



National Leadership Network Survey: Alumni Leadership Insights

Leadership insights from a national survey of more than 4,500 community leaders, including critical lessons for strengthening localities based on their experiences managing the pandemic at the local level.

Reflections on Local
Pandemic Leadership and
Perceived Condition of
their Communities in the
Aftermath

**Communities Need a Boost
in Trust**

Roadmap to a Big Step in
Equalizing Opportunity in
America

**Continue Raising Awareness
to Build A Foundation for
Change**

Community Leadership
Values

**Shared Values a Foundation
for National Collaboration**

This summer, in a period of a public crisis in facing the Covid-19 pandemic, we interviewed more than 4,500 American community leaders. We engaged with a cross-section of Americans who are active in their communities and are proven senior leaders in the government, nonprofit and private sectors. Our goal is to strategically advance our abilities as community leaders with insights and objective data to drive important conversations. We have also asked questions to help develop the National Leadership Network.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Methodology: Starr Opinion Research, commissioned by the National Leadership Network (NLN), collected 4,534 online interviews between July 22 and August 10, 2020 of U.S. community leaders. The full methodology and topline results are appended.

REFLECTIONS ON LOCAL PANDEMIC LEADERSHIP AND PERCEIVED CONDITION OF THEIR COMMUNITIES IN THE AFTERMATH COMMUNITIES NEED A BOOST IN TRUST

The local pandemic response was poor. Nearly four in five community leaders (78 percent) rated the response of their local area to the COVID-19 outbreak as below a level of well-prepared.

Trouble for some communities beyond the pandemic’s horizon. More than one in three community leaders (35 percent) feel their community will emerge from the outbreak weaker. On the positive side, 41 percent feel their community will be stronger and 24 percent “about the same.”

Successful responses were more community-driven than government-driven. Community leaders overwhelmingly described successful elements of local-area responses (not including responses by health care providers) as coming more from local efforts than from local government.

Trust is the foundation. The bottom-line is local leadership succeeded during the pandemic when there was an environment of mutual trust. The presence of trust allows people to be open to messages from their leaders, communicate about and collaboratively respond to the needs of everyone, and help each other. Problematic pandemic responses – which degraded trust – were evidenced in poor decisions (weak enforcement of safety measures, not prioritizing safety), communication (inconsistent, unclear, incorrect), coordination with other government entities and in deliberation (slow, denial of risks, too politicized, ignoring data-based expertise and not including segments of the community).

New in 2020 - combat misinformation. The new threat for community leaders is the spread of misinformation. This is something federal governments have combatted in recent years and is now present at local levels. Misinformation is certainly a factor in the loss of local trust. Community leaders emphasized using more communication channels (including social media), as well as delivering messages on a regular basis that are consistent (unified across levels of government, clearly seen as official), transparent and based on independent expertise.

ACTION: Community leaders should ... *Be intentional in all community activities in rebuilding or strengthening local levels of trust* by removing political undertones, raising civil and unified discourse, relying more on third party experts, taking a collaborative approach, demonstrating more empathy, listening more, and communicating consistently.

ROADMAP TO A BIG STEP IN EQUALIZING OPPORTUNITY IN AMERICA CONTINUE RAISING AWARENESS TO BUILD A FOUNDATION FOR CHANGE

Recalibrate expectations to a longer period of building awareness. To create change with deeper roots and greater impact, community leaders – who are successful change-makers in their communities - believe the country needs for many more people to gain a deeper understanding of the problems faced by marginalized communities and the societal challenges that create the barriers to equality. These are necessary, difficult conversations. The positive news is there is a once-in-a-generation welcoming to

these engagements. And public and private organizations can lead the skeptics of the country in moving forward.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP VALUES

SHARED VALUES A FOUNDATION FOR NATIONAL COLLABORATION

Common ground for building community leaders building relationships across the country. There is broad agreement across all community leadership program alumni on a series of leadership-related assumptions and values. 94 percent or more community leaders agree with each in a series of community-leadership related assumptions and 92 percent or more said a series of value-based approaches were important. *Moreover, community leaders interested in a national organization hold a notably more passionate views on all of these assumptions and values, but especially for opportunities to work with diverse backgrounds and confront problems.*

Compelling case for a public role for a national program. Most community leadership programs operate behind the scenes. However, among the subset of 21 percent of community leaders who are “definitely interested” in a national organization, 85 percent agree *and 54 percent “completely agree”* that “I have an obligation to publicly demonstrate how local leaders from different backgrounds can work together in a civil fashion to improve our communities.”

Thanks! The research team appreciates the senior executives of the 59 Community Leadership Programs (CLPs) for their trust and assistance in bringing this survey to their alumni and the 4,500+ community leaders who shared their opinions in the survey.

Continue on to read a discussion of these insights...

About National Leadership Network: The National Leadership Network, or NLN, joins alumni of the more than 800 non-partisan U.S. Community Leadership Programs, and their cross-sector alumni of more than 700,000, to interact, develop relationships, share ideas, and collaborate. The NLN was started in Summer 2020 by Mike Ritz and Michelle Carr of Leadership Rhode Island.

Please visit www.NationalLeadershipNetwork.org to register your interest in NLN.

About Josh Starr and Starr Opinion Research: Josh Starr uses research – such as surveys and focus groups – to help public and private organizations tackle challenges, often in management, policy and communications/marketing. He is especially interested in helping small and medium-sized businesses grow. Josh is available to help your organization and can be contacted at jstarr@starr-research.com

About RDW Group: RDW Group was founded in 1986, and is a full-service advertising, public relations and media services agency with offices in Providence and Boston. RDW also operates iFactory, an award-winning web strategy, design and development group in Boston. More info at rdwgroup.com.

SECTION ONE: REFLECTIONS ON LOCAL PANDEMIC LEADERSHIP AND PERCEIVED CONDITION OF THEIR COMMUNITIES IN THE AFTERMATH

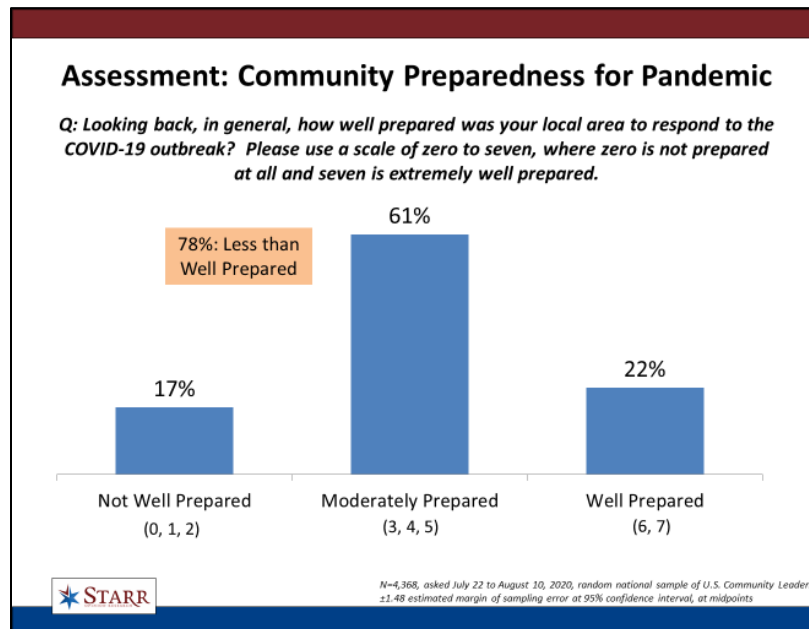
COMMUNITIES NEED A BOOST IN TRUST

The Covid-19 pandemic is widely recognized as a seminal event of this generation. Recognizing and setting aside the horrendous impact on people’s lives, this tragedy is also a critical opportunity to learn and improve our society.

From a community leadership perspective, this is the first time in scores of years in which *every community in America was taking on a similar life-and-death challenge*. Social scientists will spend careers reviewing these events and sort through the complexities. But we can start now to look for some immediate lessons.

