

Impact of Hurricane Sandy On Staten Island Nonprofits: A Town Hall Event

Convened by The Staten Island Foundation and the Staten
Island Not-For-Profit Association

Autumn 2013

Synopsis: Six months after Hurricane Sandy, Staten Island’s nonprofits were at an inflection point. The full scope and scale of the storm’s impact, and the challenges of long-term recovery, were just coming into focus. The Staten Island Foundation and the Staten Island Not-for-Profit Association seized the moment to convene a generative conversation about the work ahead. They invited leaders from the nonprofit, philanthropic and public sectors to attend a Town Hall event “to build greater understanding about the impact of Hurricane Sandy on Staten Island-based nonprofits, with a focus on their infrastructure and capacity.” This report describes the Town Hall’s context, goals and results.

Introduction
Setting the Stage: Goals, Participants & Clarifying Data
The Town Hall Discussion
Key Takeaways & Action Steps
Looking Ahead

The Town Hall was made possible by generous support from The Staten Island Foundation, with special thanks to the College of Staten Island for hosting the event. Lead organizing and facilitation were provided by Community Resource Exchange. This report was written by Dara Major, Dara Major Philanthropy Consulting.



Staten Island, Staten Island Nonprofits and Hurricane Sandy

Staten Island, one of New York City's five boroughs, is a 7 by 14 mile-Island located in New York Bay, where the Hudson River meets the Atlantic Ocean. Representing just 6% of New York City's total population, Staten Island's approximately 500,000 residents have access to comparatively fewer public services, yet experience greater public health needs. Despite having the highest all-cause mortality rates and highest rates of youth alcohol and substance abuse in New York City, primary health care is seriously under-resourced. Staten Island is the only borough in New York City without a public hospital or homeless shelter. Public transportation is limited. And while Staten Island has traditionally been perceived as a homogeneous, conservative, suburban community, the last two decades have seen the growth of a significantly more diverse population with immigrants from Latin and South America, Asia, Eastern Europe and Africa.

Though the assets of Staten Island's nonprofit sector are considerable, its operational context is as unique as the borough itself. Staten Island's deeply committed nonprofit sector has long struggled to attract sustained off-Island philanthropic awareness and support relative to other boroughs, despite strong intra-Island networks and a track record of collaboration and community impact.

Against this public and nonprofit sector backdrop, as The Staten Island Foundation's Executive Director has noted, "It is especially difficult to be poor in Staten Island."

This difficulty was brought into high relief on October 29, 2012 as Hurricane Sandy battered Staten Island's shore neighborhoods. The storm's high-water mark was recorded on Staten Island, which emerged as among the most severely impacted areas in the mid-Atlantic region.¹ Local service organizations have been on the front line assisting residents, though many of these organizations and their staff members are also storm survivors. Ongoing recovery challenges ripple out across the public, private and nonprofit sectors: how each sector thinks, problem-solves and collaborates for real change has been disrupted for the foreseeable future, and possibly for generations to come. The "frontier spirit" of this "forgotten borough" has been profoundly tested in the wake of the storm and proved to be a strength, as individuals and organizations tap long-standing relationships and networks to mobilize resources for recovery – and build preparedness capacity to face potential future disasters.

¹ Paulson, Ken. "Report: Sandy's NYC high-water mark was in Staten Island's Oakwood; winds hit 74 mph," *Staten Island Advance*, February 13, 2013.
http://www.silive.com/news/index.ssf/2013/02/report_sandys_nyc_high-water_m.html

About The Staten Island Foundation, the Staten Island Not-for-Profit Association and the Staten Island Response to Disaster Coalition

The Staten Island Foundation is a private foundation established in 1997 to improve the quality of life on Staten Island. Since its founding, the Foundation has provided over \$50 million to hundreds of local nonprofits and developed strong relationships and deep knowledge of the borough's operating ecosystem. In partnership with the local community, nonprofit, public and private sectors, the Foundation strives to ensure this vibrant, diverse community – especially its least advantaged – has access to the resources necessary to maximize its potential. With a results orientation, the Foundation views its support as an investment in change, the measure of changed lives for a better community.

The Staten Island Not-for-Profit Association was founded five years ago to serve as a common voice and resource for Staten Island's nonprofits. It now counts more than 130 organizations as members, and provides a robust schedule of annual professional development and technical assistance services. It also serves as a strong advocate for Staten Island's nonprofit sector by working closely with elected officials, civic leaders and media professionals to tell the stories of important issues across the borough.

In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, the Staten Island Not-for-Profit Association established "The Staten Island Response to Disaster Coalition," a multi-stakeholder collaborative drawn from within its membership as well as other local civic groups active in storm relief and recovery. The Coalition acts as a forum for organizations serving storm survivors, and over time aims to develop comprehensive data on recovery efforts and gaps in service. It has three main goals:

1. Strengthen the capacity of organizations to serve their constituents and to be better prepared to respond to disasters in the future;
2. Collect and analyze data about what has happened, what is happening, and what needs to happen in the future to meet the needs of affected constituents;
3. Coordinate and disseminate information on available resources and responses to support organizations providing direct services.

Why A Town Hall Event: New Challenges, New Collaborations

The continuing vulnerability of the borough's storm-impacted residents and infrastructure has created a clear sense of urgency. As the full scope and scale of the storm's impact come into view, long-term recovery and preparedness imperatives are challenging Staten Island's nonprofits to connect and mobilize in new ways, and across sectors – with a renewed push for effective advocacy, technical assistance,

community visioning and collective impact coalition building – while also remaining true to diverse missions, visions and values. In short, this was a remarkable moment for Staten Island’s community of nonprofits. With a track record of collaboration, insight and practice to build on, this community was reaching an inflection point.

As the six-month anniversary of Hurricane Sandy approached, Betsy Dubovsky, Executive Director of The Staten Island Foundation and Vin Lenza, Executive Director of the Staten Island Not-for-Profit Association, seized the moment to convene a generative Town Hall conversation about the work ahead. They designated a planning group comprised of the Foundation’s program officer LauraJean Watters, Holly Delany Cole of Community Resource Exchange/CRE (who had previously organized a nonprofit Town Hall for the Foundation on economic insecurity) and Dara Major of Dara Major Philanthropy Consulting (who is advising the Foundation on its disaster philanthropy strategy).

SETTING THE STAGE: GOALS, PARTICIPANTS & CLARIFYING DATA

With CRE in the role of lead organizer and facilitator, participants were invited to a Town Hall conversation on June 19, graciously hosted by the College of Staten Island and jointly sponsored by The Staten Island Foundation and the Staten Island Not-for-Profit Association. The stated purpose was “to build greater understanding about the impact of Hurricane Sandy on Staten Island-based nonprofits, with a focus on their infrastructure and capacity.”

Town Hall Goals

The Town Hall was designed to create “space and time” to “hear from nonprofits about the impact of the Storm and its aftermath *on their ability to carry out their mission* – to do their everyday work, as well as, if relevant, to help with recovery going forward ” and to surface “issues and challenges facing Staten Island nonprofits in the aftermath and beyond.”

Goals:

- To understand the Impact of Hurricane Sandy on Staten Island-based nonprofits, with a focus on infrastructure and capacity.
- To learn what Staten Island-based nonprofits believe are ways they can better prepare themselves for future disaster.

Central Questions:

- 1) What got in your way of being effective post-storm – whether in the recovery efforts or continuing your work with your core constituency and mission?
- 2) What facilitated your ability to be effective post-storm?

- 3) What are the ways that we nonprofits can prepare ourselves better for the next disaster, as individual organizations and as a community of organizations?
- 4) How does your organization want to be positioned come the next disaster? What do you want to be ready to do?

Participants, Listeners and Facilitators

The leaders of organizations serving Staten Island, particularly its storm survivors, were invited to attend as *participants* in the Town Hall discussion. This group included members of the Staten Island Not-for-Profit Association, grantees of The Staten Island Foundation, members of the “Staten Island Response to Disaster Coalition,” and other nonprofit and civic organizations.

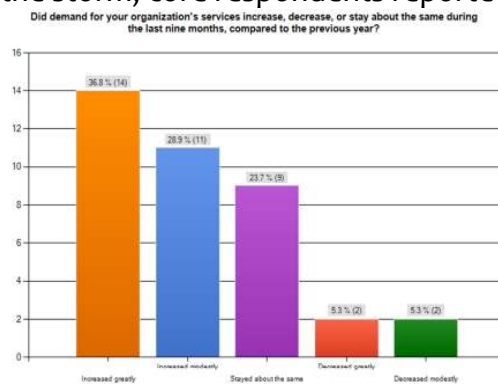
Invited to attend as *listeners* were leaders from private and public grantmaking institutions, policy makers and other advocates who have an interest in seeing the Staten Island community recover well. For listeners, the Town Hall was framed as an opportunity to learn with participants.

The Town Hall discussion was *facilitated* by a team from CRE, as well as a team of student volunteers from the College of Staten Island. The student volunteers also served as note-takers for the event. Recruited from the College’s School of Social Work, many were Staten Island residents who experienced Hurricane Sandy and its aftermath first-hand. (See Appendix A for a complete list of attendees.)

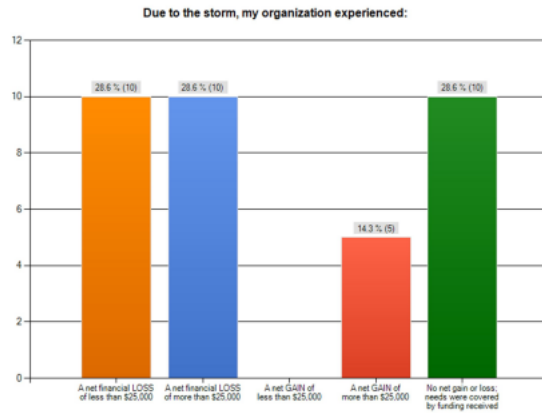
Clarifying Data: Pre-Town Hall Survey

To help set the stage for a rich Town Hall discussion, the planning team designed a survey to capture baseline data on the scope and extent of the storm’s impact on participant organizations. Fifty-six participants completed the survey: 11 reported that they were not directly impacted by the storm; approximately 35 core respondents completed the survey’s in-depth questions.

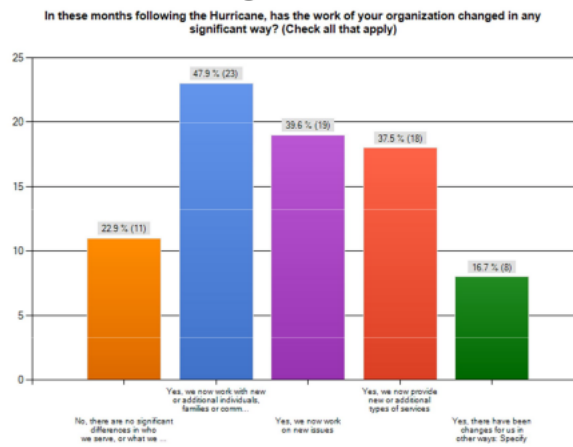
As a result of the storm, core respondents reported increased demand for services...



