RENTON REGIONAL
COMMUNITY
Foundation

2026 Nonprofit Survey Summary

Front cover: Image courtesy of African Young Dreamers Empowerment Program Intl. (AYDEPI)

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September 2026

Dear Friends,

We are pleased to share the findings and key lessons from the Renton Regional Community Foundation's sixth annual survey of nonprofit leaders in the South King County region.

Conducted in summer 2026, the survey is part of our ongoing effort to understand the issues and trends shaping the local nonprofit sector. We asked leaders about the challenges and opportunities facing their organizations, the broader environment in which they operate, and the needs they see emerging.

Now in its sixth year, the survey offers an important opportunity to consider how nonprofit organizations have navigated a period of significant change. It also allows us to examine how they have adapted to meet community needs, what they are learning, and what forms of support from the Renton Regional Community Foundation and the broader community would be most valuable moving forward.

We are deeply appreciative of the nonprofit leaders who shared their time, experiences, and perspectives with us. Their candor and insight make this report possible. This year, 51 leaders participated in the survey. It should be noted that this report reflects common themes across the responses we received and is not necessarily representative of the views and opinions of the individual participating organizations.

We also extend our appreciation to BECU for their partnership and financial support for this work. With a prominent presence in South King County, BECU shares a commitment to the health and well-being of the people and communities of our region.

We hope these findings contribute to greater understanding, continued conversation, and meaningful support for the nonprofit organizations serving our community.

In gratitude,

LeAnne Moss
Executive Director

BECU

Renton Regional Community Foundation

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Image courtesy of African Young Dreamers Empowerment Program Intl. (AYDEPI)

SIX-YEAR HIGHLIGHTS

Over the past six years (2021–2026), the survey results reveal both remarkable consistency and important changes in the experiences of nonprofit organizations serving South King County. Some challenges have remained persistent: demand for services continues to exceed available capacity; housing, food, and mental health remain the most pressing community needs; and organizations continue to face significant financial and staffing pressures. The environment in which nonprofits operate has evolved considerably—from the immediate disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic to longer-term economic pressures and, most recently, significant funding uncertainty, changes in federal policy, and the political environment.

At the same time, across all six years, nonprofit leaders have consistently emphasized the strength, resilience, and resourcefulness of the communities they serve. Collaboration, adaptability, and a commitment to culturally responsive services remain essential to supporting these community-led responses amid changing conditions.