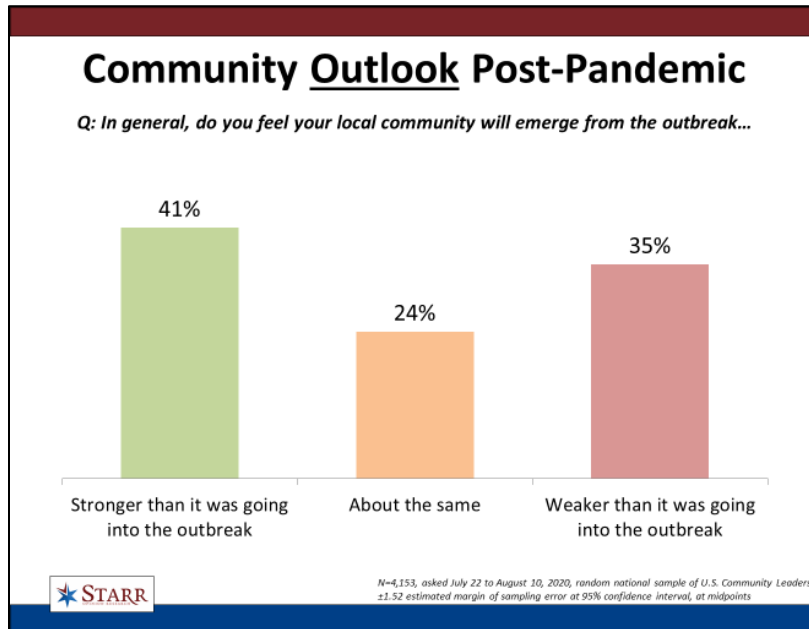
What can we learn to help community leaders more thoughtfully and strategically advance their community’s interests, today?

The local pandemic response was poor. For community leaders, the general assessment is that local areas did not perform well in response to the pandemic. Nearly four in five community leaders (78 percent) rated the response of their local area to the COVID-19 outbreak as below a level of well-prepared. For many community leaders, their perceptions of the local leadership responses are seen through this prism. These poor marks set the stage for community leaders to share more about concerns and problems they observed and less about positive actions.



Trouble for some communities beyond the pandemic’s horizon. From the perspective of community leaders, will there be problems for their communities in the wake of the pandemic? For perspective, keep in mind this question collected a *snapshot* of opinions in July-August 2020, before the later surges in the autumn. Interestingly, a plurality of community leaders – 41 percent – believe their community will be stronger. In addition, 24 percent feel their community will be about the same.

However, more than one in three community leaders – 35 percent – expect their community will be left weaker. While this group represents a minority of community leaders, it is still a sizable number and indicates there are likely to be significant concerns.

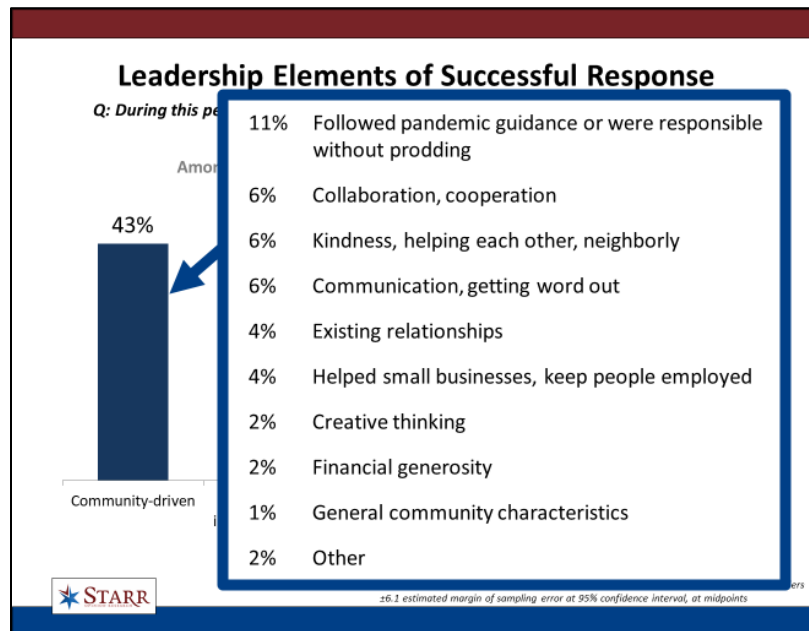


Successful responses were more community-driven than government-driven. Many of the responses indicated a tension between three groups – the local non-political community, local government that performed poorly and local governments that performed well. Most of the successful elements recounted by community leaders - 69 percent - were from local effort (or, put another way, not from government activity).

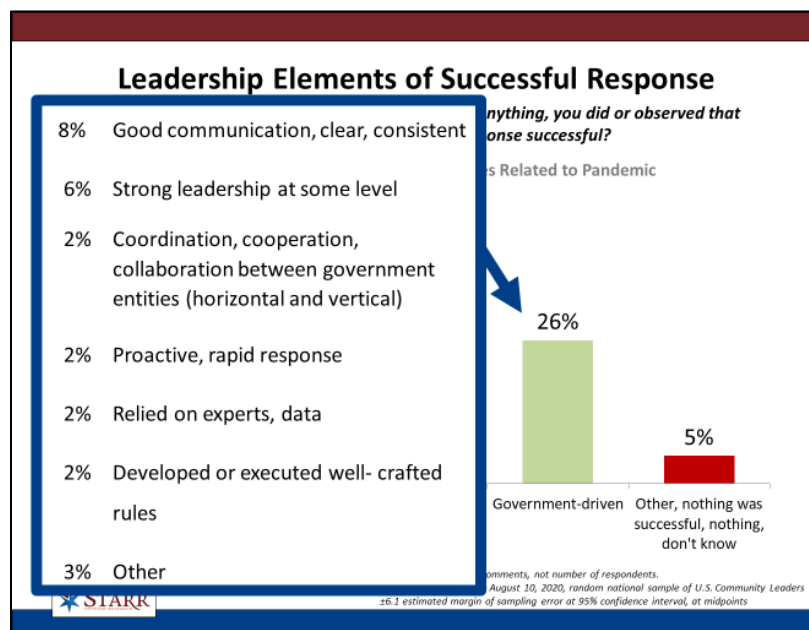


Communities that contributed a successful response were following with safety guidelines, finding ways to solve problems through working together (notably by leveraging pre-existing relationships),

demonstrating kindness and assistance, and communicating internally. The community institutions played key roles in working hard to maintain services, identify and prioritize needs, distribute necessary emergency resources, collaborate, and help push key messages.



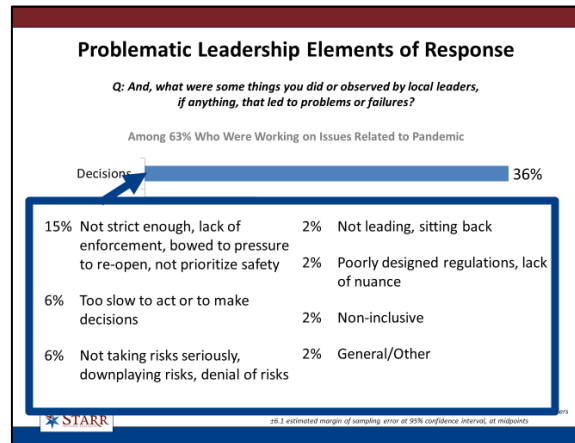
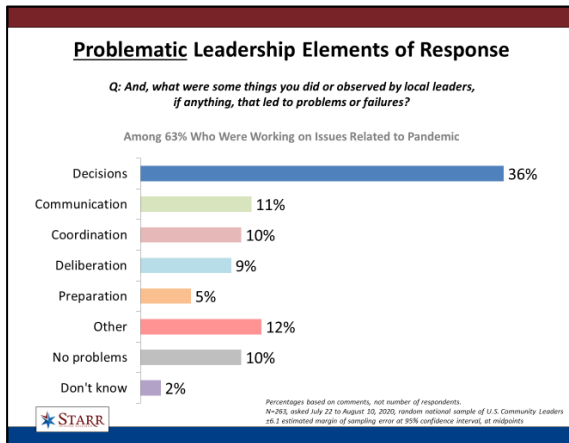
When local government was working well, they provided clear and consistent information, and provided strong leadership – making decisions quickly and explaining them in a confident manner.