... a range of net financial losses (and some gains):



... and that the work of their organizations has been changed in significant ways:



(Graphics excerpted from Community Resource Exchange’s survey report, *Impact of Hurricane Sandy on Staten Island Nonprofits*. See Appendix B for complete report.)

THE TOWN HALL DISCUSSION

The Town Hall opened with an official welcome from Betsy Dubovsky and Vin Lenza, on behalf of The Staten Island Foundation and Staten Island Not-for-Profit Association respectively. Betsy reiterated the goal for the day - “to build greater understanding about the impact of Hurricane Sandy on Staten Island-based nonprofits, with a focus on their infrastructure and capacity” – recognized the heroic efforts of so many in the room to reach and serve storm survivors, and noted that the Foundation is committed to supporting the disaster-related capacity building efforts and resilience of Staten Island nonprofits. Vin invited participants to fully engage in the Town Hall, to reflect and share lessons learned, and to draw strength from the breadth of attendees’ experience, knowledge, capacity and perseverance.

Holly Delany Cole presented key findings from the pre-Town Hall survey, and invited participants to indicate by a show of hands whether they were attending as participants or listeners. All attendees then broke out into small groups, comprised of participants, listeners, a facilitator and a recorder, to take a deeper dive.

Participants Discuss

The small-group discussions – shared via report-outs to the full group of attendees – were thoughtful and varied, and crystallized common themes. Participants reflected on challenges, strengths and preparedness as follows:

Challenges:

1) What got in your way of being effective post-storm – whether in the recovery efforts or continuing your work with your core constituency and mission?

- Massive telecommunications breakdown affected our personnel, sites *and* clients (and sometimes we didn't know how to reach them).
- Access to our facility was blocked for days after the storm.
- We were torn between hewing to our (regular) mission, and responding to immediate needs.
- Confusion about the role of the public sector during relief, no real knowledge or experience here to inform our efforts.
- Our staff were personally affected by the storm; we needed to take care of them as well as our clients.
- Lack of coordination – we did not have adequate evacuation or emergency plans in place.
- We didn't know how to help... there seemed to be a great divergence: some organizations were relatively unaffected, but didn't know what was needed or how to provide assistance.

Strengths:

2) What facilitated your ability to be effective post-storm?

- Our relationships. I knew who I could count on, and call on, to get certain things done.
- Strong networks. I was able to harness my network to mobilize a range of community resources.
- Knowledgeable peers ready to provide whatever assistance they could (including one who advised: put your phone records in the cloud, immediately).

- We played to our strengths, and were able to do more of what we always (already) do.
- Our staff! I am in awe of how dedicated, courageous and compassionate they are.
- Lack of coordination was a weakness, yes. But the good news is: if this group of participants is representative of this community, there is a lot of ingenuity, leadership and potential here.

Preparedness:

3) What are the ways that we nonprofits can better prepare ourselves for the next disaster, as individual organizations and as a community of organizations?

- Education and planning in our own agencies, so we're better prepared to help our clients and community.
- Communications plans, at the individual and community level.
- We need continuity plans, and to backup essential documents in the cloud.
- Community hubs in neighborhoods, to better coordinate after the next disaster.
- Centralized data – so we could collectively understand what is coming in, and where are gaps. Also some kind of self-register database to register survivor needs (eg patients who need oxygen).
- A directory of evacuation centers, police, food pantries – for local residents. So folks know where to go to get what they need.
- With better warning systems in place, we could stockpile commodities (food, water, generators).
- The NYC Office of Emergency Management should open an office on Staten Island.
- We should better utilize resources like our local colleges and radio.
- Next time, we need to recognize leaders of all kinds, faster – whether they have a “nameplate” or not.
- Housing for volunteers is a big gap.
- Unrestricted funds – to cover administrative costs in the wake of a disaster.
- Loosening of restrictions on use of funds already allocated – so we could use our community buses for another purpose, for instance.
- Unrestricted funds – would give us the flexibility we need in order to plan.
- We need to get to know our advocacy partners better, to influence policy.
- FEMA requirements must be made more intelligible.
- We need to know more about government roles, processes, contracts - at the local level, on Staten Island.
- Make sure we are not just talking to ourselves – but that we are at the table when public sector planning/policymaking is happening.
- Get more media coverage of Staten Island issues in regional, national media.

4) How does your organization want to be positioned come the next disaster? What do you want to be ready to do?

- We will definitely be purchasing backup generators (though most funders won't help us pay for them).
- Every organization needs disaster plans: backup for IT/communications/ reaching volunteers/storage/collaborating across programs and services. And we need to revisit and update these plans regularly.
- We can talk in broad strokes about preparation, but there are special subsector needs to consider too.
- We will be addressing sub-communities that have special needs, compiling lists of clients with special needs, medications, etc.
- We'd like to be ready with more mobile medical units.
- A resource hub to map information – what are government agencies doing, and how to find them. Is there a “portal” to get, eg, SBA information?
- Let's strengthen our coordinating mechanisms. Right now, we have no consensus on what a unified response, across organizations, might look like.
- I'd like to create a “buddy system” across my and two other agencies.
- We need to have a mindshift on fundraising, to change how we think about it. As of now, we are not covering the true costs of programs, and we are definitely not getting the support we need to strengthen the organization.
- I want our board to be engaged in our organization's preparedness planning! They need to be involved and engaged.

Participants noted how highly they valued the opportunity to engage in the Town Hall – to carve out some space for themselves, to articulate what they're thinking about, to connect with colleagues and get context on where they “are” in their own disaster recovery. A key underlying theme among participants was relationships: many noted that as a result of the storm, they either made the most of existing relationships, developed new relationships, or transformed existing relationships.

Strikingly, organizations *not* directly involved in post-storm relief and recovery were also eager to clarify their roles in relief and recovery, and to find a way to help going forward – a call to SIFNPA members and the larger community to envision what a whole community or “ecosystem” response would look like, and could accomplish with and for the borough's most vulnerable storm survivors.

The participant portion of the Town Hall concluded with Betsy Dubovsky thanking all for sharing their best thinking and recommendations, which may have resonance within and beyond Staten Island.

Listeners Debrief

Listeners then convened as a sub-group over lunch, to reflect on what they had heard in the course of the Town Hall. Many noted that relationships matter, especially in times of emergency; they can enhance capacity to be responsive, and to work well together in hard times. Listeners observed the profoundly positive, affirmative role relationships played in Staten Island's nonprofit ecosystem.

Several listeners were struck by the clear desire to shift from individual preparedness to organizational preparedness and community resiliency – underscored by a need for better coordination, communication, training and long-term sustainability. One listener said, “We have to sit around the table together to get to a better level of coordination. Before today, we hadn't found that table yet. This meeting is an important first step.”

Another listener, clearly moved, noted, “Today we experienced: ‘Here is Staten Island. It is an island, geographically, and with a nuanced survival mindset/reality that is unique.’ So that makes disaster planning here a little different. We're engaging in disaster preparedness conversations city-wide... but here, it's a little different. We need to ensure that the borough's unique ‘frame’ is grafted onto policy realities.”

Listeners observed:

- Staten Island is a bounded system, with unique capacity and needs, relative to other boroughs.
- That system encompasses robust networks – of relationships, resources, knowledge, execution capacity.
- Among participants, there is a clear articulation of shared needs – at the organization and sector levels.
- Networks were activated post-storm in new ways, though ramp-up was hampered by fragmentation in communications, knowledge, regulations, funding restrictions.
- A common thread: lack of communication systems/coordination.
- Given the strength of relationships and networks here, we should be supporting training efforts to better self-organize after disasters. How to flatten that curve?
- Disaster preparedness takes time, and resources. It has to be accessible, right-sized to the organization, and kept current.
- A kind of "typology" of activity by participants had emerged: Hold (hunker down on mission); Extend (hold on to mission, and do a little more); Transform (stop day-to-day mission and provide disaster assistance).
- Together, we need to address twin nonprofit challenges: leadership to advance a sector-wide action plan, and capacity to strengthen the distributed/self-organized nature of the sector.

- Engaging the public sector is critical. Without question, government is the "tip of the spear" post-disaster, with a scale of resources and capacity way beyond other sectors. Yet just three reps at today's Town Hall; Staten Island's nonprofit sector has to seek out or create opportunities to "be at the table."
- In a disaster, I was surprised to learn, government isn't going to come in and tell us what to do: we need to do it, to find our way together.
- The colleges in the borough are an incredible resource, let's figure out how to mobilize that resource, and students, better.
- I was struck by how many are still wrestling with getting their facilities up and running.
- We could help nonprofits post-disaster by advocating and educating funders of all kinds (private, philanthropic and public sectors): in the aftermath of disaster, flexible funding is critical! And funders need to recognize that grantees also need additional organizational support (staff, administration, general operational support) to handle new disaster (program) support effectively.

In closing, listeners encouraged The Staten Island Foundation to continue to be a "portal for folks outside the borough on who is doing what. You've done that so well. Keep us engaged as ambassadors for what you're doing. We'll be your champions."

Vin Lenza thanked listeners for reinforcing, and expanding on, the direction of SINFPA's "Staten Island Response to Disaster Coalition," observing that nonprofits engage in these ideas out of genuine, deep concern for the future. Practically speaking, he said, "We must figure this out. "

Betsy Dubovsky concluded by noting that Hurricane Sandy "exposed our vulnerabilities, and our strengths" – and that the Town Hall discussion was an important step in coming together to build on those strengths for our community, certainly, and also perhaps for the rest of the country.

KEY TAKEAWAYS & ACTION STEPS

Key Takeaways

The Town Hall provided participants and listeners alike – nonprofits, private and public grantmaking institutions, policy makers and other advocates who have an interest in seeing the Staten Island community recover well – with an important, much-needed opportunity to tell their stories and, with colleagues, to reflect on their disaster experiences to date.

On Staten Island, relationships matter, especially in times of emergency; they enhanced the ability of many nonprofits to be responsive, and to work together well in hard times. The participants' discussion powerfully affirmed the positive role of relationships in the borough's nonprofit ecosystem.

Organizations not directly involved in post-storm relief and recovery are nonetheless eager to clarify their roles in relief and recovery, and to find a way to help going forward – a call to SIFNPA members and larger community to envision what a whole community or “ecosystem” response would look like, and could accomplish with and for the borough's most vulnerable storm survivors.