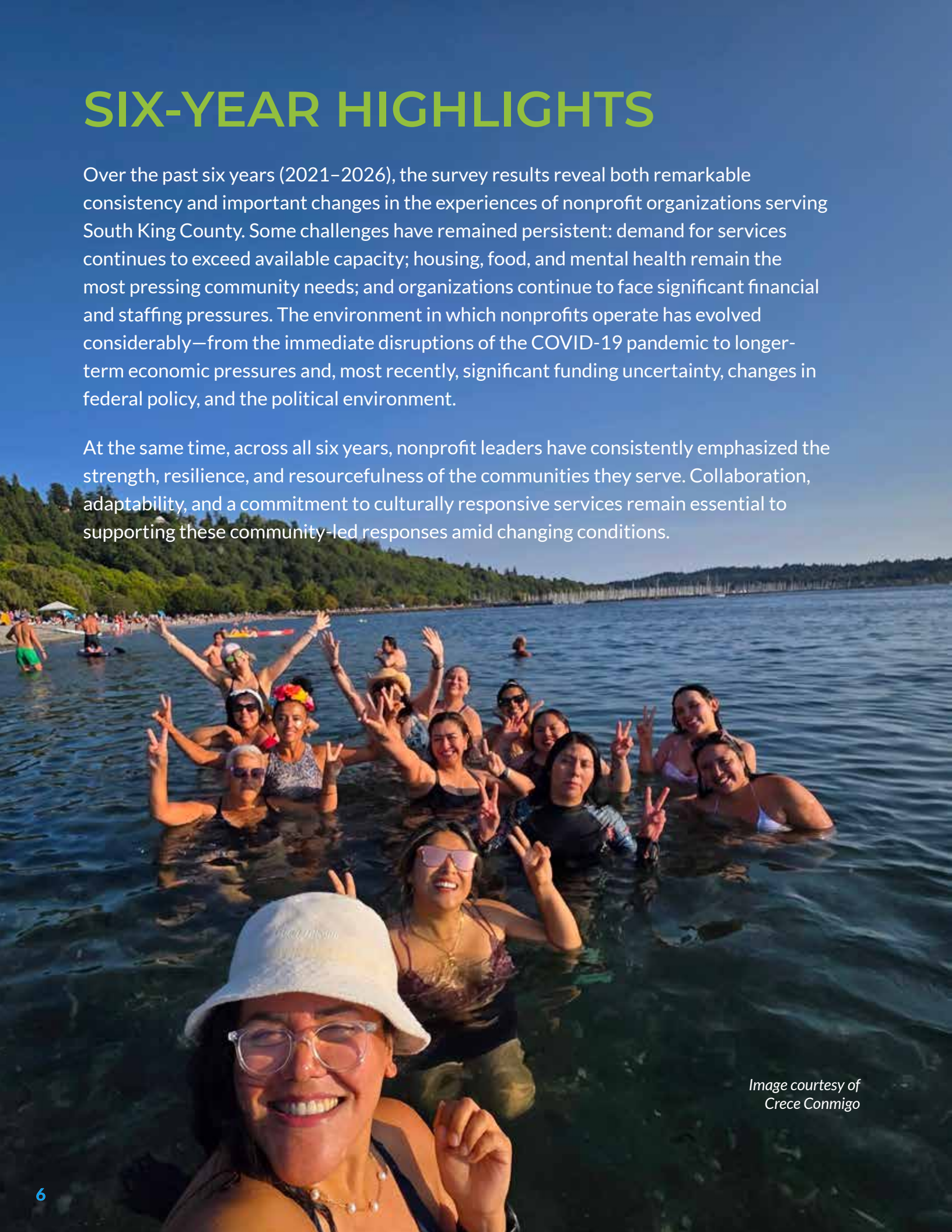


Image courtesy of Crece Conmigo

Similarities Across All Six Years (2021–2026)

Demand for services has remained consistently high. In every year of the survey, a majority of organizations have reported difficulty keeping pace with community needs. The percentage of organizations unable to fully meet demand has ranged from 58% to 72% over the six years.

In 2026, 72% reported being unable to fully meet demand, the highest level reported during the six-year period.

Three community needs have continually ranked at the top. Across all survey years, rental assistance and housing security, food security, and mental health have consistently been the three most frequently identified community needs overall.

Financial stability has remained an ongoing concern. In every year of the survey, organizations have expressed concern about securing sufficient and sustainable resources. Although funding conditions have varied, nonprofits have reported difficulty balancing available resources with growing demand, rising costs, and increasingly complex community needs.

Staffing pressures and organizational well-being continue to be concerns. Challenges related to staff capacity, workload, recruitment and retention, and burnout have appeared repeatedly. In 2026, these concerns are particularly visible in responses describing secondary trauma, compassion fatigue, increased workloads, and anxiety related to organizational and funding uncertainty.

Access to culturally responsive mental health care remains difficult. Across the six years, nonprofit leaders have repeatedly identified a shortage of culturally appropriate mental health services, limited provider availability, stigma, and organizational capacity as barriers to meeting mental health needs.

Collaboration continues to be a significant strength. Partnerships among nonprofit organizations increased substantially during the early pandemic years and have remained an important part of how organizations respond to community needs. In 2026, 88% reported partnering with other nonprofit organizations, and 77% said their partnerships had increased.

Communities continue to be recognized for their strengths and assets. Across all six years, nonprofit leaders have emphasized resilience, cultural richness, lived experience, creativity, mutual support, adaptability, and leadership within the communities they serve. Increasingly, their responses recognize community members not simply as recipients of services, but as experts, leaders, and partners in shaping solutions.