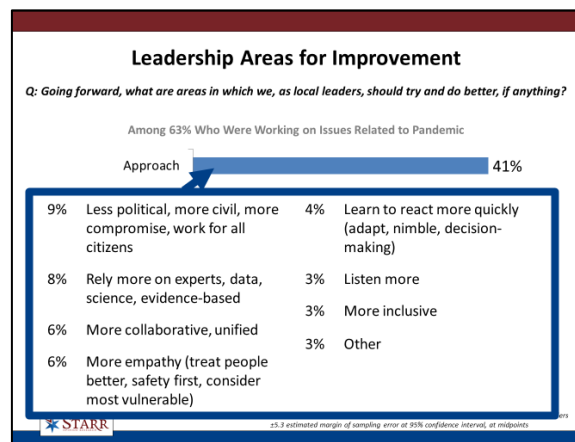
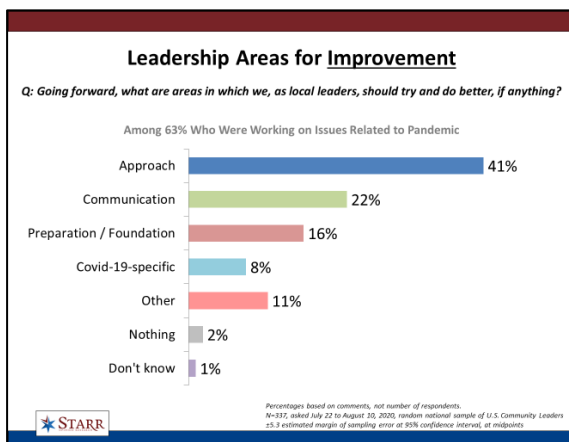
Trust is the foundation. In carefully reviewing the elements of successful responses, as well as the perceived problems and areas for improvement, a clear theme emerged – the role of trust. To many involved in civic life, trust might be a foregone conclusion, something that is assumed. We know trust is critical to making American society work, and the loss of trust takes tremendous efforts to repair. The presence of trust allows people to be open to messages from their leaders, communicate about and collaboratively respond to the needs of everyone, and help each other.

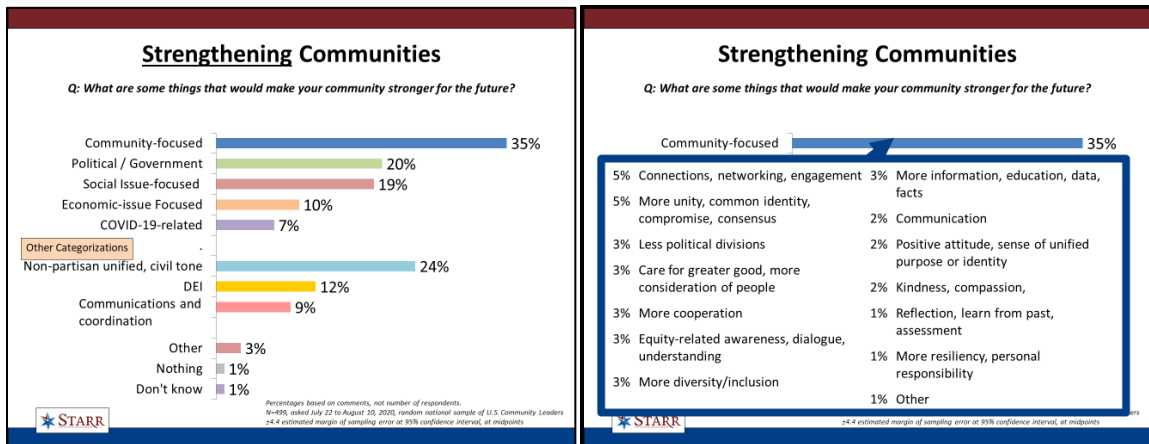
In areas with mutual trust, the community response (i.e. not the response of the medical personnel) to the pandemic was better. The pandemic seems to have driven a wedge and placed a spotlight on differences between community leaders and local government officials who took a path that degraded trust.

Areas in which there was a degradation of trust could be identified, based on perceptions by community leaders, through poor decisions (weak enforcement of safety measures, not prioritizing safety), communication (inconsistent, unclear, incorrect), coordination with other government entities and in deliberation (slow, denial of risks, too politicized, ignoring data-based expertise and not including segments of the community).



Conversely, community leaders chose to highlight similar behaviors to help their local areas move forward. In making recommendations for improving their areas in a post-Covid-19 world, community leaders focused on elements of repairing trust. It requires people inviting more people into civil discussions, listening, relying on non-partisan expertise, empathy, and compromise.





New in 2020 - combat misinformation. We live in an age of rapid technology-driven change. Community leaders continue to rely on many traditional skills to collaborate and work towards achieving their objectives. However, some new aspects of strong leadership have emerged, and leaders should take note.

Leaders advise that an emerging concern for community leaders is combatting the spread of misinformation. This concern has been on the edge of federal issues, including national security and elections. However, with the Covid-19 response, the negative local impact of misinformation has garnered the attention of community leaders. The impact might be felt in specific cases, such as about medical information, but it also has a long-term impact on mutual trust.

Community leaders emphasized two ways to deal with this, though experts should provide more tactics in the future. One consideration is making it very clear to audiences that certain information can be trusted – this includes having a professional look-and-feel, clearly showing the organizations and jurisdictions involved, and providing information at regular times which audiences can anticipate. It is critical for these messages to be unified, and, to reduce potential confusion, minimize the number of official channels. Moreover, to demonstrate the credibility, messages should include the data and analysis that has been used as the basis for making decisions.

As the same time, some community leaders said it is important to include a social media presence in order to reach populations that are not using traditional media. Similarly, leaders need to monitor social media to confront misinformation.

ACTION Community leaders should incorporate these insights into their work. What does this look like? This is a good time to remind yourself of the many community leadership tenets you have practiced, and model the practice in front of others – seek out to expand your network, listen, include different people in discussions, look for ways to collaborate and compromise to move a project forward, strengthen relationships with shared experiences, be open to different ideas. Build more bridges. Use civil tones and when outside the political arena, de-emphasize political differences. Continue your community work but highlight these elements in your actions and communications.

SECTION TWO: ROADMAP TO A BIG STEP IN EQUALIZING OPPORTUNITY IN AMERICA

CONTINUE RAISING AWARENESS TO BUILD A FOUNDATION FOR CHANGE

We asked successful U.S. community leaders, “*What would you put forward as a Big Step that could be accomplished in our communities, organizations, or corporations to address known systemic problems and/or provide equal opportunities?*”

The question was posed against a backdrop in which, according to Princeton University’s Bridging Divides Initiative, there had been 7,750 Black Lives Matter protests at 2,400 locations between May 26 through August 22 (<https://bridgingdivides.princeton.edu/>).

We wanted to get a sense of where the headlines, rallies, and corporate discussions on this issue of inequity might lead. What might be a reasonable goal to address the concerns about fairness and equality in the American system?

Three major lines of thought emerged from the responses. One slightly more prominent line called for a longer period of intense exchanges and discussions. While the convergence of the pandemic and the events catapulting the Black Lives Matter protests had brought attention to the issues, and many people were newly aware of and sympathetic to the concerns, many community leaders feel there is a need to build an even broader foundation of support among the American public before moving ahead to any “big steps.”

An almost equally prominent line called for making changes within the political system, primarily by increasing the diversity of representation in the public and corporate arenas.

A third line of thought called for reforms in various policy areas. And a fourth, very minor group, did not recognize the issue.

A few quick thoughts to consider before moving deeper into the issues. (1) Most comments demonstrated there are no immediate fixes, no quick legislation or demands, that will resolve the inequity. Comments were focused locally, with no mention of a federal solution. (2) Few community leaders offered specific Big Steps - an agenda or goals - to achieve. The concerns, whether at the street level or among the establishment of community leaders, seems to be decentralized, with no unified leadership, or agreed-upon agenda, process, or steps.

Continue to raise awareness and change attitudes. The most common approach recommended by community leaders, suggested by nearly three in ten comments (29%), is to focus on building awareness and engaging in dialogues to achieve a broader level of understanding. The issues are sensitive and painful, for example, many are concerned they will be personally blamed for the intentional and unintentional behaviors of previous generations. However, solutions cannot be discussed until more Americans can understand the complex systems at work and agree there are problems and become open to finding solutions. From the perspective of these leaders suggesting these approaches, the past summer has been an opportunity to start a true conversation, and it will take a lengthy, disciplined effort to build a lasting solution.

