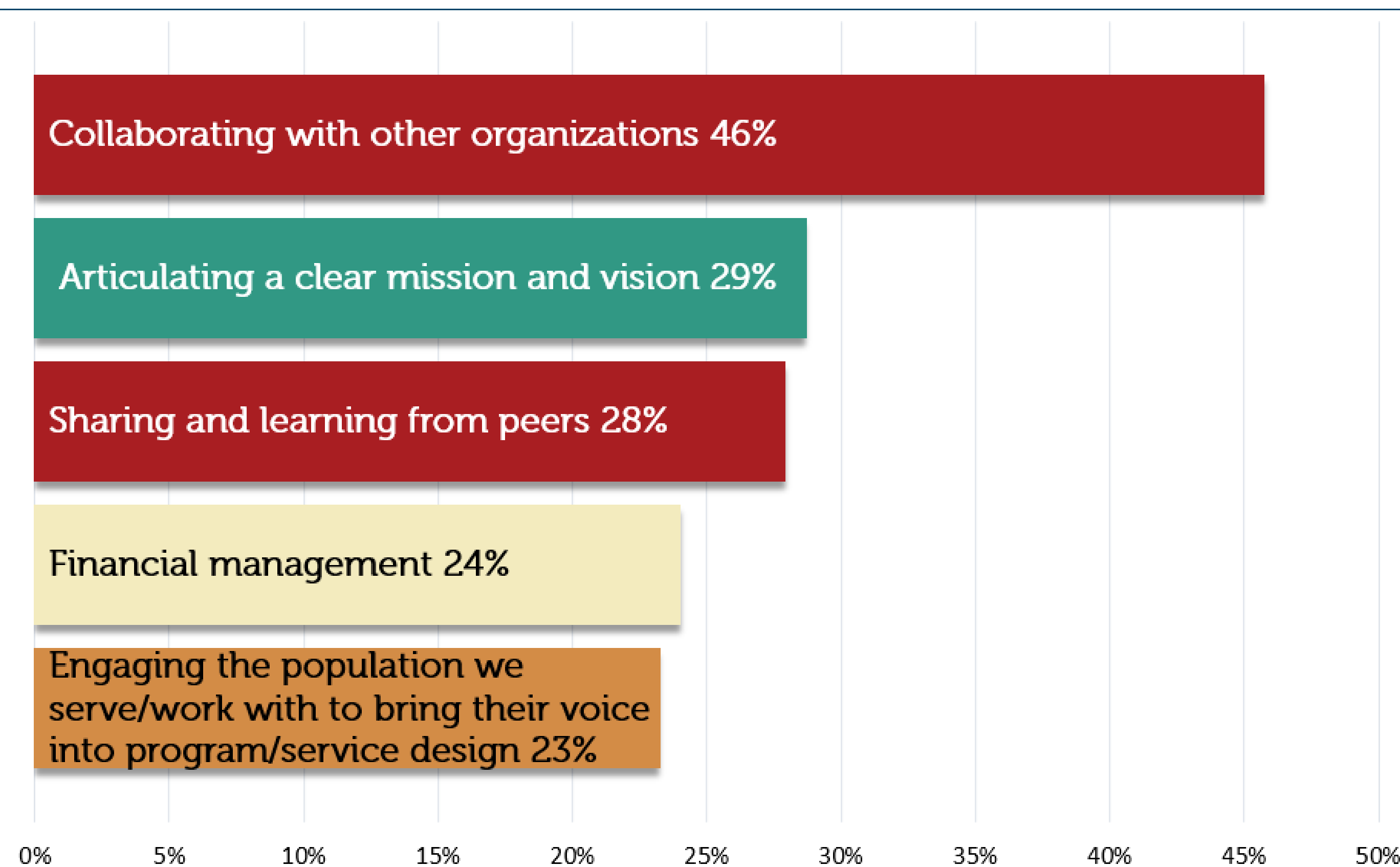- Appreciation of rural scale (Res.)

Vision and Mission

Back to: Full Map

Management to strategic plan

Staying true to mission

Articulation of vision & mission

Dedication to vision & mission

Community-level vision & mission

Asset: Articulation of vision & mission

Overall, nonprofit leaders feel fairly confident in their ability to articulate their vision and mission. It was the second most commonly identified organizational strength on the organizational survey (29% of respondents) and only 3% of survey respondents listed it as a top area for support.

Top Areas of Nonprofit Strength

Collaborating with other organizations 46%

Articulating a clear mission and vision 29%

Sharing and learning from peers 28%

Financial management 24%

Engaging the population we serve/work with to bring their voice into program/service design 23%

0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35% 40% 45% 50%

Organizational distinction

Smaller and younger organizations were more likely to lift up challenges with vision and mission articulation.

Asset: Dedication to vision & mission

Nonprofit leaders described the sector's overall commitment and dedication to the mission and vision of their organizations as an asset to creating community change.

"People are driven by the mission."

"We are all in existence to make an impact."

"The sector is resilient – it continues to innovate, to make a positive impact and positive change."

"People don't get into this work for the money – people really care."

Vision

Values

Mission

Gap/Need: Staying true to mission

Nonprofit leaders expressed concern about stretching beyond their missions or strategic plans in an effort to respond to specific funding opportunities in order to access financial resources.

"Do you change your integrity to get a grant or do you pass on an opportunity?"

"It is difficult to fit into funder program boxes, you end up responding to funder requests rather than community need."

"Organizations tend to diversify their programs to fit an RFP rather than partner with organizations already doing that work."

"You miss opportunities of work that you really want to do because you have to respond to the narrow requirements of a grant application."

Gap/Need: Management to strategic plan

Nonprofit leaders acknowledged that it can be a challenge to ensure that their strategic plans remain a "living document" rather than sitting on a shelf. Leaders can easily become consumed by the day-to-day operations and management of organizations due to stretched resources and limited staffing. This makes it difficult for leaders to take the time to reflect on and manage to the stated plan and adjust it in the face of changing conditions and community need.

"On a day-to-day basis we get through, but that strategic plan is always sitting there reminding me that we haven't focused on it. We're always in reactive mode."

"I need to the time to sit down to think about how to solve these problems and then have the support to do it."

"How can we figure out how to be more proactive instead of reactive? I would rather anticipate problems and make a plan rather than urgency."

Organizational distinction

Minority-serving organizations were more likely to list challenges in terms of strategic planning to advance their vision and mission.

Gap/Need: Community-level vision & mission

Nonprofit leaders also discussed the drawbacks to not having a shared vision at the community level leading to duplication of services and competition for limited financial resources, as well as missed collaborative opportunities.

"Some nonprofits get started with an idea that they think they can do better or differently. Or they don't know that someone else is doing it. No one is the keeper or the watcher of the initiation of nonprofits. Then the funders and donors have to decide who to support. It spreads things too thin. The way we have diversified is not always a strength."

"What it is and why we are doing it seems a little fuzzy sometimes."

"There isn't a serious enough look at competitiveness by nonprofits in their respective marketplaces."

"As a community, there is a tremendous desire to help but very little leadership focused on core targeted issues. The lack of focus is a core issue for Greater Rochester. We need a call to action that the greater community can feel and grasp onto. We can help, if there's a focused call to action."