Differences and Trends Over Time (2021-2026)

The nature of the external crisis has changed. In 2021 and 2022, the immediate effects of COVID-19 dominated the findings, including isolation, disruptions to services, volunteer losses, and rapid shifts to virtual service delivery. By 2023 and 2024, attention increasingly shifted toward the longer-term effects of the pandemic, inflation, workforce pressures, and increasingly complex community needs. In 2025 and 2026, funding uncertainty, federal policy changes, immigration enforcement, and concern about the broader political and social environment were much more prominent.

The funding environment has shifted and become more difficult. During the early years of the survey, emergency government assistance and other pandemic-related funding helped many organizations respond to extraordinary demand. As emergency funding ended, financial pressures became more pronounced. Declines in individual, foundation, and government funding became increasingly visible beginning in 2023 and were especially significant in 2025 and 2026. At the same time, inflation and growing demand increased the cost of providing services.

Volunteer participation declined sharply and then began to recover. Volunteer involvement dropped significantly during the first years of the pandemic. Beginning in 2023 and becoming more apparent in 2024 and 2025, organizations reported signs of recovery. In 2026, 48% reported an increase in volunteers, while 33% reported no change, suggesting greater stability than during the early years of the survey.

Organizational priorities have shifted toward financial stability. From 2021 through 2024, improving the quality and depth of programs and services was consistently the highest organizational priority. Fundraising moved into the top three priorities in 2023, rose to second in 2024, and became the number-one reported priority in both 2025 and 2026. Collaboration has also moved into the top three priorities during the past two years, perhaps reflecting the importance of shared capacity in an increasingly constrained environment.

Community needs are increasingly interconnected and affected by policy. Beginning in 2024, respondents described needs as more complex and intersectional, with the overlap in housing, food, mental health, transportation, employment, immigration status, and other concerns frequently cited. In 2025 and 2026, immigration and legal concerns became more prominent, and organizations began describing fear, changes in access to services, and the effects of federal policy and immigration enforcement on the communities they serve.

Immigration-related policy concerns rose sharply in 2026. For the first time in the survey, navigating current administration policies affecting immigrant communities was among the three most frequently selected responses for the number-one greatest area of need. Fourteen percent of respondents ranked it first, placing it behind rental assistance and housing security (31%) and food security (29%), and ahead of mental health (12%). Although mental health remained among the top three needs overall when all ranked choices were considered, this change in first-choice responses reflects the growing urgency of immigration-related policy concerns.

Across the six years, nonprofit organizations have continually adapted to changing circumstances while responding to many of the same underlying community needs.

The most significant change has been in the environment in which organizations are operating and attempting to address these needs.

OVERALL 2026 HIGHLIGHTS

The 2026 survey findings reflect both the persistence of long-standing community needs and an increasingly challenging environment for the nonprofit organizations working to address them.

New survey questions in 2026 provided a clearer picture of how the political, economic, and social environment is affecting nonprofit work. Respondents described impacts on their ability to achieve their missions, funding and operations, organizational safety, and the willingness of some community members to seek services.

These external pressures are also affecting the people working within nonprofit organizations. **Nearly three-quarters (73%) of respondents said the current environment has affected the well-being of their staff, leadership, or board members.** Leaders described increased workloads, secondary trauma and compassion fatigue, anxiety related to funding and job security, and the difficulty of supporting communities while staff members themselves may be personally affected by many of the same circumstances.

Image courtesy of BLAST Haus

Key Themes From the 2026 Findings

Demand remains high and continues to exceed organizational capacity. Eighty-one percent of respondents reported increased demand, while 72% were unable to fully meet the demand for their programs and services.

Longstanding needs persist as immigration-related concerns rise. When respondents' three ranked choices were considered together, rental assistance and housing security, food security, and mental health remained the most frequently identified areas of need. For the first time, however, navigating current administration policies affecting immigrant communities ranked among the top three responses selected as the number-one greatest area of need. Food security also received renewed attention in 2026, with 55% of organizations identifying it as a special area of focus—the highest level reported during the six-year survey period.