“Conversation. I initially didn't list this as it doesn't seem like a Big Step, but on review I think it is. I've had conversations at work, at home and in the community that addressed topics that would not have been broached before. I hope open dialogue will continue so that the best action and solutions can be implemented in service of greater equity in our communities.”

“Engaging with the public in meaningful ways cannot be under emphasized. Beyond public meetings in board rooms or council chambers, where the public can access them, but are not much heard, is not really enough...”

“You can’t legislate or dictate equity. Equity must evolve from the community at large. All you can is provide structure for someone to utilize once equity has been established.”

“Awareness must be raised. Communities, organizations, and corporations don’t know what they don’t know. I consider myself well educated and more cognizant of the challenges that diverse communities face; however, since George Floyd, I have read myself, learning more the reality of people of color. People deny systemic racism because it is viewed from a white perspective. That needs to change - hard conversations must be had.”

“Education at all levels is the key. We must expand our educational process to help people understand the realities of our nation and the world. This must include open and honest discussions of victories, foibles, and malicious behaviors. Openness and honesty can be painful in the short run; however, avoidance of these processes is ultimately more harmful in the long run to individuals, institutions and the nation.”

“Seek majority agreement that these issues actually exist.”

“Continued awareness training. I was surprised how few people in my community knew about Juneteenth. “

*“This is a *long* term issue. It took a long time to develop, and it will take a long time to fix. As the last 20 years have illustrated, large scale, fast changes in society destabilize those societies. That said, we need to make change in the *systems* that perpetuate these inequalities, such as K12 public schools and market systems that help keep diverse populations apart regardless of their desires or means. But such solutions are long-term, and we will also need short-term "wins" to keep the momentum moving forward and overcome resistance like the nation has been experience in reaction to having our first Black president. As Dr. King noted, the arc of the moral is long, but it bends towards justice. I would add that it does not bend on its own. It bends to the will of the majority of people who enshrine the value of real justice in their hearts and are willing to express that sense of justice in how they live their lives in the face of injustice.”*

“Having an open discussion about racial relations... it's a topic that MANY, MANY avoid...”

“We need to have community conversations that include these topics and address the issues that might be different in each community with the same passion that we address all other issues.”

“Self-awareness is 90% of the problem and providing tools and resources to help people understand the magnitude of the problem and explore their own personal contribution to that magnitude would be very useful.”

“Acknowledging the problem is the first step. There are many people who need more education and exposure to even understand that there is an issue at hand.”

“We need to continue the discussion and not let the typical fatigue of discussion set in, i.e. change the “normal” non-crisis community heartbeat to action not complacency.”

Focus on political reforms. In the similar vein of working in the system, more than one in four comments (27%) suggested communities could make changes, in their own systems, to address the inequities. It is worth noting again that few offered specific goals or benchmarks to achieve. Moreover, the comments were focused locally, rather than looking for direction at the federal level.

The suggested changes in their local systems by community leaders fell into three categories:

Representation. Nearly one in one in ten comment (9%) mentioned a need for more diverse representation from affected communities in decision making processes, in both the public and private sectors.

“If only we could solve this in two sentences. Inviting a diverse group to the table is an important first step.”

“Bringing the right people to the table. By right, I mean the people directly affected by the problems.”

“Engage representative stakeholders from diverse perspectives in the community to be a part of strategic planning and decision making.”

“An overhaul of who is in the room when big decisions are made at the local and state level.”

“Make sure that people of color and lower socioeconomic circumstances are included in the dialogue.”

Tone and Expertise at Local Decision-Making Levels. More than one in twenty comments suggested scaling back emerging political ideologies in community decisions that are best served by relying on experts and with a focus on long-term results.

“Keep politics out of decisions in what is best for the community.”

Budget Reprioritization. In addition, more than one in twenty comments mentioned a need to reform how public funds are spent, with more community input, so budgets are more in line with the needs of the broader community that may have less political and economic influence. Most of the comments referred to funding for public education and public safety.

Focus on issues affecting current family and adult populations. A minority of community leaders focused on addressing specific issue-areas – 18 percent focused on economic and other areas that affect families and adult populations, and 15 percent discussed areas focused solely on younger people.

Fewer than one in ten leaders (7%) mentioned economic issues, ranging from raising wages, equal pay and blind hiring, jobs, affordable day care and promoting targeted economic development.

Collectively, more than one in ten leaders (12%) raised concerns in a variety of other areas, including affordable housing, healthcare, reducing poverty, mental health, and food security.

Focus on issues affecting the next generation. Most of these comments that focused on younger people discussed reforming and improving the public-school education system, equalizing funding for public schools and providing ways to guide youth into adulthood, such as youth centers, mentorship, and internships.

“Starting at the elementary school level is the only place this problem will be solved.”

“Equal access to educational opportunities. Period.”

“Equalizing educational opportunities across all cities, towns and neighborhoods. Consider a state-level educational tax that is divided among school districts on an equal per capita basis rather than having schools in poorer districts rely on funding from their socio-economically depressed towns/cities.”

“Push back against poorly designed systems and lobby your state, local, and federal government to come into the 21st century. Our infrastructure and education and healthcare systems are dated and help perpetuate the next generation of systemic inequality.”

Some do not recognize a systemic problem. Comments from a small group of American community leaders – one in ten – indicate they do not believe there is a consistent problem that has led to some groups of citizens not having equal opportunities.

Some of the comments indicate these leaders feel the problem does not exist, with some saying it is created by the media. Among this group, many feel there are individual issues as well as individual solutions. Individuals, some believe, should take personal responsibility for their situation, and there should be no consideration of broader circumstances in work advancement. Along similar lines, others feel that more people need to treat individuals nicely, following the Golden Rule.

“Quit labeling everything and everyone. Just see people as people, not as a race, color, religion, etc.”

“Get over all the blame and separation. What our Founding Fathers did in regard to slavery, Native Americans, etc. has nothing to do with today. No one today had a direct impact on that, and we all need to realize that we are all valuable and the more we #_____livesmatter, the worse it will get. Go back to being good human beings - pick up trash if you see it, smile, and say hello, help a neighbor, etc. The rest will work itself out. We are killing our nation from the outside in.”

“Everyone should be treated equally with respect. Every person matters.”

“Stop dividing people by race, ethnicity, etc. and treat everyone the same. We are Americans! Nothing more. Nothing less.”

“Opportunities are equal.”

What was not mentioned. Though police brutality has been a key trigger of protests, few leaders (three percent of comments) specifically mentioned reforming police and police union practices nor prison and sentencing reform, or drug abuse prevention and rehabilitation.

In the end, process matters. Accomplished community leaders understand the complexity and importance of the issue of inequity. They counsel building a stronger foundation of understanding before moving forward with specific reforms. Change the environment so leaders can broadly address the source of the problem, still rarely discussed, before proposing solutions. This is challenging work, and requires long-term focus, honesty, listening, empathy, and open discussion – skills that run counter to the current American politicized culture.

