

NONPROFIT INTERVIEW RESULTS

From June 6 to July 6, ACT for Alexandria personally interviewed 11 Alexandria nonprofit leaders whose organizations each addressed a community need such as homelessness, animal welfare, culture and immigration, to name a few. The nonprofit organizations ranged in receipt size from \$178,055 to \$11.5 million. Most interviews were conducted in-person with a few completed over the phone. We asked each leader similar, open-ended questions that addressed 3 primary areas: a vision for Alexandria, a vision for their organization, and possibilities for ACT. Interviews lasted from 1 to 1.5 hours.

A sampling of some of the questions:

- The year is 2030. You've returned to Alexandria after being away for more than ten years. What do you hope you'll see and observe as you become reacquainted with the community? (i.e., What is your vision for Alexandria?)
- What do you love about Alexandria?
- What keeps you up at night?
- How can a community foundation help create life changing results for Alexandrians?
- If ACT we were to disappear, what would be missed?

VISION FOR ALEXANDRIA

1. Alexandria is a community that embraces inclusion, equity and diversity

7 out of 9 nonprofits mentioned inclusion, equity and/or diversity

"We're on the verge of interesting conversations on race in this country and can't recall that Alexandria has had conversation on race in the last 3 years."

"Beneath the surface, Alexandria is very southern and this comes with mindsets of what is possible based on culture, race, etc. Things are talked around....[we need to] approach challenges from an equity lens. Would be great to see community make headway. Progress with how we structure resources lining up behind this conversation."

2. Alexandria is a place where everyone can afford a home to live in.

6 out of 9 nonprofits mentioned affordable housing.

"How do we balance continued economic growth with affordable housing inside the community?"

"Don't think it will ever be accessible for even middle-class people to live [in Alexandria]."

"[I] think of rich people when I think of Alexandria."

3. Alexandrians love their small-town feel but want thoughtful development to maintain its community connections.

"Community development is unavoidable but we need to do it smartly."

"Feel sense of people's desire to be part of building community."

"Opportunities out there to be model community for interaction between different types of people."

4. Alexandrians are invested in the community's charitable giving.

"I would like to see a culture of giving locally. I look at donor lists elsewhere and see Alexandrians on that list but not here..... Creating a culture of local philanthropy is a major goal."

"People don't support nonprofits, they support causes."

5. Alexandria harnesses the power of many people invested in the community.

"We depend a lot on generosity of others because the community decides that it will help neighbors."

YOU & YOUR ORGANIZATION

Opportunities

1. Tools and resources to address race and equity.

"Have yet to see a useful training on racial equity."

".....looking internally at our board and staff, we are a white, middle-class organization serving a Spanish-speaking community."

2. Increased organizational capacity and capability.

"Working culture affects people's ability to do their best work and if not supported, it wears on people over time."

"Wide or deep is always the challenge." [context: given limited capacity and capability, the organization must decide between addressing a broad number of needs or delve deeper into a smaller amount of needs]

3. Engagement with those most affected by the issues.

"What may be the perfect employee on paper may not be the same as what the community needs... we [should] present ourselves to the community rather than the reverse in terms of hiring from the community."

"Scruffy Hospitality: Want a place that's safe and suitable for people but also not take ourselves too seriously."

Challenges

1. Financial Sustainability

Adapting to changes in funding

"Challenge with foundations and government grants is the changing priorities which we don't have control of."

Adapting to changes in donor demographics

"The economic models have been changing over the years. This generation doesn't give like generations of the past."

2. Complexity of issues requires a different way of working

More collaboration

"In future would like to see less of a struggle for resources....more coordination/collaboration across different lines.....organizations that have different functions but serve the same community."

Taking holistic or systemic view

"Learn from one another. Have more eyes out there...need to coordinate with each other to align with each other."

3. Board Governance (continued next page)

3 out of 9 nonprofits mentioned board governance as a challenge

“The board is a challenge.... Takes up an enormous amount of time”

“Board governance structure needs to change. That is the key to everything for [us]....Not much has changed over the years which is sort of a sign for them to consider changes...”

POSSIBILITIES FOR ACT

1. ACT builds capacity

4 out of 9 nonprofits mentioned capacity building

Capacity building funding is unique, rare, and highly valued by nonprofits (ex: donor support software).

"Very few people want to invest in [capacity building]. Takes capacity to keep growing, developing, and innovating. VERY little support in this area."

".....hard to get this type of money [capacity building] because most people want to fund programs."

Leadership development and peer cohorts

"Networking is valuable. No one else provides opportunities to get to know others at other organizations. That is a real niche."

2. ACT connects to resources

7 out of 9 nonprofits mentioned ACT streamlining resource connections

Nonprofit leaders want ACT to connect them to resources and to help them share resources

"I see ACT as a foundation that channels money, grants, and resources."

Spring 2 Action

"ACT provides vital place for donors who don't want to be bombarded."

"ACT helps to get and put focus on people."

3. ACT is a convener

5 out of 9 nonprofits mentioned ACT's role as a convener

Brings people together for important conversations about community needs.

"Maybe ACT could support more raising awareness or leverage its influence in advocacy realm."

Create space for networking and peer connections

"Staying on top of everything is almost impossible. ACT could spread the information on what others are doing."

Listen to the community and share what we're hearing.

"Network of leaders in the community is needed."