Rising costs, funding uncertainty, and federal actions are affecting nonprofit work. Inflation and rising costs were identified as an organizational influence by 90% of respondents. Economic uncertainty was cited by 84%, followed by changes in government funding (82%), changes in philanthropic funding (76%), federal policy changes (73%), and ICE or Border Patrol activity (73%).

Funding stability has become a defining organizational concern.

Sixty percent of respondents reported decreased government funding, 52% reported a decrease in total revenue, 45% reported decreased individual giving, and 42% reported decreased public foundation funding.

Although more organizations met their fundraising goals in 2026 than in 2025, fundraising remains the number-one organizational priority. Advanced fundraising was identified as a professional development need by 74% of respondents, which is the highest percentage in the six-year survey period.

Organizations continue to adapt and collaborate. Sixty-nine percent reported adjusting programs or services in response to the current environment, and 71% reported an increase in collaboration. Overall, 88% partner with other nonprofit organizations and 77% reported that these partnerships have increased.

Access barriers remain significant. Transportation challenges increased again in 2026, with 81% reporting transportation as a challenge for the people they serve, the highest level reported during the six-year survey period. Organizations continue to address transportation and other access barriers through transit and gas assistance, rides, home-based services, virtual options, and services delivered in trusted community locations.

Nonprofit leaders are asking for sustained investment. When asked how funders and community leaders can best support their work, respondents emphasized flexible and unrestricted funding, multi-year commitments, and investment in staffing and organizational capacity. They also called for stronger connections and partnerships and greater trust in community-based organizations and the knowledge of the communities they serve.

Image courtesy of Living Well Kent

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF NONPROFIT STAKEHOLDERS

The survey includes responses from a diverse group of 51 nonprofit organizations, varying in size, geographic reach, mission focus, and the communities they serve. Together, the responses offer a broad view of the organizations working to meet community needs across the region.

Nonprofit Status

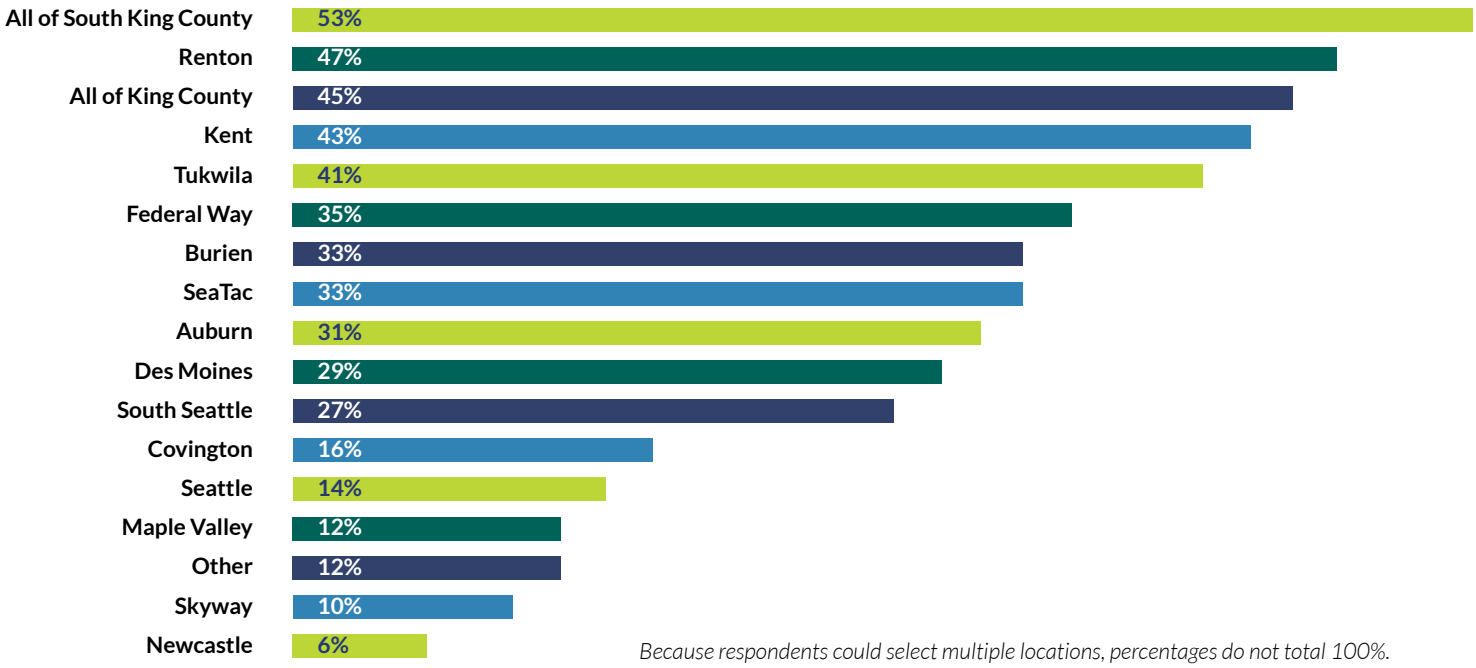
Nearly all respondents (94%) represented organizations with 501(c)(3) nonprofit status. The remaining 6% operated under a fiscal sponsor.