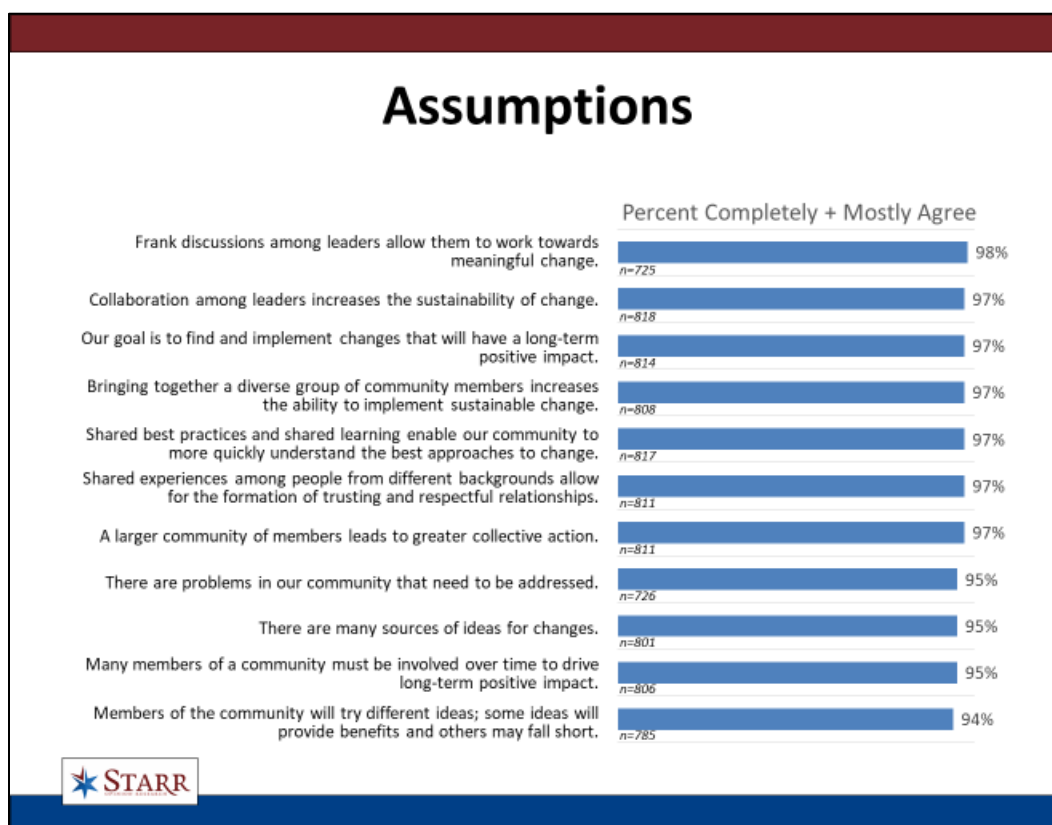
SECTION THREE: COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP VALUES

SHARED VALUES A FOUNDATION FOR NATIONAL COLLABORATION

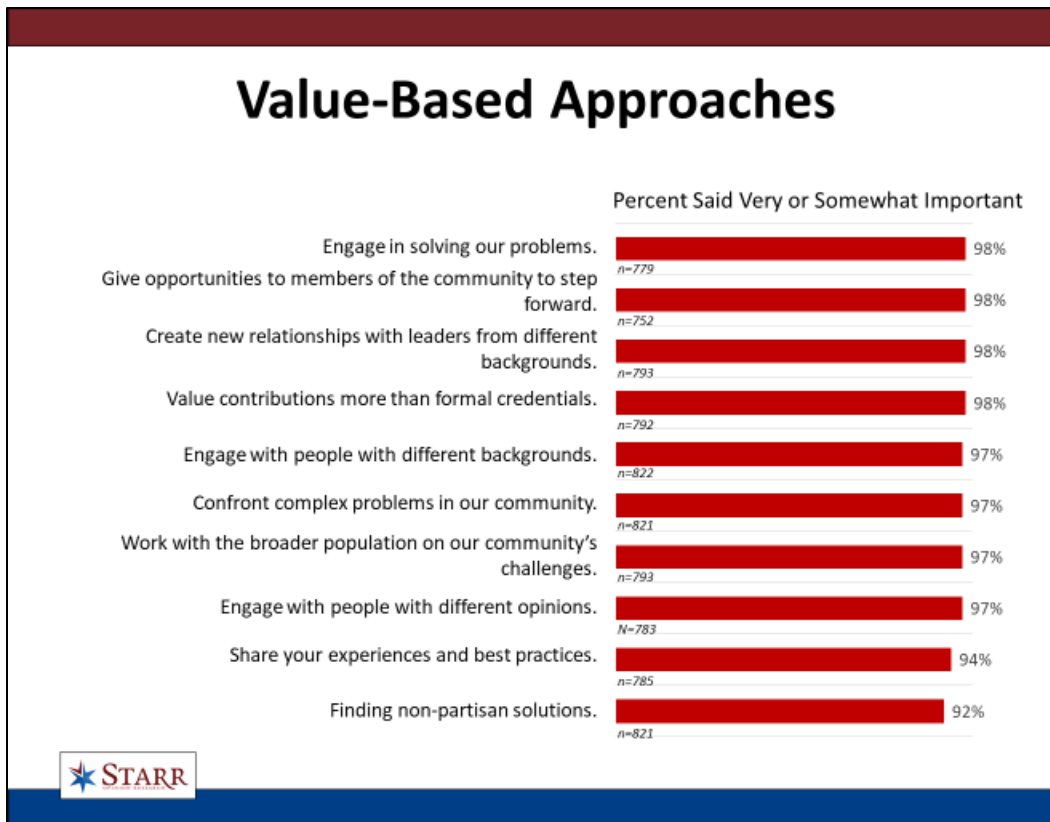
Organizations and communities are typically built around a set of commonly shared values. With an eye towards possibly building a national meeting point for U.S. community leaders - a group of people who have completed a local Community Leadership Program¹ - it is critical to evaluate whether they share common attitudes and perspectives.

Community leaders were asked for their level of agreement with a series of community leadership assumptions as well as the level of importance they assign to a series of value-based leadership approaches.

Common ground for building community leaders building relationships across the country. There is broad agreement across all community leadership program alumni on a series of leadership-related assumptions and values. 94 percent or more community leaders agree with each in a series of community-leadership related assumptions and 92 percent or more said a series of value-based approaches were important. *Moreover, community leaders interested in a national organization hold a notably more passionate views on all of these assumptions and values, but especially for opportunities to work with diverse backgrounds and confront problems.*



¹ We have defined our eligible Community Leadership Programs (CLPs) as those which, each year, intentionally recruit a cohort of diverse proven senior leaders across sectors (typically government, non-profit and private) and other backgrounds, especially gender and race or ethnicity. Though it is not required, most have a 6, 12- or 18-month program of creating social bonds followed by a series of seminars to learn about key elements of public issues that are most important to their area.



National organization draws leaders most passionate with these values – with a special focus on diversity and confronting problems.

While there is broad alignment in values and attitudes among the national poll of community leaders, there are differences among the 21 percent of them who indicated they were “definitely interested” in the concept of a national leadership organization. In almost all values and attitudes, this subset was more passionate about them – signified by a higher percentage, often by double digits, selecting a top box response, such as “completely agree” and “very important.”

These differences led to two insights:

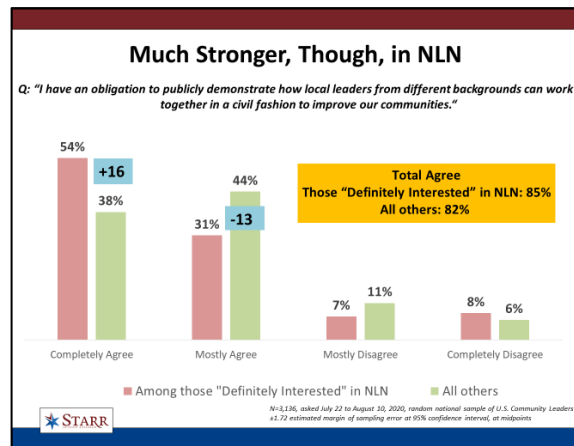
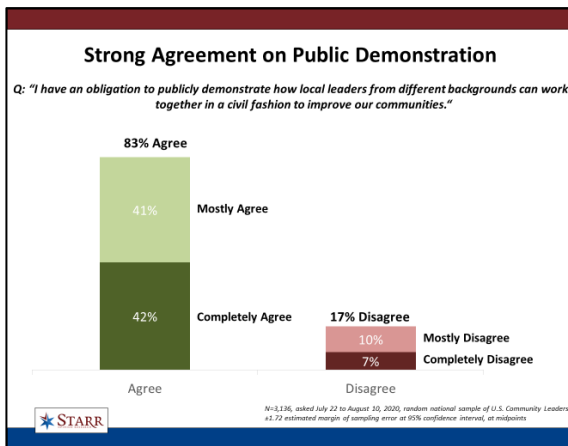
1. There is an intense sharing of leadership values among those most attracted to the national leadership organization concept.
2. Perhaps we can identify *what are the most attractive features of the national leadership organization concept* by looking at the value and attitudes with the greatest differences between those community leaders “definitely interested” and the rest. From this analysis, it appears the most interested community leaders are especially interested in opportunities to interact with people from different background and opinions, and the opportunity to confront problems in their communities.

