The Impact of COVID-19 on Community-Based Organizations Serving Older Adults

Findings from April, July, and October 2020

Across the nation, community-based organizations that provide vital services to enable older adults to stay in their own homes are struggling to continue supporting their clients during the COVID-19 pandemic. In April (1,003 respondents), July (890 respondents), and October (814 respondents) 2020, the National Council on Aging (NCOA) surveyed organizations to understand this impact. As part of the nation’s aging network, these organizations provide services such as meals, senior centers, healthy aging programs, benefits enrollment, caregiver support, transportation, and more.

Older Adults’ Needs

The highest-priority needs for older adults during the pandemic are staying socially connected while physically distancing, affording basic expenses, and getting help with technology.

Technology Access

The digital divide means less than half of older adults have what they need to stay connected virtually.

Older Adults Access to Internet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access to Internet</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>October</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have broadband</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a tablet or computer</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are comfortable using Internet</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Community-Based Organizations Efforts to Expand Internet Access for Older Adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Efforts to Expand Access</th>
<th>April</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unable to expand access</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquired and distributed technology</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Found partners to donate and distribute technology</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The pandemic has decreased organizations’ resources and spurred them to work with other groups to continue serving older adults.

### Effects on Operations

- **Lost revenue**
  - October: 44%
  - July: 48%
  - April: 45%

- **Reduced staff**
  - October: 42%
  - July: 44%
  - April: 42%

### New Partnerships

- **Now working with departments of health**
  - October: 45%

- **Now working with municipal organizations**
  - October: 40%

### Reopening Plans

- **Developing, but not ready to move ahead**
  - October: 36%

- **Have plans for staff only**
  - October: 36%

- **Plan to continue remotely**
  - October: 37%

- **Anticipate working with limited staff in office**
  - October: 34%