Locations Served

Organizations reported serving communities throughout the region, often working in more than one location. Fifty-three percent reported serving all of South King County, and 45% reported serving all of King County, reflecting the broad geographic reach of many participating organizations.

Among specific areas, Renton (47%), Kent (43%), and Tukwila (41%) were the three most frequently identified, while Newcastle (6%), Skyway (10%), and Maple Valley (12%) were the least frequently identified. Newcastle and Maple Valley have consistently been among the least-represented locations across all six years of the survey, with Skyway appearing among the bottom three for the first time in 2026.

COMMUNITIES NONPROFITS IDENTIFIED AS BEING SERVED



Because respondents could select multiple locations, percentages do not total 100%.

Food security received particular attention in 2026. Fifty-five percent of respondents identified food security as a special focus of their work, the highest percentage reported during the six years of the survey.

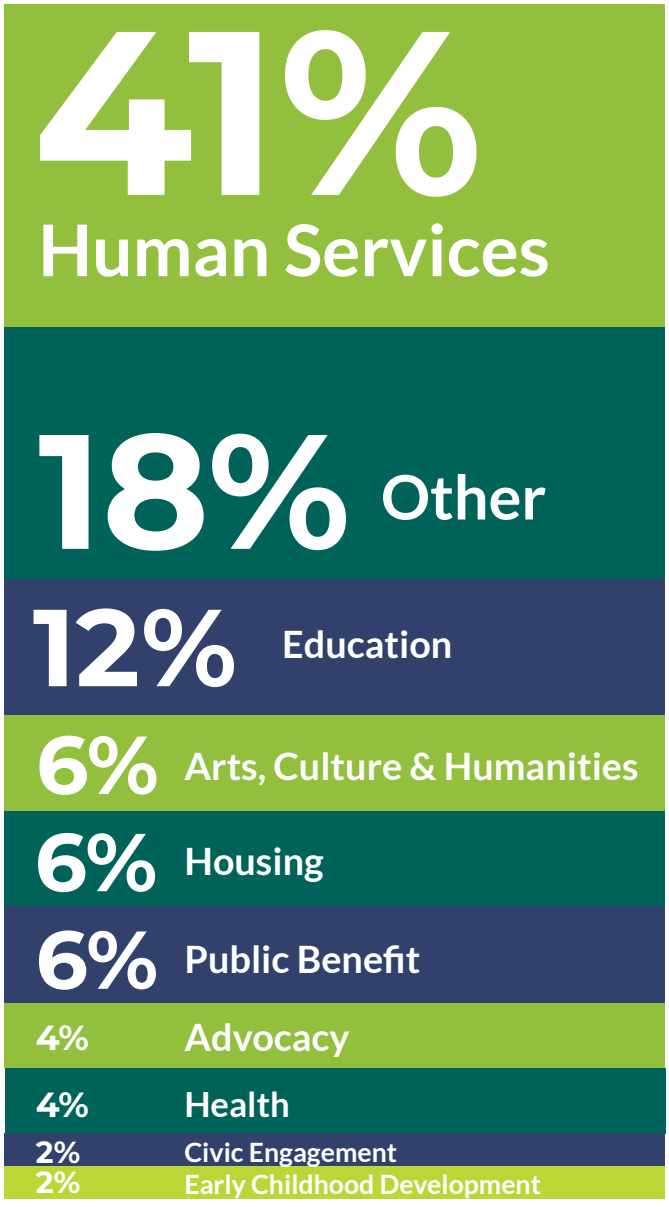
Organization Budget Size

Most participating organizations operate with relatively modest budgets: 65% reported annual budgets below $1 million and 86% reported budgets below $3 million. Nine percent reported budgets between $5 million and $10 million, and none reported an annual budget above $10 million.

Focus Area

Human services remained the most common primary focus area (41%). Eighteen percent selected "Other," compared with 19% in 2025. Comments described organizations working across traditional service categories, often combining food security, housing stability, workforce and youth development, health and wellness, community outreach, violence prevention, and advocacy in response to interconnected community needs. Education was the third most frequently identified primary focus area (12%).

SOUTH KING COUNTY NONPROFIT AREAS OF PRIMARY FOCUS IN 2026:

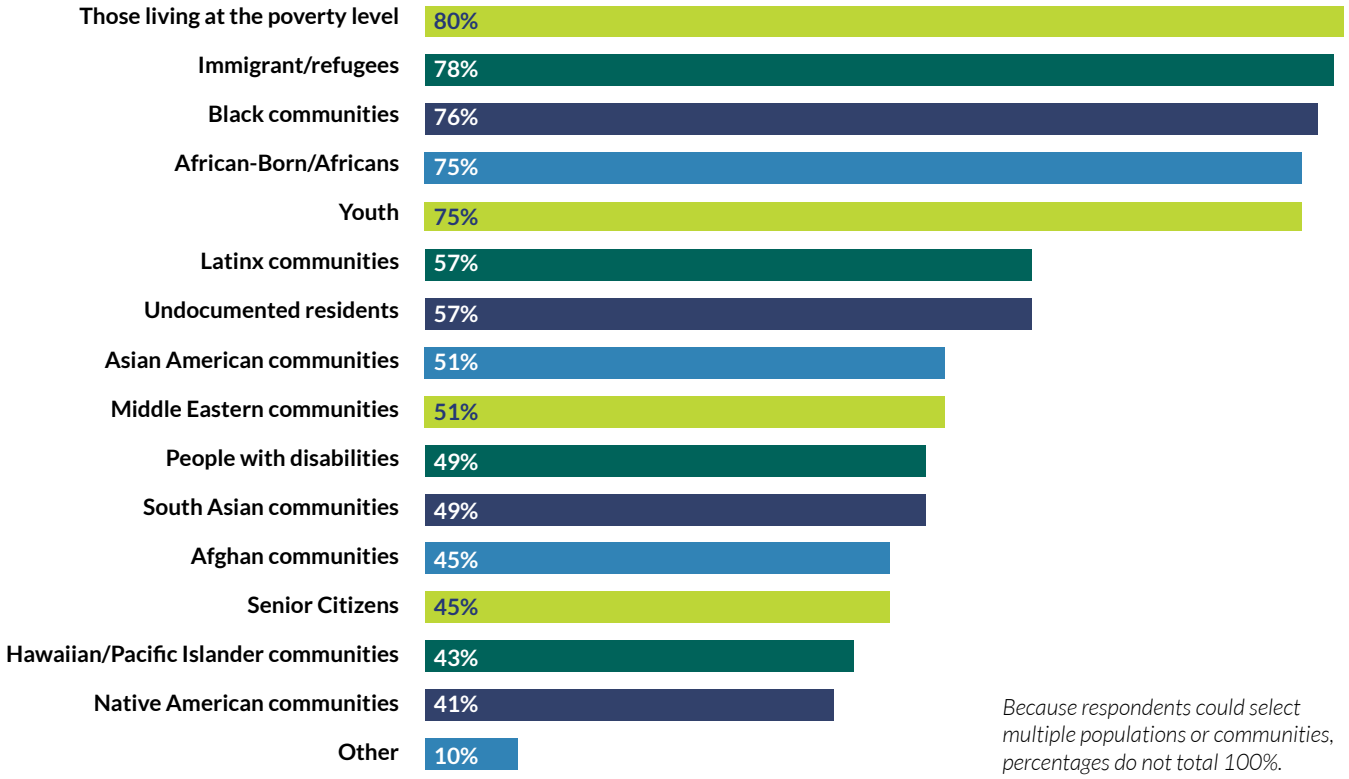


GENERAL OVERVIEW OF NONPROFIT STAKEHOLDERS (cont.)

Populations/Communities Worked with and/or Served

Participating organizations reported serving a wide range of populations and communities, with many organizations working across multiple groups. The three most frequently identified were people experiencing poverty (80%), immigrants and refugees (78%), and Black communities (76%). Native American communities (41%) and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander communities (43%) were least frequently identified, followed by Afghan communities and senior citizens, both at 45%.

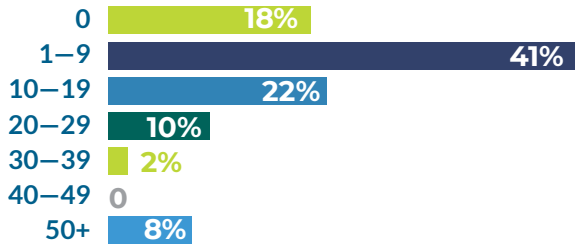
POPULATIONS/COMMUNITIES WORKED WITH AND/OR SERVED IN 2026



Because respondents could select multiple populations or communities, percentages do not total 100%.

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

Organizations varied considerably in staffing. The number of employees reported ranged from no paid employees to 90, with many organizations reporting fewer than 10. Several described relying on volunteers, independent contractors, or stipend-supported team members rather than traditional paid staff. These differences provide important context for understanding the range of organizational structures and capacities represented in the survey.



Assets of the Communities and Populations Nonprofits Serve

Respondents were asked to describe the assets and strengths of the communities with which they work. Across the responses, community members were described as bringing knowledge, relationships, skills, and experience that contribute to the well-being of their families and communities. From participant responses, six closely connected themes emerged:

- **Resilience and resourcefulness.** Leaders repeatedly described community members as resilient, persistent, adaptable, and skilled at finding ways forward despite displacement, economic hardship, discrimination, trauma, and other significant barriers. This resilience was reported as being evident not only in people's ability to endure difficult circumstances, but also in their determination to rebuild their lives, care for their families, pursue new opportunities, and help others.