Compelling case for a public role for a national program. For assorted reasons, most community leadership programs operate behind the scenes. There are advantages and disadvantages to whether a community leadership program should have a public presence, in addition to whether a public role would align with their mission.

Community leaders, however, feel they, personally, have an “obligation to publicly demonstrate how local leaders from different backgrounds can work together in a civil fashion to improve our communities.”

More than four in five community leaders – 83 percent – agreed with this position, including more than two in five – 42 percent – who completely agreed. This result typically indicates this is a strongly supported position and would expect a positive response if executed.

Probing deeper, there is an even more passionate belief in having a public face among the subset of community leaders who are “definitely interested” in the concept of a national leadership organization. Among these leaders, 85 percent agree with this position, and 54 percent *completely agree*. The concept of the national organization has drawn leaders with this attitude that they have an *obligation* be more active in public.



TOPLINE RESULTS OF NATIONAL SURVEY OF U.S. LEADERS – SUMMER 2020

Methodology: *Starr Opinion Research, commissioned by Leadership Rhode Island as the sponsoring organizer of the National Leadership Network, collected 4,534 online interviews between July 22 and August 10, 2020 of a nationally representative sample of U.S. community leaders.*

To create a known national universe of U.S. community leaders, all respondents were recruited from lists of graduates of Community Leadership Programs (CLPs). CLPs are individual programs in more than 800 locations across the United States. The first major wave of the establishment of these programs started in the mid-1970s and 1980s, and the average age of a CLP is 29 years. For their Signature or Core programs, CLPs intentionally recruit diverse proven senior leaders across sectors (typically government, non-profit and private) and other backgrounds, especially gender and race or ethnicity. We estimate more than 700,000 American leaders have completed a program, with more going through a program each year.

Recruitment Methodology: We collected a national random sample of sampling points of leaders, with each CLP being a potential sampling point. The senior-most staff members of all CLPs in our national database were offered an equal opportunity to participate in the survey. This survey included 59 randomly recruited sampling points from 27 states. In all sampling points, the staff of the CLP invited, using a consistent e-mail method, invited all graduates of their Core or Signature program to participate.

Weighting: The results were weighted by the nine census sub-regions, so the percentage of responses in the survey match the percentage of potential sampling points in our national database. To be clear this is a survey of national community leaders who have completed a Core or Signature CLP.

Sampling Error: The estimated margin of sampling error for the survey is ± 1.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence interval. If we were to conduct the same survey 100 times, we expect that in 95 of those surveys the responses would fall somewhere within our margin of sampling error. The margin of error will be larger among subgroups of respondents.

All sample surveys and polls may be subject to multiple sources of error, including, but not limited to sampling error, coverage error, and measurement error.

Additional possible sources of error for this survey: (1) We know from surveys among this leadership population, as years pass since completing the program, fewer participate in surveys. In addition, given the current pandemic, some leaders have been harder than usual to reach. (2) We relied on staff of CLPs to send the survey to all of their alumni of their Core or Signature Program.

For a deeper understanding of margin of sampling error and credibility interval, please review resources from the American Association for Public Opinion Researchers (AAPOR).

Note: Some percentages may add not add up to 100% due to rounding. 0% indicates less than 0.5%.

SECTION 1: SCREENERS

ASK OF ALL

1. **Please select the program(s) you completed. If you do not see your program(s), select “none of these.”**

Professional staff should select the program for which they work.

MULTIPLE RESPONSES ALLOWED

N=4,534

CENSUS REGIONS AND SUB-REGIONS

- 10% Northeast**
 - 3% New England (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT)
 - 7% Middle Atlantic (NJ, NY, PA)
- 49% South**
 - 21% East North Central (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI)
 - 6% North West Central (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD)
 - 22% South Atlantic (DC, DE, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV)
- 27% Midwest**
 - 13% East South Central (AL, KY, MS, TN)
 - 14% West South Central (AR, LA, OK, TX)
- 14% West**
 - 3% Mountain (AZ, CO, ID, MT, NM, NV, UT, WY)
 - 11% Pacific (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA)

2. **To the best of your recollection, in what year(s) did you complete this program? MULTIPLE RESPONSES ALLOWED**

N=4,534

- 11% 2020
- 40% 2015 to 2019
- 18% 2010 to 2014
- 20% Between 2000 and 2009
- 9% Between 1990 and 1999
- 3% Between 1980 and 1989
- <1% 1979 and before
- <1% Staff, I am the most senior executive
- <1% Staff, I am not the most senior executive
- 0% Unsure

SECTION 2: CLP VALUE AND OUTBREAK RESPONSE

ASK OF ALL

3. **Now, please think about the leadership program you completed. For your local area, how valuable has it been for your community to have the leadership program you completed? Please use a scale of ZERO to SEVEN, where zero means the program provided no value and seven is it was absolutely essential.**

N=4,262

2% LOW VALUE

- <1% Zero PROVIDED NO VALUE
- <1% One
- 1% Two

29% MODERATE VALUE

- 2% Three
- 7% Four
- 20% Five

70% HIGH VALUE

- 30% Six
- 40% Seven ESSENTIAL

4. **Looking back, in general, how well prepared was your local area to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak?**

Please use a scale of zero to seven, where zero is not prepared at all and seven is extremely well prepared.

N=4,368

17% NOT WELL PREPARED

- 4% Zero NOT PREPARED AT ALL
- 4% One
- 9% Two

61% MODERATELY PREPARED

- 15% Three
- 22% Four
- 24% Five

22% WELL PREPARED

- 16% Six
- 6% Seven EXTREMELY WELL PREPARED

5. Please think about the time between when citizens in your area were asked to shelter at home to avoid the COVID-19 outbreak, until normal businesses were allowed to re-open.

During this time, which of the following BEST DESCRIBES how you were spending your time?

N=4,439

63% COVID LEADER

5% I worked exclusively on the issues related to the response the outbreak, whether at the local, county, state, or national level

31% I worked a lot on issues related to the response, in addition to other responsibilities I had at work or home

27% I worked a little on the local issues to the response, in addition to other responsibilities I had at work or home

37% NOT A COVID LEADER: I worked only on my responsibilities at work or home

SECTION 3: LOOKING BACK AT PANDEMIC

ASK OF GROUP B ONLY

ASK OF COVID LEADERS ONLY

The goal of this survey is to help local leaders learn from each other. Some questions are about the response to the COVID-19 outbreak, but this is mainly a way for us to ask about leadership in action across the country.

We believe you will find the questions interesting, and that our final analysis will help you and your communities. So, please respond to this survey as if you were having a discussion with another local leader. ***PLEASE NOTE "LOCAL" IS SOMETHING YOU CAN PERSONALLY DEFINE, WHETHER YOU ARE A LEADER AT THE NEIGHBORHOOD, CITY, COUNTY, REGIONAL OR STATE LEVEL.***

As someone who was involved in your local area's response to the outbreak, we appreciate your willingness to share your experiences and thoughts. You will be asked five open questions for which you might write a few thoughtful sentences for each. For some, it is easier to do this while sitting at a computer and setting aside 10 minutes. Thanks!