For the “Response to Disaster Coalition,” the Town Hall provided essential data on the borough's nonprofit sector needs and aspirations, and crystallized the work ahead. SIFNPA now has a more solid platform for implementation, with clear guidance on where to begin investing resources.

Key points, as summarized by Vin Lenza of SIFNPA:

June 19th Town Hall

Key Reported Points

- Communication among and between not-for-profit and civic agencies before, during and after a community crisis were a common point of discussion among almost all of the small group discussions. Many of the Town Hall participants felt that the lack of communication between organizations led to difficulties in understanding the resources and capabilities that their colleagues at other organizations were able to marshal in order to effectively respond to the needs of the individuals they were charged with serving.

The scope of communications needs discussed ranged from direct technical needs of knowing what kinds of communications devices to purchase so that staff could talk with each other as crises unfolded, to having a directory of those to be contacted in the event of crisis at respective organizations to how to utilize mass-media outlets most effectively when communicating with the entirety of the Borough's impacted communities.
- The necessity of having competent disaster plans in place was also a key finding of many of the small groups. Even those organizations that had disaster plans in place prior to Sandy felt that the scope of the disaster, as well as the impacts that the disaster had on their internal and staff operations, went well beyond the contingencies for which they had planned. New plans that outline both how an organization will respond to long, large scale impacts like extended power outages, inaccessibility of buildings, or inability of staff to report to their worksites are necessary.
- Several of the discussion groups reported on the idea of designating a central command center that would serve as the pre-agreed “hub” of activity in the event that the not-for-profit sector needed to mobilize to respond to a community crisis. This center would be determined in advance of any disasters and would become a location at which the not-for-profit community would agree to convene, store materials, coordinate response activities, and potentially provide work spaces to groups that were unable to operate in their own existing facilities.
- The issue of training was one that was also often mentioned during the small group conversations. Participants were clear that they felt that there were distinct internal training needs that needed to be arranged in order to address the capacity gaps present in their respective organizations, including trainings on disaster preparedness and response as well as trainings on disaster communications and on maintaining existing operations while handling dramatically increased need from among impacted communities.

The Town Hall discussions have served as a launching point for the Coalition, which subsequently established a Task Force to act on these findings. As a first step, it has completed an initial scan of the training landscape and is actively clarifying members' training goals, capabilities and objectives to guide selection and implementation of a rigorous suite of trainings.

LOOKING AHEAD

As the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Sandy looms, the commitment of Staten Island's nonprofit sector is stronger than ever. Many had devastating experiences during and after the storm, yet kept going – united by a common sense of place, and purpose. Even those not directly impacted by the storm feel, strongly, part of this community, and want to play a supportive role in recovery, however big or small, direct or indirect. The Town Hall helped to lift up and strengthen a mindset – not only are there strong *parts* here, but an ecosystem of good organizations and people gearing up to take their work to the next level.

In short, this is a community that is on the cusp of readiness, exploring new ways to build on and leverage all of its assets to go beyond the traditional constraints of individual grants, initiatives or organizations to more deeply engage stakeholders, test multiple approaches and aggregate or help coordinate resources from many sources. Along the way, they are forging promising new pathways for innovation. The clearest example of this is SINFPA's "Response to Disaster Coalition." Though in its earliest stages, the Coalition sees potential to influence the entire ecosystem in which it does its work; by harnessing relationships and complementary resources to effect entire systems, the Coalition hopes to strengthen the growth, resilience and reach of nonprofits in the borough for the long term.

Town Hall Attendees

Participants:

Name	Organization
Adena Long	NYC Parks & Recreation
Anthony DeFazio	SCORE-Staten Island
Beverly Neuhaus	Richmond Senior Services, Inc.
Bracha Cabot	Council of Jewish Organizations in S.I
Carol Dunn*	SI Inter Agency Council for Aging
David Roshetar	Staten Island University Hospital
David Sorkin*	Jewish Community Center of Staten Island
Denise Bloise	American Red Cross Greater NY Region
Derek Tabacco	Guyon Rescue
Diane Arneth*	Community Health Action of Staten Island
Fern Zagor	Staten Island Mental Health Society, Inc.
Gail Driscoll	American Red Cross
Genevieve Benoit	A Very Special Place, Inc.
Gloria Garcia	College of Staten Island
Gonzalo Mercado	El Centro del Inmigrante
Gus Haus	Port Richmond CERT
Henry Thompson	Community Health Center of Richmond, Inc.
Jaclyn Stoll	Project Hospitality
Janice Monger	Alice Austen House
Joanne Gerenser	Eden II Programs
Karen Jackson	Project Hospitality
Kate Mackenzie	City Harvest
Kathleen Bielsa	Northfield CDC
Katina Johnstone	Kayak Staten Island
Linda Baran	Staten Island Chamber of Commerce
Linda Dianto	National Lighthouse Museum
Lourdes Ferrer	Catholic Charities
Lynn Kelly	Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden
Malissa Priebe	Art Lab, Inc.
Margaret Crotty	Partnership with Children
Maria Cirillo	Busy Beach Day Care Center Inc.
Meg Ventrudo	Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art
Melanie Franklin Cohn	Staten Island Arts
Melissa McCrumb	Make the Road New York
Nikki Odlivak	Community Agency for Senior Citizens, Inc. (CASC)
Niles French	Historic Richmond Town
Pablo Vengoechen*	SIimages
Patricia Pugliese	Police Athletic League (PAL)
Patrick Mooney	Food Bank For New York City
Ralph Pagan	Seek/CSI

Rev. Judy L. Brown	African Refuge Inc.
Rich Flanagan*	College of Staten Island
Roseann Holt	Meals on Wheels of Staten Island
Sara Diaz	JBFCS Project Hope
Stephen Preskill*	Wagner College
Terry Troia	Project Hospitality
Theresa Folino	Busy Beacon Day Care Center
Thomas McDonough	Tunnel To Towers
Tom Boyland*	SIimages
Tom Cunsolo	Midland Breach Alliance
Ziesha Norris	Project Hope

Listeners:

Adriana Akers	HUD Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force
Alex Lutz	American Red Cross in Greater New York
Allan Weissglass	The Staten Island Foundation
Brian Byrd	New York State Health Foundation
Danny Rosenthal	Human Services Council
Dee Minter	Federal Emergency Management Agency
Fatima Shama	NYC Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs
Irfan Hasan	New York Community Trust
Isabella Cardona	NYC Mayor's Recovery Office
Juanita Ayala Vargas	United Way of NYC
Justin Bowman	Federal Emergency Management Agency
Kallin Brooks	National Center for Disaster Preparedness, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University
Kathleen Kennedy	New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Linda Manley	Lawyers Alliance of New York
Maria Mottola	New York Foundation
Paul Duffy	Governor's Office
Rabbi Bob Kaplan	CAUSE NY-Jewish Community Relations Council of New York
Salvatore Ingravallo	Federal Emergency Management Agency

Small Group Facilitators:

Adrienne Abbate	SI Partnership for Community Wellness
Carolyn Sauvage Mar	Community Resource Exchange
Karen Erdos	Community Resource Exchange
Lacey Sloane*	College of Staten Island, Social Work Program
Laura Jean Watters*	The Staten Island Foundation
Pavitra Menon	Community Resource Exchange
Randall Quan	Community Resource Exchange
Vicki Roitman	JCC of Staten Island

Student Volunteers:

Claire Ferry	College of Staten Island, Social Work program
Damian Leibold	College of Staten Island, Social Work program
Jared Cohen	Community Resource Exchange
John Felci	College of Staten Island, Social Work program
Luiza Kayumova	College of Staten Island, Social Work program
Melissa Mak	College of Staten Island, Social Work program
Violet Epelman	College of Staten Island, Social Work program
Yin Fung	College of Staten Island, Social Work program

Town Hall Planners:

Betsy Dubovsky*	The Staten Island Foundation
Dara Major*	Dara Major Philanthropy Consulting
Holly Delany Cole	Community Resource Exchange
Vin Lenza*	Staten Island Not-for-Profit Association

*Also served as Listeners.

Impact of Hurricane Sandy on Staten Island Nonprofits

A Town Hall Event

Prepared by Community Resource Exchange

7/30/2013

Introduction

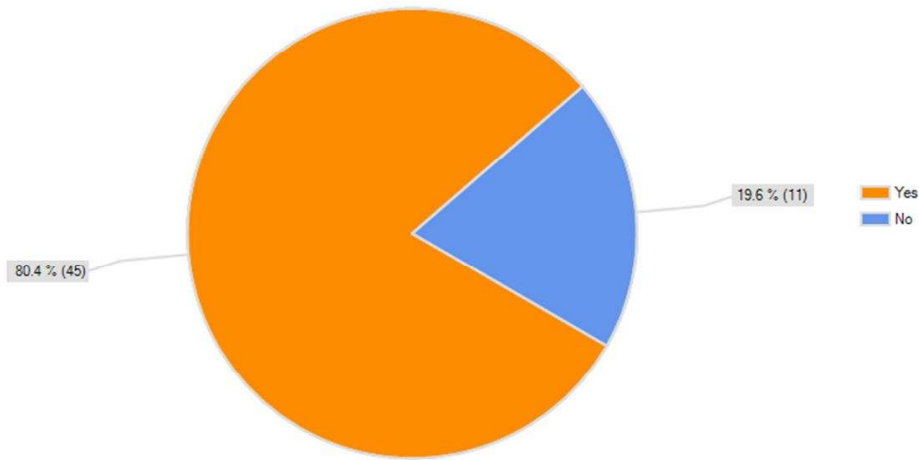
On June 19, 2013, The Staten Island Foundation and the Staten Island Not-For-Profit Association (SINFPA) co-sponsored a town hall at the College of Staten Island whose purpose was to build greater understanding about the impact of Hurricane Sandy on Staten Island-based nonprofits. The event's conversations were to specifically focus on the storm's impact on nonprofit infrastructure and capacity.

The fifty-six Staten Island based nonprofits which registered for the town hall completed a brief survey as part of the process. The survey was designed to provide town hall conveners with background that enabled them to organize the event's conversations well as well as to provide initial data to event participants and beyond about the impact of the Hurricane on Staten Island nonprofits.

The following report provides a summary of the key data offered by nonprofit registrants. It should be noted that many of the survey questions were designed specifically to capture information about the experience of nonprofits which **were affected by Hurricane Sandy**. At least 11 conference registrants indicated that they were not impacted by the storm, and as such, within the survey, they were directed to answer just a few select questions. A handful of other registrants, while affected by the storm, chose not to respond to all of the questions asked. As such, for questions related to storm impact, the survey reports most consistently on the experience of about 35 - 38 nonprofits whose representatives completed the survey fully.