- **Cultural identity and intergenerational strength.** Respondents identified cultural traditions, languages, faith, family relationships, and knowledge shared across generations as important sources of identity, connection, and strength. Elders were recognized for sustaining cultural traditions and offering wisdom and guidance and young people for contributing creativity, technological skills, energy, and emerging leadership. According to participants, multilingual and multicultural perspectives also help communities navigate systems, maintain a sense of belonging, and build connections across generations.
- **Mutual support and collective care.** Communities were described as generous, interconnected, and deeply committed to supporting one another. Families, neighbors, faith communities, cultural organizations, volunteers, and informal networks share food, information, transportation, emotional support, and connections to resources. According to respondents, these relationships help people meet immediate needs, welcome newcomers, and reduce isolation. They also fill important gaps when formal systems are difficult to access or do not provide sufficient support.
- **Community knowledge and lived experience.** Respondents emphasized the knowledge community members have gained through their experiences navigating social, economic, educational, health, and public systems. This firsthand understanding helps people identify the barriers facing their communities and the types of support most likely to be accessible, trusted, and effective. Community members were reported as often serving as trusted messengers, mentors, interpreters, connectors, and advocates.
- **Creativity, leadership, and commitment to the future.** Leaders described community members as creative problem-solvers, entrepreneurs, artists, educators, caregivers, volunteers, and emerging leaders. Young people were especially recognized for their curiosity, creativity, leadership potential, and desire to contribute to their schools and communities.
- **Community members as partners in developing solutions.** Respondents described community members not only as people receiving services, but as experts, leaders, trusted partners, and co-designers of solutions. Organizations emphasized the importance of listening to community members and building on the strengths and relationships already present. Respondents also described their role as helping remove barriers, connecting people with resources, and creating opportunities for community members to shape the programs and decisions that affect them.