6. During this period of time, what were things, if anything, you did or observed that helped make your local area's response successful? OPEN ENDED RESPONSES

N=258

PERCENTAGES ARE BASED ON 361 COMMENTS RECEIVED, NOT RESPONDENTS

43% Community-driven

- 11% Followed pandemic guidance or were responsible without prodding
- 6% Collaboration, cooperation
- 6% Kindness, helping each other, neighborly
- 6% Communication, getting word out
- 4% Existing relationships
- 4% Helped small businesses, tried to keep people employed
- 2% Creative thinking
- 2% Financial generosity
- 1% General community characteristics
- 2% Other

26% Government-driven

- 8% Good communication, clear, consistent
- 6% Strong leadership at some level
- 2% Coordination, cooperation, collaboration between government entities (horizontal and vertical)
- 2% Proactive, rapid response
- 2% Relied on experts, data
- 2% Developed or executed well-crafted rules
- 3% Other

15% Community institutions-driven

- 6% Coordination, cooperation between organizations and possibly government
- 3% General provided programmatic assistance
- 2% Health system (providers, Department of Health)
- 1% Presence of good data
- 1% Business community participation
- 1% Other

10% Actions taken by individuals

- 3% Helped or advised other individuals (not through an organization)
- 2% Followed guidance, stayed updated
- 1% Set a personal example to others
- 3% Other

1% Other

2% Nothing was successful

1% Nothing

<1% Don't know

7. And, what were some things you did or observed by local leaders, if anything, that led to problems or failures?

N=263

PERCENTAGES ARE BASED ON COMMENTS RECEIVED, NOT RESPONDENTS

36% Poor leadership execution

- 15% Not strict enough, lack of enforcement, bowed to pressure to re-open, not prioritize safety
- 6% Too slow to act or to make decisions
- 6% Not taking risks seriously, downplaying risks, denial of risks
- 2% Not leading, sitting back
- 2% Poorly designed regulations, lack of nuance
- 2% Non-inclusive
- 2% General/Other

11% Poor communication

- 5% Incorrect, conflicting, lacking, unclear, inconsistent
- 6% General/Other

10% Poor coordination or leadership from above

- 7% Vertically
- 3% Horizontally

9% Poor deliberation system

- 6% Too politicized
- 3% Would not listen to scientists/experts
- 1% General/Other

5% Poor preparation, lack of readiness

- 2% PPE, testing
- 3% General/Other

12% Other

- 2% Poor assistance to small businesses / business community
- 2% Over-reaction, media off-base, allowed businesses to fail
- 1% Exposed inequities
- 8% Other

10% Nothing, no problems

2% Don't know, unsure

SECTION 4: POST OUTBREAK

ASK OF GROUP B ONLY

ASK OF OUTBREAK LEADERS GROUP ONLY

- 8. We would like to learn from this crisis. Going forward, what are areas in which we, as local leaders, should try and do better, if anything? OPEN ENDED RESPONSES**

N=337

PERCENTAGES ARE BASED ON 502 COMMENTS RECEIVED, NOT RESPONDENTS

41% Approach

- 9% Less political, more civil, more compromise, work for all citizens
- 8% Rely more on experts, data, science, evidence-based
- 6% More collaborative, unified
- 6% More empathy (treat people better, safety first, consider most vulnerable)
- 4% Learn to react more quickly (adapt, nimble, decision-making)
- 3% Listen more
- 3% More inclusive
- 3% Other

22% Communication

- 8% General (more effectively, consistent, continued)
- 3% Better collaboration, unified message
- 3% More honest, transparent, build trust
- 2% How to combat misinformation
- 2% More centralized, single-source
- 5% Other

16% Preparation/Foundation

- 11% Better preparation, planning, anticipation
- 4% More networking, build relationships, collaboration
- 1% Technology

8% Covid-19 specific (better regulations, more enforcement, more compliance, PPE supplies, develop vaccine)

11% Other

- 1% Not over-react
- 10% Other

2% Nothing

1% Don't know

9. Sometimes in a crisis, we discover better ways to do things. It might be a new tactic, a way of communicating, a new resource, or something you observe from a younger generation or people from different backgrounds. From this period of time, was there any new and effective way of doing things as local leaders, if any, that you did or observed, that you would like to share with leaders in other communities? OPEN ENDED RESPONSES

N=252

PERCENTAGES ARE BASED ON 293 COMMENTS RECEIVED, NOT RESPONDENTS

43% Telecommunications

- 28% Online / virtual meetings, and discovering they can be effective, save time and reach/include more people
- 6% Social media
- 5% General use of technology
- 1% Telehealth
- 3% Other

11% Remote and Flexible Work Environments

32% Other

- 3% Involving a younger generation, impressed by actions of young people
- 3% Related to engaging people in communications
- 3% Need for more diverse people in decision making, / need to bring telecommunications to all socioeconomic audiences
- 2% Methods to combat misinformation
- 22% Other (primarily existing ways to lead)

11% Nothing

1% Don't know

ASK OF ALL

10. In general, do you feel your local community will emerge from the outbreak...

N=4,153

41% STRONGER

- 8% Much stronger than it was going into the outbreak
- 33% Somewhat stronger

24% ABOUT THE SAME

35% WEAKER

- 28% Somewhat weaker
- 6% Much weaker than it was going into the outbreak

ASK OF GROUP B ONLY

11. What are some things that would make your community stronger for the future? OPEN ENDED RESPONSES

N=499

PERCENTAGES ARE BASED ON 760 COMMENTS RECEIVED, NOT RESPONDENTS

- 35% Community-focused**
 - 5% Connections, networking, engagement
 - 5% More unity, common identity, compromise, consensus
 - 3% Less political divisions
 - 3% Care for greater good, more consideration of people
 - 3% More cooperation
 - 3% Equity-related awareness, dialogue, understanding
 - 3% More diversity/inclusion
 - 3% More information, education, data, facts
 - 2% Communication
 - 2% Positive attitude, sense of unified purpose or identity
 - 2% Kindness, compassion,
 - 1% Reflection, learn from past, assessment
 - 1% More resiliency, personal responsibility
 - 1% Other

- 20% Political/Governmental**
 - 7% Stronger/change in state/local elected leadership
 - 4% Preparation for future pandemics/disruptions
 - 3% More coordination (horizontally and vertically)
 - 2% Improve government-based communication
 - 1% Stronger/change in federal elected leadership
 - 1% More empathy for citizens
 - 1% Less regulation / more personal choice
 - 1% Reform public safety
 - 1% Equitable funding formulation
 - 1% Respectful tone and actions from elected officials
 - <1% Other

- 19% Social Issue-focused**
 - 3% Systematic racism / equality / race relations
 - 2% Poverty-related
 - 2% Education
 - 2% Mental health / alcohol and drug treatment
 - 2% Health (access, insurance)
 - 1% Care for elderly, vulnerable populations
 - 1% Reduce Digital Divide
 - 1% Civil society, justice
 - 1% Affordable housing
 - 1% General social issues
 - 2% Other

- 10%** **Economic Issue-focused**
- 3% Small business / entrepreneurial support
- 2% Diversify local economic drivers
- 1% Jobs
- 1% Better wages
- 1% General economic issues
- 3% Other

- 7%** **COVID-19 Related**
- 1% General Covid-19 concerns
- 6% Other

3% **Other**

1% **Nothing**

1% **Don't know**

OTHER CATEGORIZATIONS

24% **Related to calling for more non-partisan, unified, civil tone**

- 5% Connections, networking, engagement
- 5% More unity, common identity, compromise, consensus
- 3% Less political divisions
- 3% More cooperation
- 3% Care for greater good, more consideration of people
- 2% Positive attitude, sense of unified purpose or identity
- 2% Kindness, compassion,
- 1% More empathy for citizens
- 1% Respectful tone and actions from elected officials

12% **Related to diversity, inclusion, equity**

- 3% Equity-related awareness, dialogue, understanding
- 3% More inclusion
- 3% Structural Racism / Equality / Race relations
- 1% Reform public safety
- 1% Equitable funding formulation
- 1% Civil society, justice

9% **Related to communication and coordination**

- 3% More cooperation (within community)
- 3% More coordination (intergovernmental and providers, horizontally and vertically)
- 2% Communication (within community)
- 2% Improve government-based communication

SECTION 5: BIG STEPS

ASK OF GROUP A SUBGROUP A1 ONLY

12. We are interviewing a diverse pool of local and national leaders. What would you put forward as a Big Step that could be accomplished in our communities, organizations, or corporations to address known systemic problems and/or provide equal opportunities? OPEN ENDED RESPONSES

N=413

PERCENTAGES ARE BASED ON COMMENTS RECEIVED, NOT RESPONDENTS

- 60% General, Working in the System**
 - 29% Changing awareness, attitudes
 - 19% *Communication, raise awareness, dialogues, discussion, understanding, honest conversations*
 - 4% *Positive attitude (moving forward, unity, no blame, willing to change)*
 - 3% *Acknowledge the problem*
 - 2% *Training in unconscious bias*
 - 1% *Promote diversity/inclusion as an advantage, more training*
- 27% Political reforms
 - 9% More POC involved in decision-making
 - 6% Redirection of budget priorities
 - 4% Less partisan politics at local levels
 - 2% More reliance on experts, science, evidence-based
 - 1% Base decisions more on long-term outcomes
 - 5% Other political reforms
- 2% Traditional planning process (committees, define problem, create action plans)
- 1% Reparations
- 18% Focus on Current Adult/Family Population**
 - 12% Social-driven
 - 4% *Affordable Housing*
 - 2% *Poverty*
 - 2% *Healthcare*
 - 1% *Mental Health*
 - 1% *Food security*
 - 1% *Other social services*
 - 7% Economic
 - 2% *Livable wages*
 - 2% *Equal Opportunity - equal pay, blind hiring*
 - 1% *Jobs*
 - 1% *Economic development projects*
 - <1% *Affordable day care*