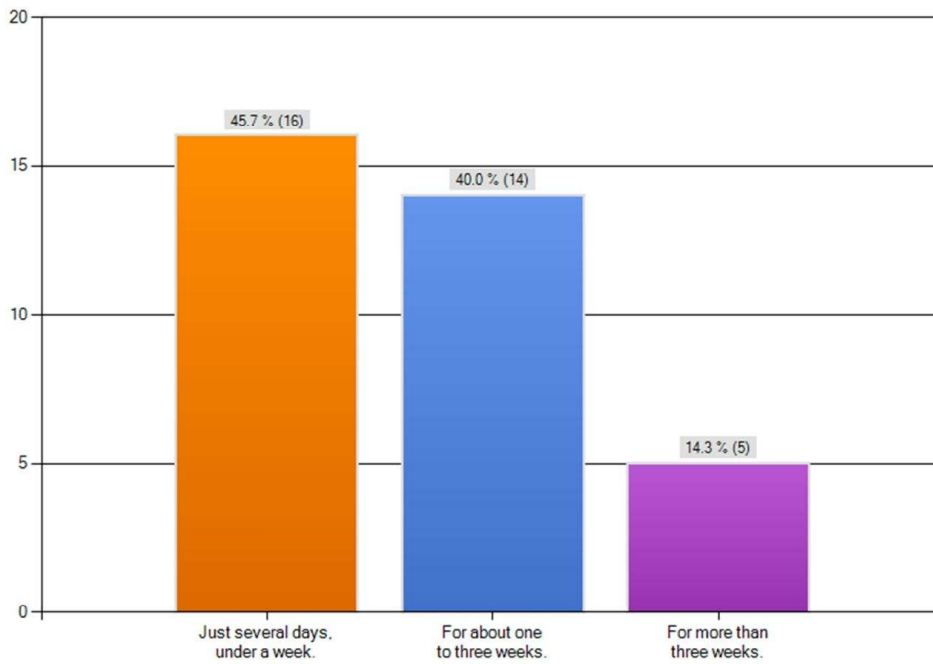
Questions 1 & 2:

Was your Organization Impacted by Hurricane Sandy?



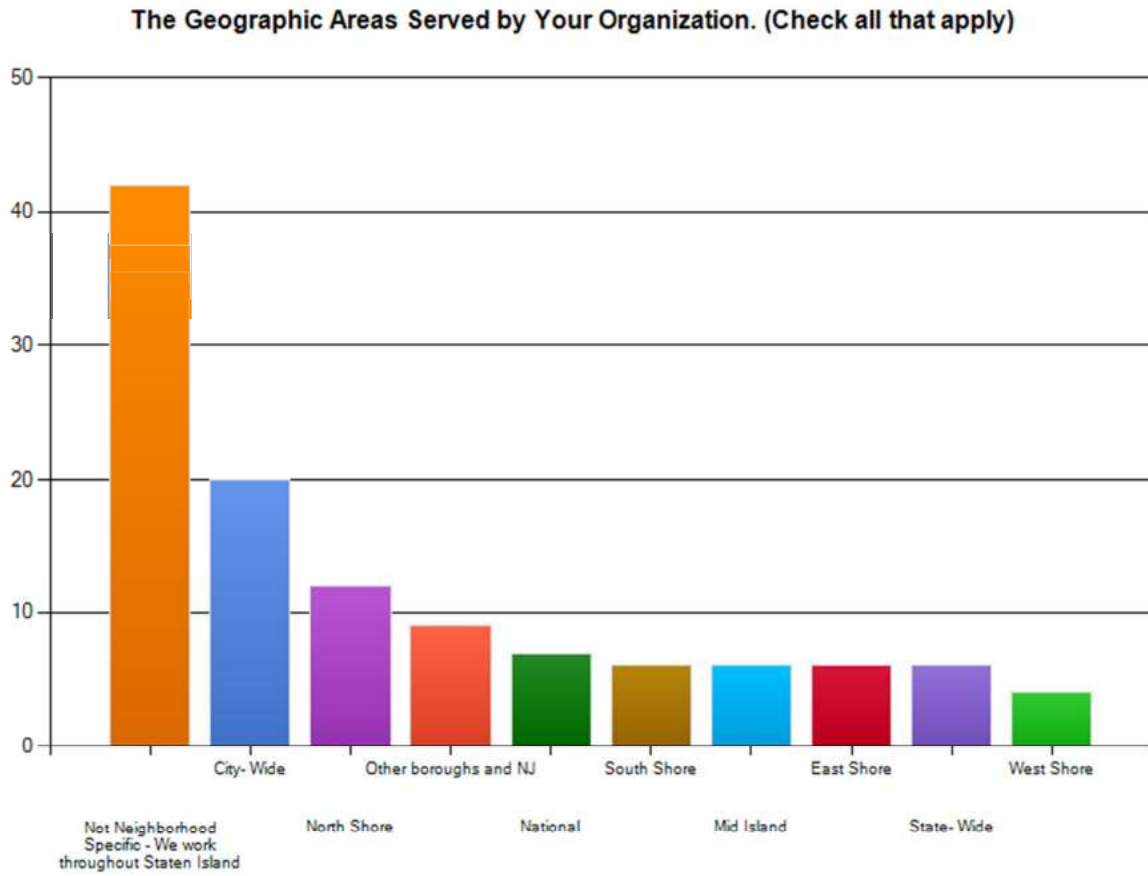
N=55

If yes, the organization was closed and/ or services were interrupted for:



N=35

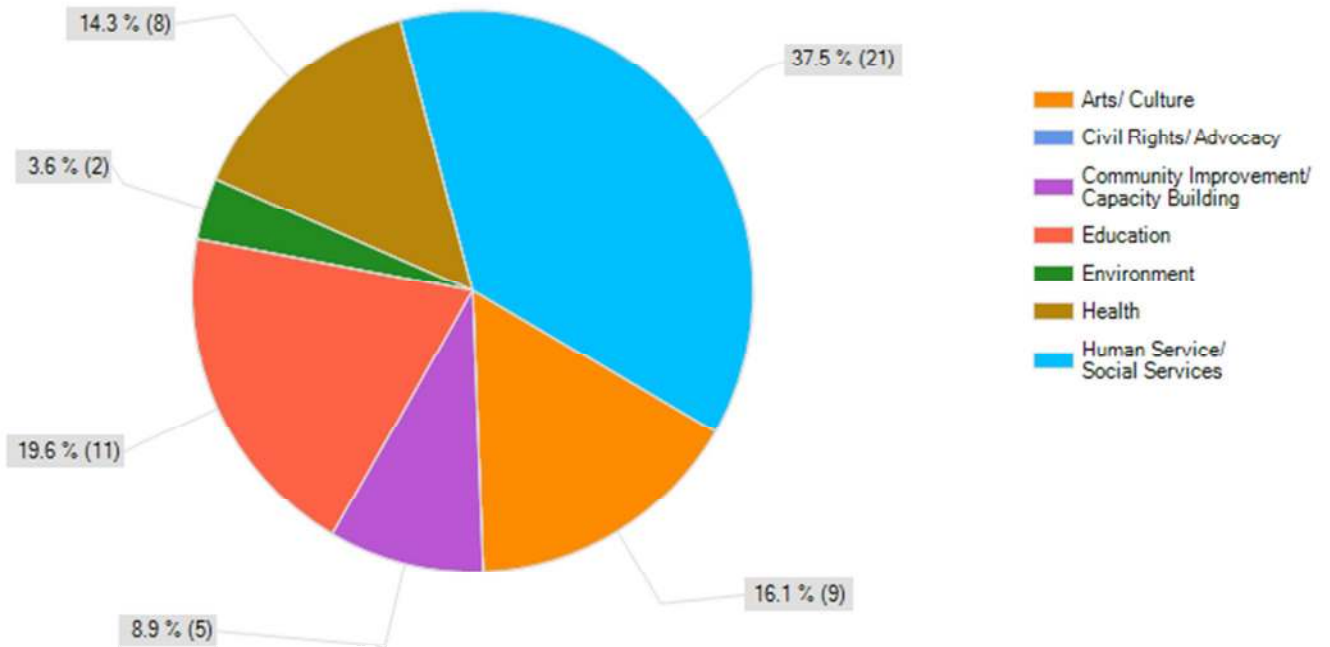
Question 2:



N=56

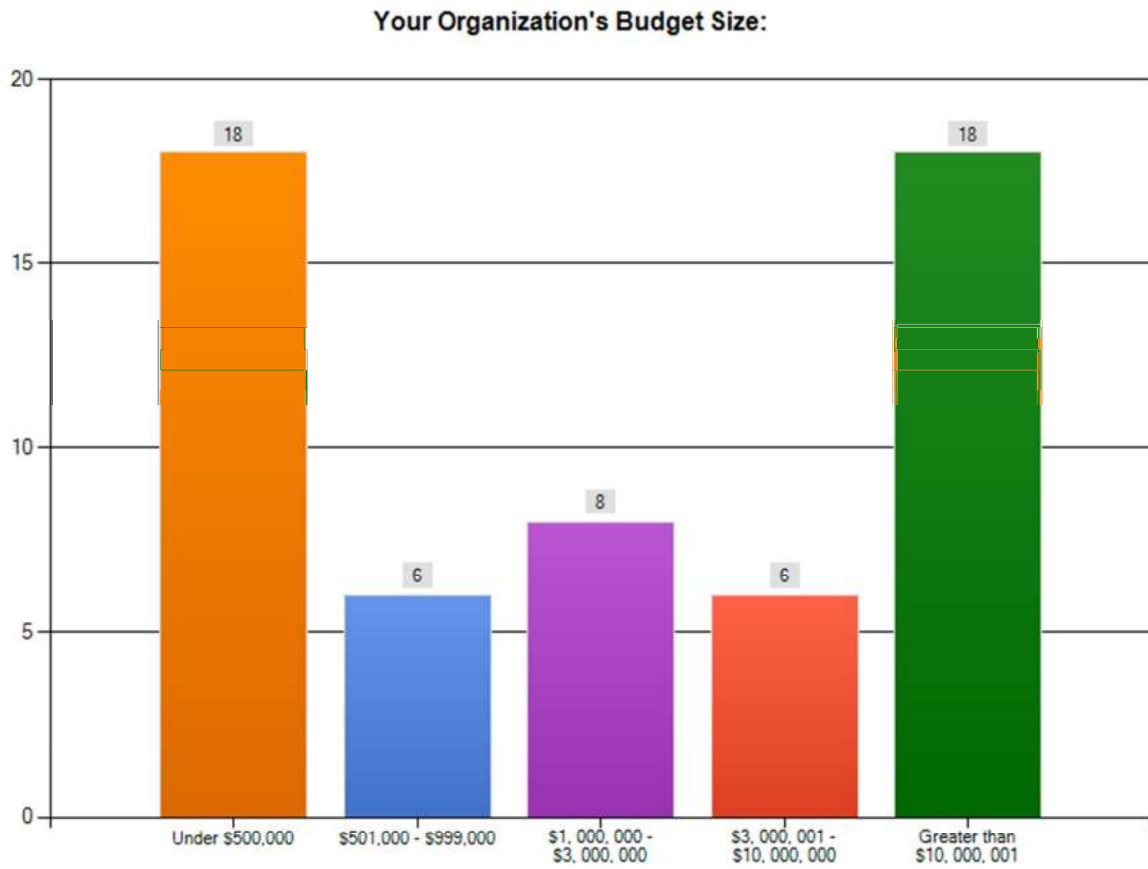
Question 3:

What is the main subject category in which your organization works?



N=56

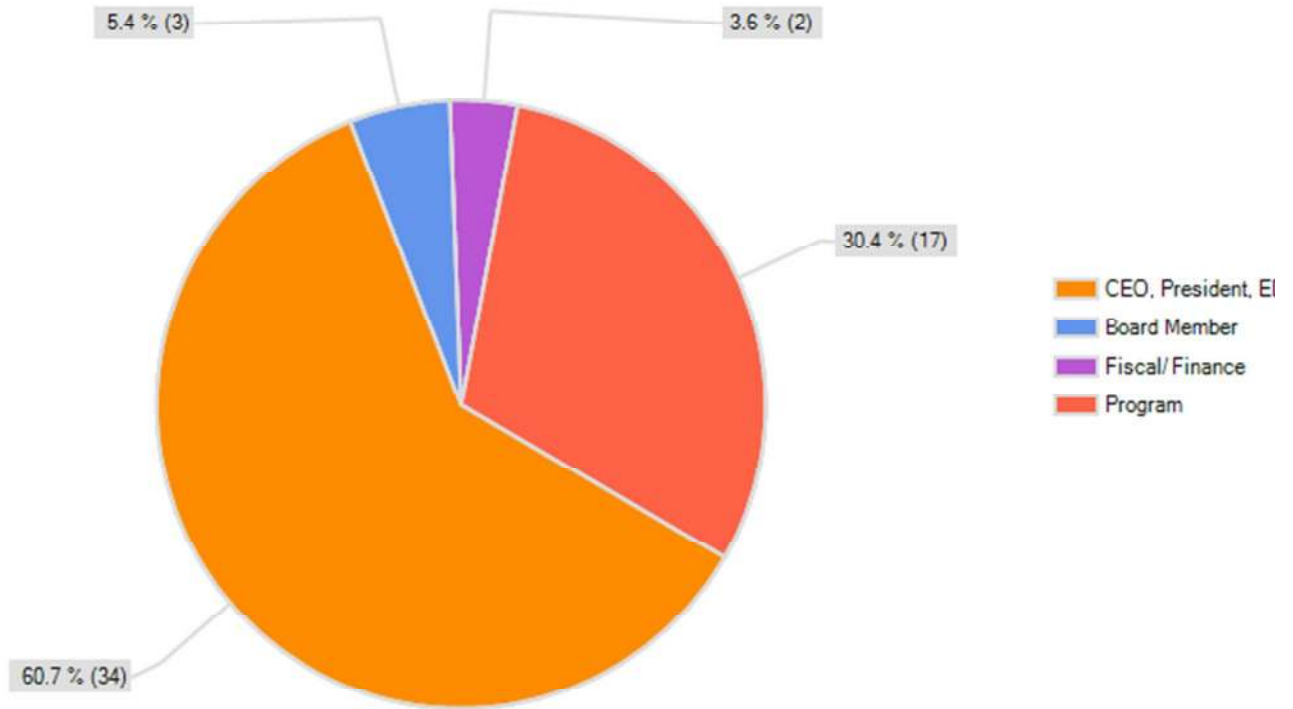
Question 4:



N=56

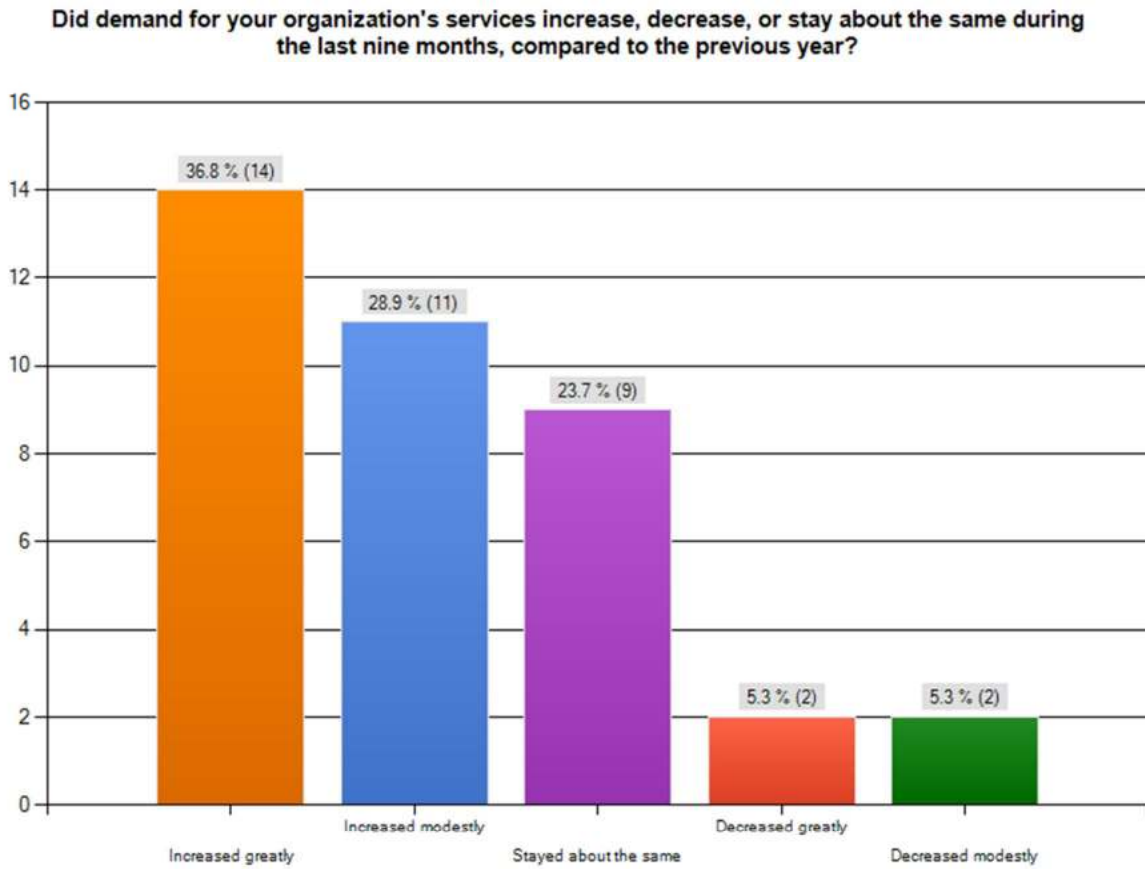
Question 5:

For classification purposes, what is your primary responsibility with your organization?



N=56

Question 6:



N=38

Question 7: How did Hurricane Sandy affect your organization's ability to help your core constituency and to carry out your core mission?

- Hurricane Sandy impacted PAL after school and child care programs in Staten Island, Coney Island and Rockaway. In Rockaway, sites were closed for extended periods and one site in a NYCHA facility was used a distribution hub to the community. In Coney Island, our child care facilities suffered extensive damage. One location has still not reopened. On Staten Island, many of our participants and their families were impacted. One site was closed for several weeks while another began running a Saturday Program that families rebuilding were able to bring their children to.
- While our fleet of trucks was damaged, we quickly found replacements and created a two-track system of food delivery; one for our "normal" deliveries, and one for Sandy deliveries.
- Fewer people were able to take our classes – this compromised our bottom line and our ability to offer free/scholarship services.
- We continued to deliver meals, challenged but undeterred, to our recipient constituency. A number of our volunteer deliverers were unable to deliver and we found alternate volunteers or had others "double-up" with delivery. We needed to search for all of our meal recipients to confirm their location and well-being. Some clients were displaced and were served at other locations. We provided meals to individuals who could not be included under our city contract and we delivered food to these people unfunded. We responded to a request from the PAL to deliver 50 lunches each Saturday to children PAL were supervising whose families were cleaning up and restoring their homes in the storm damaged areas. This operation was also unfunded through the end of April 2013.
- The hurricane damaged the property and inhibited us from having meetings and clients. The hurricane also affected businesses with which we work very closely.
- We experienced moisture & mold damage as well as structure power outages.
- We actually increased our constituency with Project Hope funding.
- Many students and staff were affected, which put some constraints on the ability of the institution to fulfill its mission fully. In congruence with our mission, our school felt a commitment to reach out to the community, as many of our students were affected by the disaster. We think this outreach was able to make an impact.
- We were closed for 4 days, and the phones and internet service was down for a couple weeks after the storm passed.
- Three of buildings damaged by the storm to the extent that they could not be occupied for several weeks. This included agency's executive office building which houses central administration staff.
- We had to evacuate our residents from their homes. Lack of power made it more

difficult for us to provide emergency relief to others.

- Our work was delayed, but our core mission and work were not greatly affected.
- We were unable to have several residences open due to storm damage, our day services were closed for about a week and our new building suffered considerable damage.
- Since our core mission is to help with housing and community service access, the needs of those affected by the hurricane were within our mission.
- Our communication capacities were affected due to down telephone service and electric, which impacted both staff and clients. Senior centers closed due to electric. We had difficulty fueling vehicles in 2nd week. After initial 2-3 week period, things began to settle. Also, in one of our other housing corps, due to cellar and first floor flooding, electricity, heat, and telephone services was interrupted and clean-up and repairs were needed over 1-2 month period.
- Our organization was almost totally crippled.
- Increased demand for service; had to secure outside training of staff.
- We were still able to serve our network.
- Unable to provide childcare services for 3 weeks due to the structural damage of the facility and equipment. We also experienced material damages as a direct result of Hurricane Sandy.
- Many of our members lived in the affected areas. Even one of our staff lost her house. Many immigrants were not accessing relief because of cultural and language barriers. We had to replicate FEMA days to get people to sign up. Also the initial eligibility requirements for federal aid were changing by the day and very confusing.
- We changed our work load to help the community.
- The office closed.
- Our program will not be available in its former capacity until next year.
- The Museum lost power so we were unable to operate. Our annual mailing was sent the week before the storm and response was down 20% compared to last year.
- In addition to the physical damage that Snug Harbor sustained, Hurricane Sandy significantly impacted our earned income revenue. The decrease affected our operations, which ultimately supports the communities that Snug Harbor serves. Snug Harbor saw tour cancellations, a decline in the number of school trips, and a decrease in rentals amounting to a significant loss.
- Office closed, telephone not working, unable to deal with small business owners.