- 15% Focus on Next Generation**
 - 6% Education, prioritize education or improve education (general)
 - 3% Equalize education funding
 - 2% Youth (after school centers, mentoring, internships)
 - 2% Curriculum and teacher training to include more POC history
 - 1% Early childhood
 - 1% Major education reforms/improvements
 - <1% Other

- 10% Do not recognize a systemic problem**
 - 4% Does not exist
 - 3% Individuals should just treat other individuals well (Golden Rule)
 - 2% Personal responsibility, merit only
 - 1% Other expressions of no systemic issues

- 4% Private sector involvement / leadership / internal reforms**
- 3% Police**
 - 1% Reform police unions
 - 2% Reform police practices, hiring
- 2% Address racism, more diversity and inclusion (general)**
- 2% Bridge the Digital Divide, unlimited Internet**
- 1% More "opportunity" or "equal opportunity"**
- 1% Action**
- 1% Change in top political leadership**

- 11% Other**
- 3% Don't know**

SECTION 6: VIEWS OF CIVIC LEADERSHIP

ASK OF GROUP A ONLY

13. Civic leaders may have varying assumptions and approaches in their community. For each of the following statements, please rate how much you agree or disagree.

ASSUMPTIONS		Group	N	AGREEMENT				
				Top 2 (Agree)	Completely Agree	Mostly Agree	Mostly Disagree	Completely Disagree
a.	Leaders from different backgrounds who have relationships of trust and respect are in the best position to discuss and reach agreement, as much as it is possible, on the important problems in our communities, and their solutions.	A	3160	97%	60%	37%	3%	0%
f.	Frank discussions among leaders allow them to work towards meaningful change.	A1	725	98%	70%	29%	1%	0%
c.	Collaboration among leaders increases the sustainability of change.	A2	818	97%	73%	25%	2%	1%
k.	Our goal is to find and implement changes that will have a long-term positive impact.	A2	814	97%	69%	28%	3%	1%
d.	Bringing together a diverse group of community members increases the ability to implement sustainable change.	A3	808	97%	68%	29%	3%	0%
g.	Shared best practices and shared learning enable our community to more quickly understand the best approaches to change.	A2	817	97%	67%	31%	2%	0%
e.	Shared experiences among people from different backgrounds allow for the formation of trusting and respectful relationships.	A4	811	97%	66%	31%	3%	0%
j.	A larger community of members leads to greater collective action.	A1	811	97%	66%	31%	3%	0%

ASSUMPTIONS		Group	N	AGREEMENT				
				Top 2 (Agree)	Completely Agree	Mostly Agree	Mostly Disagree	Completely Disagree
b.	There are problems in our community that need to be addressed.	A1	726	95%	72%	23%	4%	1%
l.	There are many sources of ideas for changes.	A3	801	95%	65%	29%	4%	1%
h.	Many members of a community must be involved over time to drive long-term positive impact.	A3	806	95%	58%	37%	4%	1%
i.	Members of the community will try different ideas; some ideas will provide benefits and others may fall short.	A4	785	94%	51%	43%	6%	0%

14. Civic leaders such as yourself may weigh things as having varied worth or importance. For each of the following, please rate how important each of the following is to you. RANDOMIZE LIST. ROTATE ORDER OF ANSWER CHOICES.

VALUES		Group	N	IMPORTANCE				
				Top 2	Very	Somewhat	A Little	Not at All
c.	Engage in solving our problems.	A4	779	98%	77%	21%	2%	0%
h.	Give opportunities to members of the community to step forward.	A1	752	98%	76%	22%	1%	0%
a.	Create new relationships with leaders from different backgrounds.	A2	793	98%	71%	27%	2%	0%
i.	Value contributions more than formal credentials.	A2	792	98%	70%	27%	2%	0%
f.	Engage with people with different backgrounds.	A3	822	97%	79%	18%	3%	0%
b.	Confront complex problems in our community.	A3	821	97%	76%	21%	3%	0%
e.	Work with the broader population on our community's challenges.	A2	793	97%	71%	26%	3%	0%
g.	Engage with people with different opinions.	A4	783	97%	69%	28%	3%	0%
d.	Share your experiences and best practices.	A1	785	94%	51%	43%	6%	0%
j.	Finding non-partisan solutions.	A3	821	92%	69%	23%	5%	2%

ASK OF GROUP A ONLY

15. "I have an obligation to publicly demonstrate how local leaders from different backgrounds can work together in a civil fashion to improve our communities."

N=3,136

83% Agree

42% Completely agree with this statement

41% Mostly agree with this statement

17% Disagree

10% Mostly disagree with this statement

7% Completely disagree with this statement

SECTION 7: DEMOGRAPHICS

ASK OF ALL

16. Do you identify as ...?

N=3,476

42% Male

56% Female

2% Other

<1% Prefer to not respond

17. What is your age?

N=3,482

0% Under 24

6% 25 to 34

23% 35 to 44

30% 45 to 54

25% 55 to 64

14% 65+

2% Prefer to not respond

18. Is the area in which you live...?

N=3,483

26% Urban

55% Suburban

18% Rural

2% Prefer to not respond

19. Which of the following best describes the type of organization with which you most affiliate during your career?

N=3,482

- 18% Government
- 34% Not-for-profit organization or institution
- 46% Private Sector
 - 12% Publicly owned corporation
 - 26% Privately owned corporation
 - 7% Self-employed as sole proprietor
 - 2% Prefer to not respond

20. Your current work status is best described as....

N=3,482

- 82% Working full-time (40 hours+ per week)
- 6% Working part-time
- 1% Looking for work
- 2% Not in workforce, not retired
- 9% Retired
- 1% Prefer to not respond

ASK OF GROUP A ONLY

21. Which of the following best describes the professional sector(s) with which you most affiliate?
MULTIPLE RESPONSES ALLOWED

N=2,752

- 16% Education
- 13% Healthcare, medical, social services
- 12% Financial services, insurance
- 12% Professional services
- 7% Administration, elected official
- 7% Social Services
- 6% Arts, entertainment, and recreation
- 6% Legal Services
- 6% Construction, real estate
- 5% Manufacturing
- 5% Communications, publishing
- 4% Energy, utilities
- 4% Technology, software, information services
- 3% Hospitality
- 3% Environmental
- 3% Military, law enforcement

- 3% Retail/Wholesale
- 2% Transportation, distribution
- 2% Telecommunications
- 1% Agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining
- 14% Something else
- 0% Prefer to not respond

ASK OF ALL

- 22. **Are you of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish background?**
- 23. **IF NOT HISPANIC: For statistical purposes only, how would you describe your main ethnic or racial group? Select all that apply. MULTIPLE RESPONSES ALLOWED.**

N=3,424

- 83% White, Caucasian, Euro-American
- 6% Black, African-American, Afro-Caribbean
- 4% Hispanic, Latino or Spanish background
- 2% East Asian, Asian-American
- 1% South Asian or Indian American
- <1% Middle Eastern or North African
- 1% American Indian, Native American, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander
- 1% Something else
- 4% Prefer to not respond

- 24. **Please indicate whether, before 2020, you played a community leadership role in responding to a community-wide life-threatening crisis: Select all that apply. MULTIPLE RESPONSES ALLOWED.**

N=3,384

- 68% **None**
- 29% **Yes**
 - 25% Sudden Disasters (wildfire, tornado, hurricane, flash flooding, earthquakes, snow and ice storms, environmental spills, terrorism, and/or civil unrest)
 - 9% Slow-moving Disasters (drought, seasonal flooding, pollution, and/or pandemic)
 - 3% Prefer to not respond

-END-