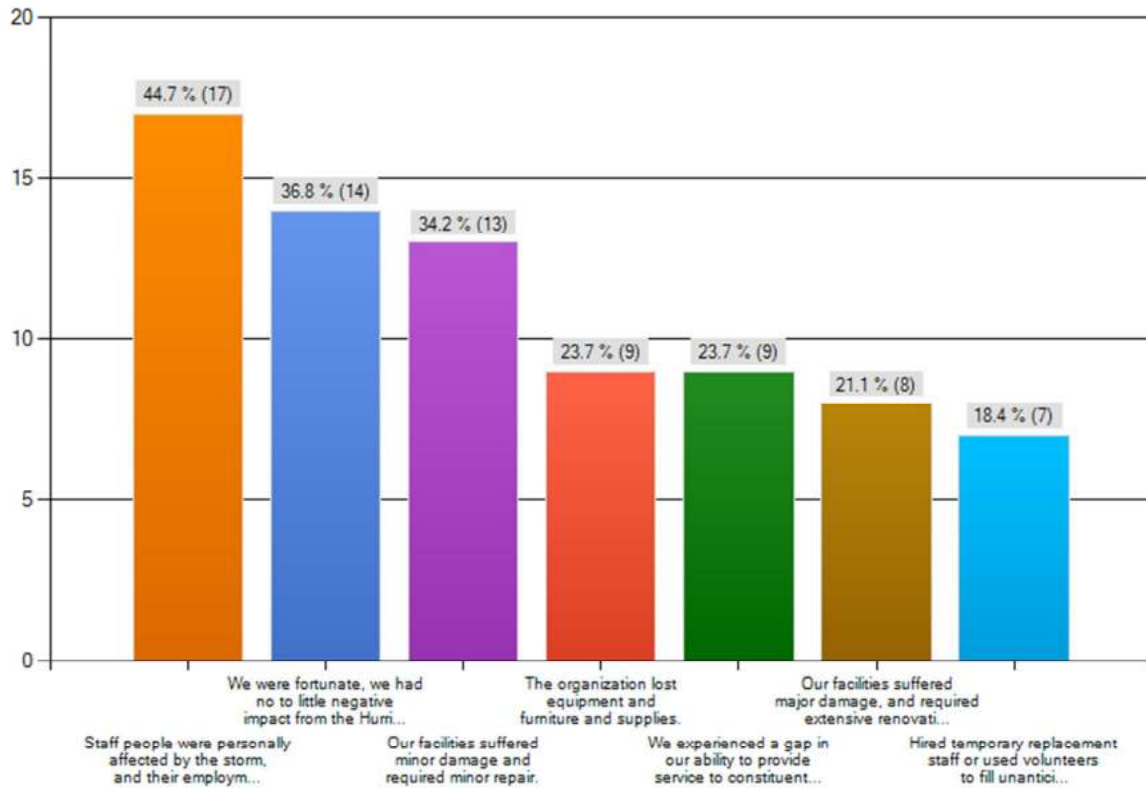
- It was challenging due to lack of basic resources, i.e., gas, electric & transportation.
- It made it more difficult, but staff was able to work remotely and continue some work.
- Because we had no electricity, computer or phone service, we could not reach our clients and could not provide on-site services at our various locations. Staff went out to the field to offer help -- crisis counseling, etc. These were non-reimbursable services. The overall financial loss was approximately \$300,000.
- Our mission was to open a National Lighthouse Museum in summer 2013, but due to future Museum site sustaining \$200,000 in Sandy damage our plans have been put on hold in trying to resolve Sandy damage and a revised targeted hard opening for summer, 2014.
- Regular communication systems were down so it was difficult to contact clients, and treatment services were interrupted for a week due to power failure.
- Our flagship office was without power for 9 days, but we were able to reconstruct many critical services at an alternate location.
- We quickly took on so many cases for Sandy victims that it impeded our ability to do our existing work.

N=35

Note: As indicated by question #1, 19.6% of organizations who registered for the event and took this survey reported they were not impacted by Hurricane Sandy.

Question 8:

What were the specific types of financial and material losses were experienced by your organization as the result of Hurricane Sandy? (Check all that apply)



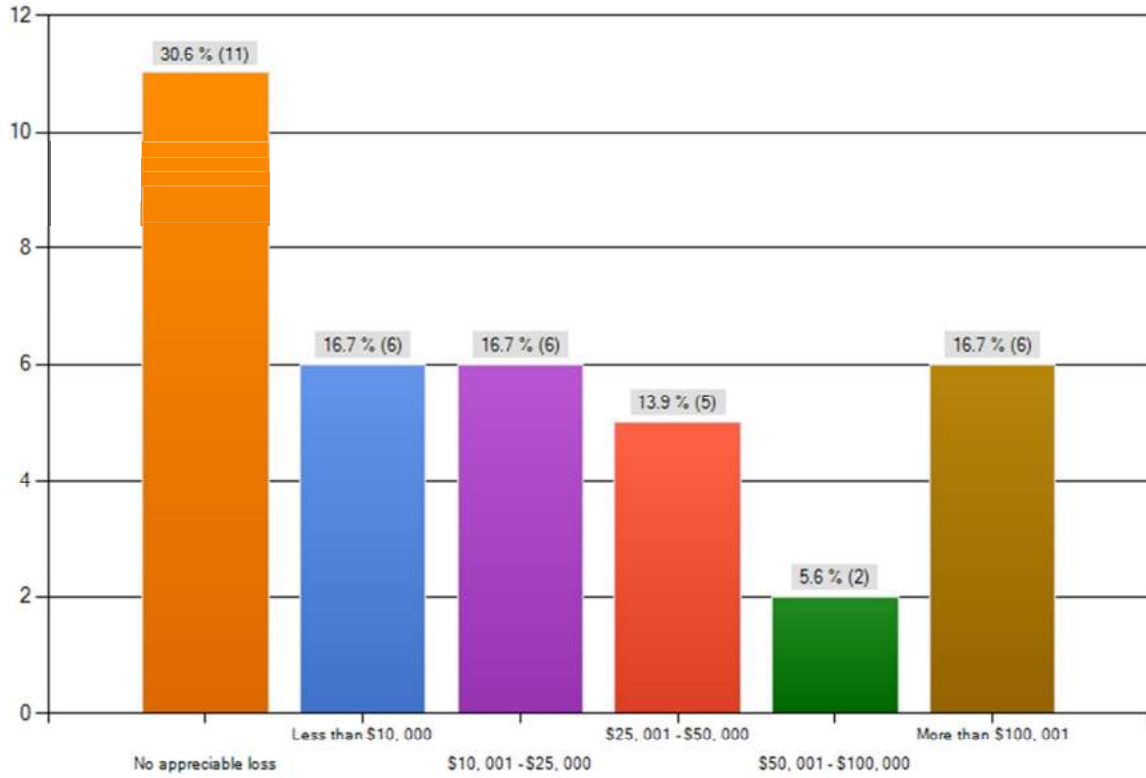
CHOICES

1. Staff people were personally affected by the storm, and their employment with us was interrupted.
2. We were fortunate, we had no to little negative impact from the Hurricane of any type.
3. Our facilities suffered minor damage and required minor repair.
4. We experienced a gap in our ability to provide service to constituents at off-site or secondary locations.
5. The organization lost equipment and furniture and supplies.
6. Our facilities suffered major damage, and required extensive renovations and rebuilding.
7. Hired temporary replacement staff or used volunteers to fill unanticipated staff gaps.

N=38

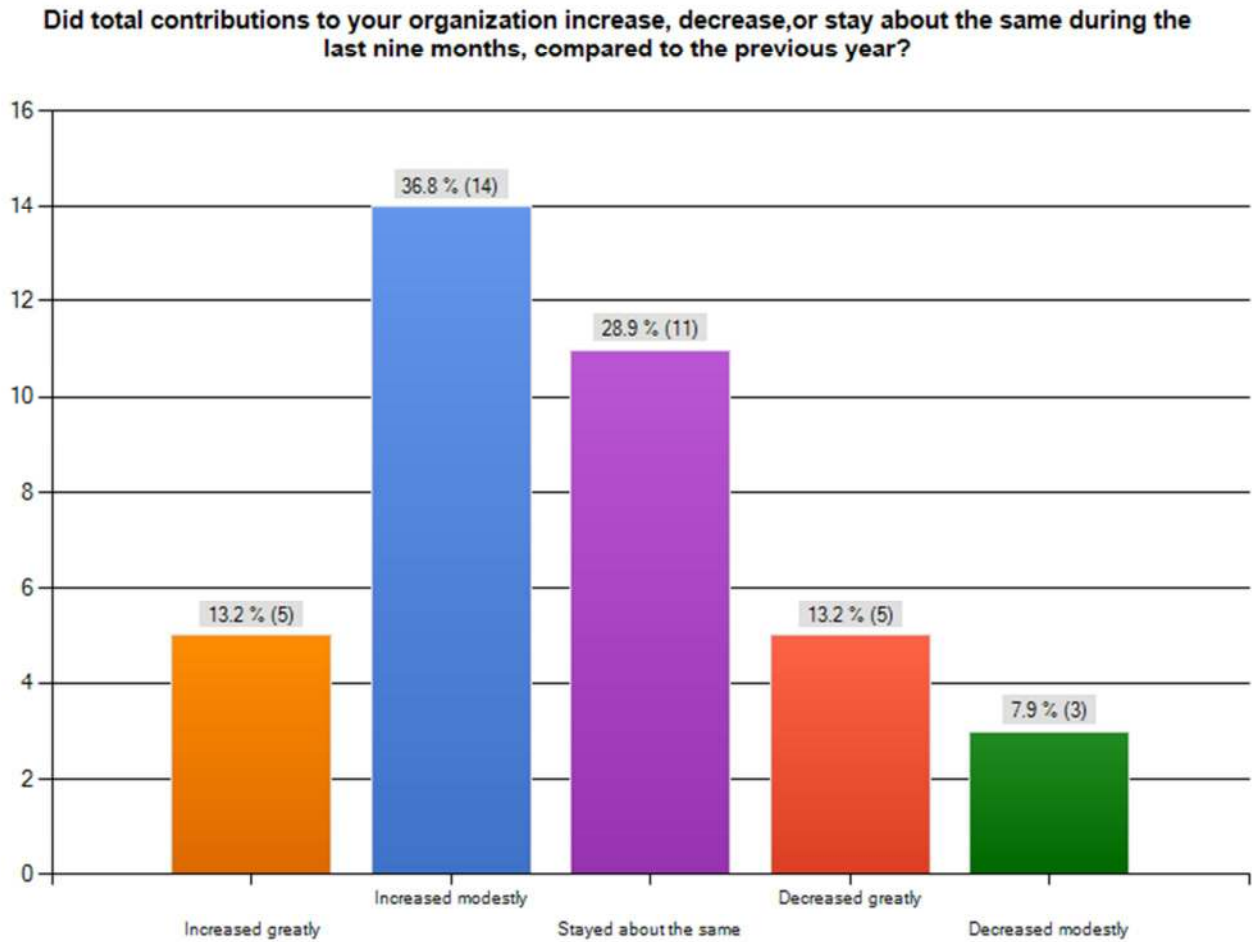
Question 9:

What is your estimate of the to - date total financial loss to your organization due to the Hurricane?



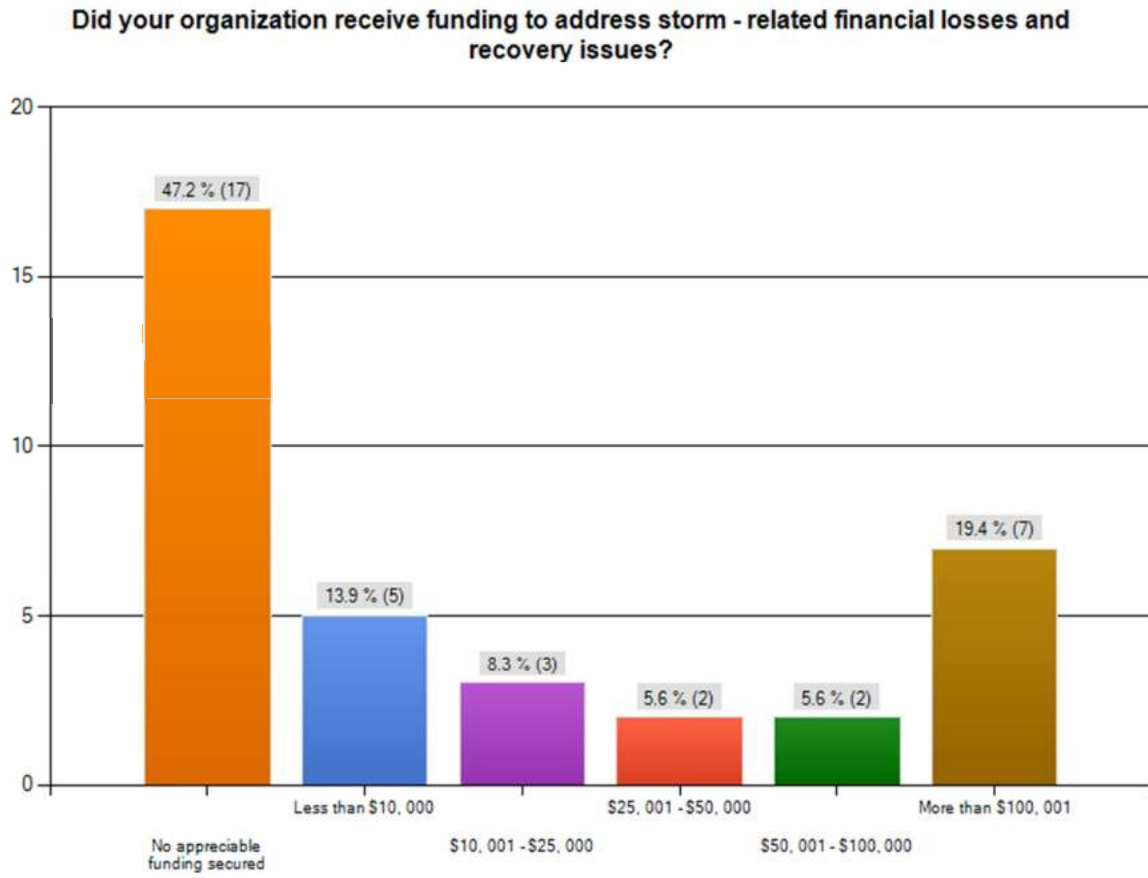
N=36

Question 10:



N=38

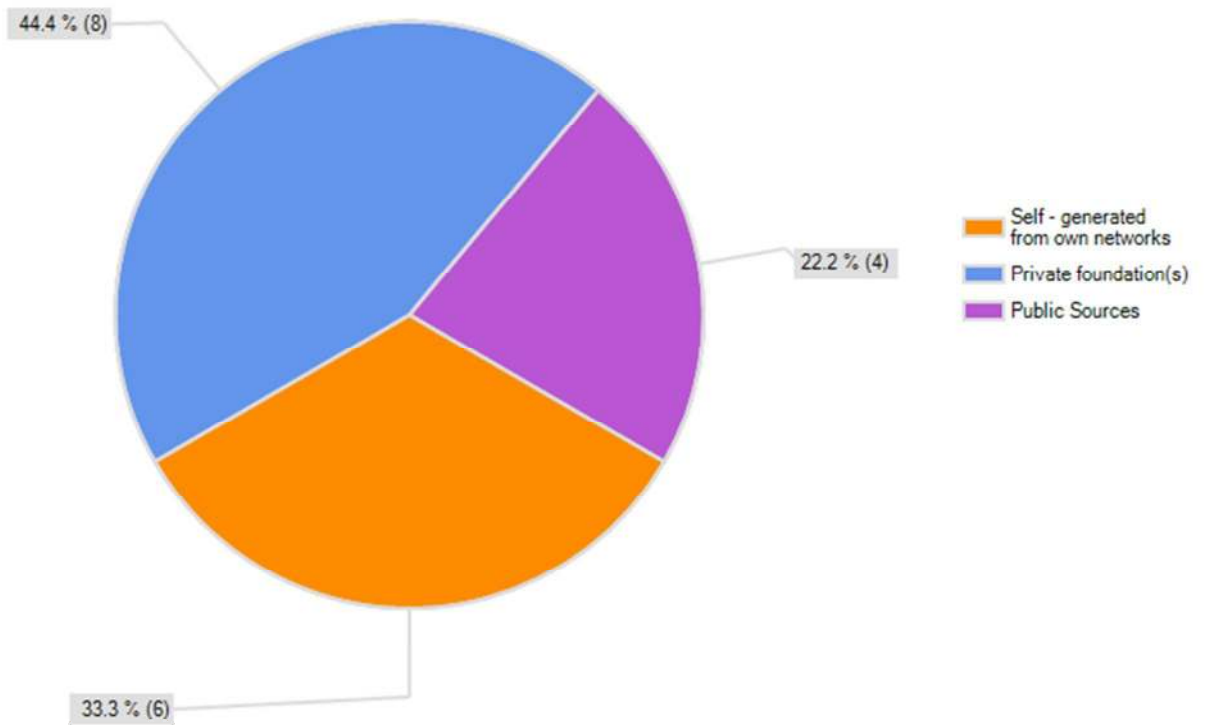
Question 11:



N=36

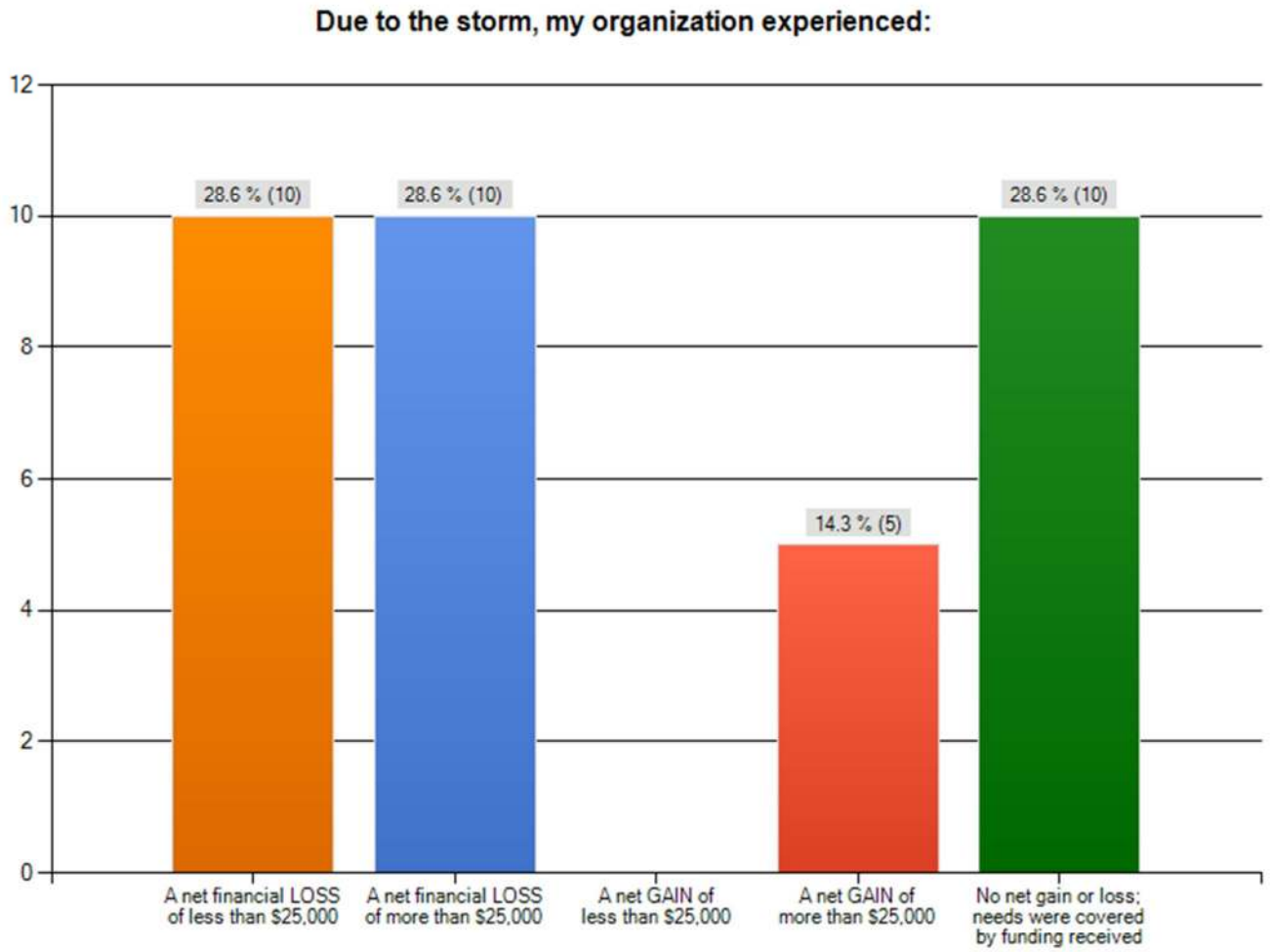
Question 12:

If your organization received funding to address storm - related financial losses and recovery issues, what was the source of those funds?



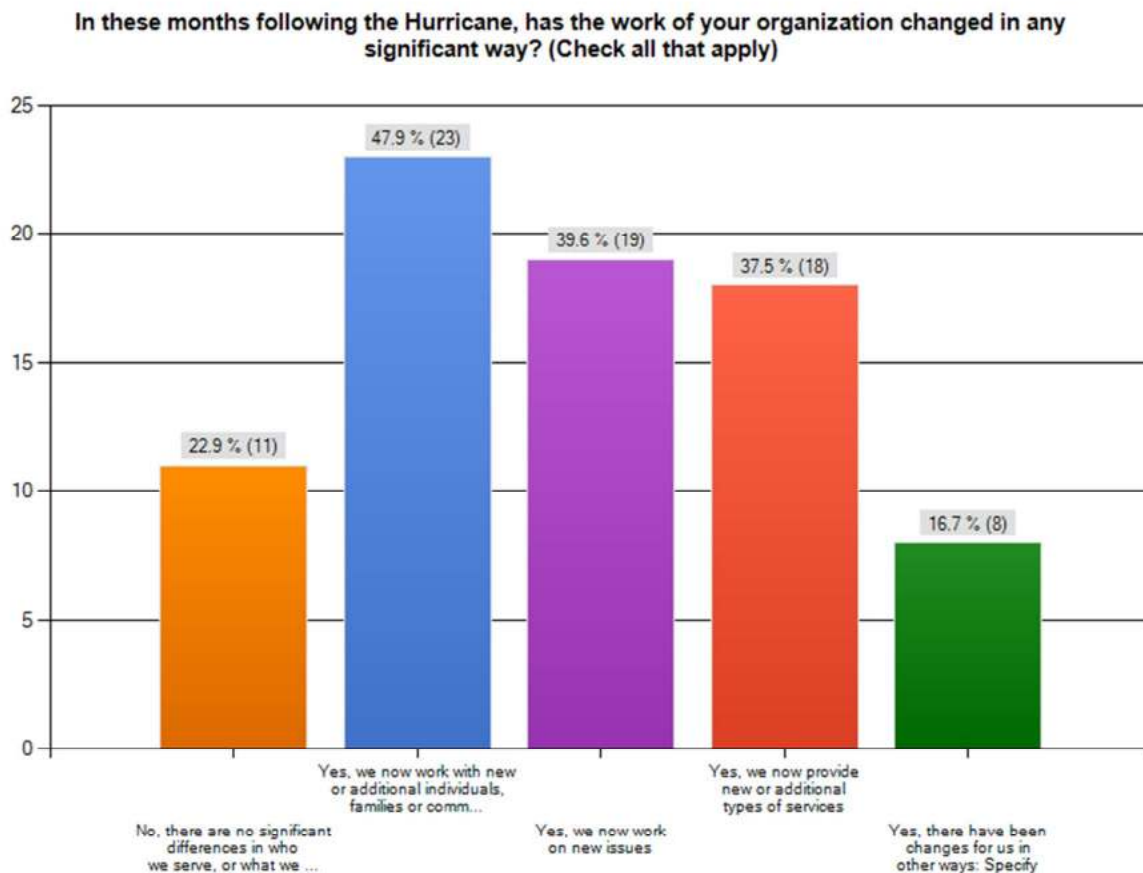
N=18 (of 19)

Question 13:



N=35

Question 14:



CHOICES:

Blue: Yes, we now work with new or additional individuals, families or communities

Orange: No, there are no significant differences in who we serve, or what we focus on or deliver now, as compared to before Hurricane Sandy.

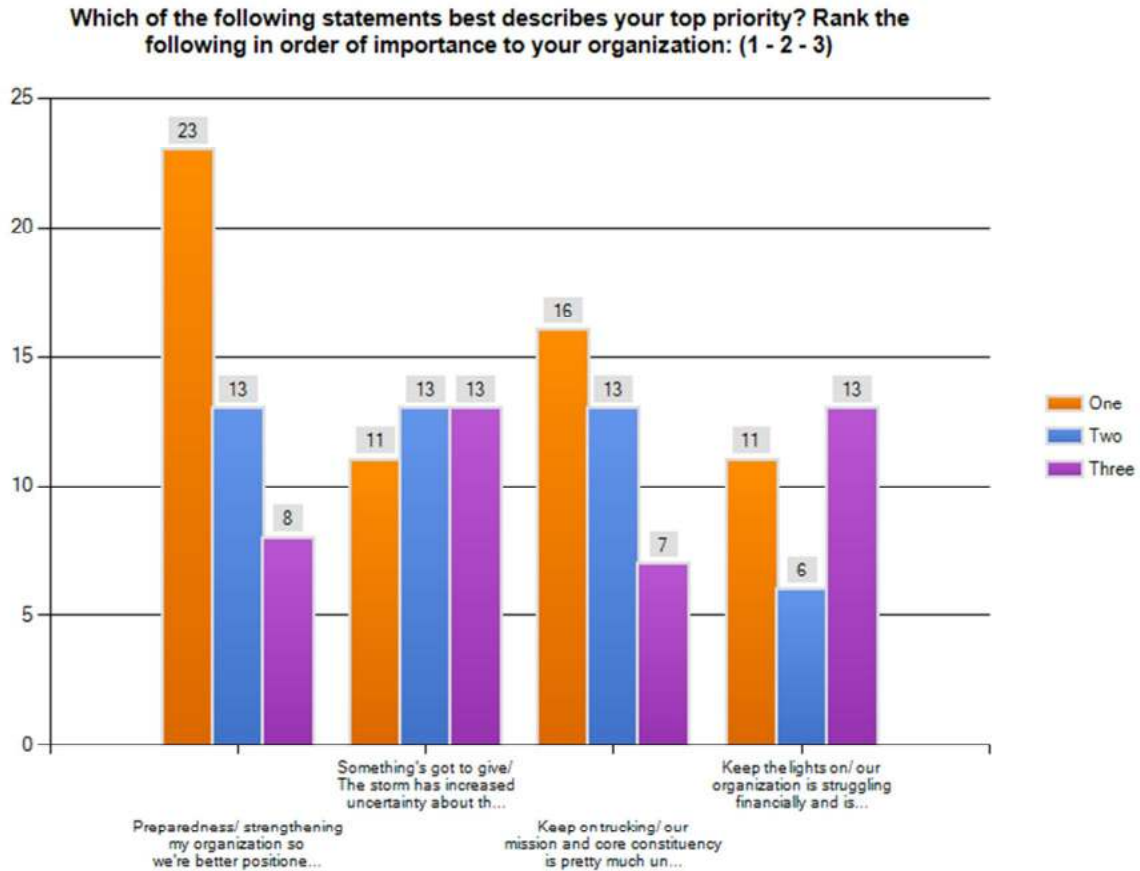
N=48

- We are trying to work with Sandy Victims, offering scholarships, etc. We're also planning a Sandy Children's Art Workshop and exhibit - free to those affected. And we are struggling with a loss of registrations as those affected by Sandy are not taking classes, etc.
- There has been a reduction in the number of field trips for schools located in areas hit by Sandy. There has been a reduction in the number of visitors to the museum for those areas.
- We have increased our work on crisis management.

- Yes, at this time we offer programs/ services to assist those who have been impacted by Hurricane Sandy. This may last several years.
- There is more focus on remediating homes, on homelessness, on alleviating hunger, and on providing mental health support for affected individuals.
- We have served additional individuals and families from the Mid-Island and South Beach areas of Staten Island; CHCR has also waived co-payments for individuals who do not have any form of health insurance coverage and were affected or displaced as a result of Hurricane Sandy.
- During the weeks immediately following the storm our property on Cedar Grove Avenue served as a gathering and distribution center for donations for the surrounding community. Other than that immediate response, we have returned to our core mission exclusively.
- Our home repair program has been expanded to include families affected by the hurricane. Specifically, we are currently repairing homes with a grant from the Robin Hood Foundation. We are providing more case assistance for individuals and families to receive services related to the hurricane, and we are serving on committees of the Long Term Recovery Organization to advocate for needed services.
- There has been some Sandy related transportation services provided, elder abuse and crime victims assistance services provided, but these are core services for agency.
- We are budgeting for greater sustainability such as an increase in reserve funds.
- Our program has moved to Freshkills Park for this year allowing limited public access.
- We have had to refocus programming due to the loss of our dock and outdoor stage.
- Through funding received from various charitable organizations, we are now providing school and community based short-term crisis counseling and long-term PTSD treatment services to children and families in locations where we previously had no presence. We are actively involved in disaster planning activities with the SI NFPA.
- Fundraising efforts are now faced with a new focus.

- We have significantly expanded our outreach and case-management services. We launched a 50 plus member coalition and actively participate in other community coalitions.

Question 15:



- 1) Preparedness/strengthening my organization so we're better positioned for a similar disaster in the future.
- 2) Linking up with others to better respond to these challenges.
- 3) Our mission and core constituency is pretty much unchanged; we're in good shape for the year ahead.
- 4) Keeping the lights on/ our organization is struggling financially and is at risk in the coming year.

N=45

Question 16: **Any Additional Comments?**

- I am interested in what options might still be available for organizations like mine that did not get direct storm damage, but still six months later are feeling the effects.
- We have also received no support in helping our organization to better prepare for similar storms in the future in terms of physically preparing the properties to mitigate the damage due to storm surge/flooding in the future.
- Until the city budget for FY14 is passed and we know the exact amount of NYC Council's discretionary funds, we will not have a clear sense about our financial position for the new year, (which has been the case for last 4 years). There is also a concern re sequestration and its impact on our federal funding.
- We need more help from the Community, foundations & CITY / FEMA.
- There must be special attention to CBO's working with vulnerable populations such as Immigrants (documented and undocumented) seniors, etc. *We must establish a formal relationship with Emergency Response and Preparedness agencies.* We responded immediately after the storm and were able to identify over 150 families that authorities have not encountered and we connected them with services. We have the trust of the community and we need to formalize these partnerships to avoid having people falling through the cracks in future emergencies.
- Both our annual appeal and annual fundraiser were significantly less than this year. Our facility also needs improvement to be protected from future storms.
- Preparedness/ strengthening my organization AND OUR CONSTITUENCY are priorities so we're better positioned for a similar disaster in the future.
- Financial struggles are related to both the storm and the dramatic changes in state funding for behavioral health services. Together, it is the perfect storm.
- Not sure if any of the above statements describe our needs.