DEMAND FOR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Greatest Area(s) of Need from Community

Respondents were asked to identify the three greatest areas of community need. When all three choices were considered together, rental assistance and housing security was included among the three greatest needs by 75% of respondents, followed by food security at 67%, and mental health at 63%.

The number-one choices revealed an important change in 2026. Rental assistance and housing security received the highest percentage of first-place rankings (31%), followed closely by food security (29%). For the first time in the history of the survey, "navigating current administration policies affecting immigrant communities" ranked among the top three number-one choices, with 14% of respondents identifying it as the greatest area of need. Mental health ranked fourth among number-one choices at 12%, although it remained third overall when all three choices were considered.

1 FIRST ranked greatest needs:

- **31%** Rental assistance/ housing security
- **29%** Food security
- **14%** Navigating the current administration's policies impacting immigrant communities
- **12%** Mental health support
- **6%** Safety: domestic violence support
- **4%** Support for undocumented people
- **4%** Other

2 SECOND ranked greatest needs:

- **30%** Rental assistance/housing security
- **24%** Food security
- **20%** Mental health support
- **14%** Support for undocumented people
- **4%** Navigating the current administration's policies impacting immigrant communities
- **4%** Relief from social isolation
- **2%** Safety: domestic violence support
- **2%** Other

Respondents' comments emphasized that the areas of greatest need often overlap, creating more complex situations for individuals and families and requiring more coordinated responses from nonprofit organizations.

Ability to Fully Meet Demand for Services

Demand for nonprofit programs and services remains high across South King County. Eighty-one percent of respondents reported that demand increased during the past year. Although the percentage reporting increased demand is lower than in 2025, the gap between community need and organizational capacity remains substantial: 72% of respondents said their organizations were unable to fully meet demand, compared with 62% in 2025.

Challenges in Meeting Community Needs and Concerns

Most respondents (82%) reported observing changes in the needs, concerns, or priorities of the people they serve during the past 12 months. Comments reflected several related themes:

Rising costs and greater demand for basic needs. Organizations described increasing housing, food, transportation, childcare, and other basic costs, along with greater demand for emergency assistance and culturally relevant food.

Growing mental health and safety concerns. Respondents reported increased stress, anxiety, trauma, community violence, and social isolation in addition to concern about the availability of culturally responsive mental health care.

Employment and economic instability. Organizations noted employment uncertainty, changes in public benefits, and growing demand for workforce development, financial education, paid training, and pathways to living-wage employment.

Fear related to federal policy and immigration enforcement. Many respondents described heightened fear and uncertainty among immigrant and refugee communities. Respondents reported that some community members were reluctant to leave their homes, attend programs, seek services, or participate in public activities.

More complex and interconnected needs. Respondents emphasized that housing instability, food insecurity, mental health concerns, employment, transportation, immigration status, and other challenges frequently overlap. These circumstances have increased the need for trusted information, culturally and linguistically responsive services, and more coordinated support.

DEMAND FOR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES (cont.)

Organizational Responses to Concerns Affecting Immigrant and Refugee Communities

Most respondents (80%) reported that their organizations had addressed concerns or issues affecting immigrant and refugee populations. Their comments described several ways organizations are responding:

Trusted information and legal navigation. Organizations are offering Know Your Rights workshops, sharing multilingual information and policy updates, distributing rights-based resources, developing safety protocols, and connecting people with trusted immigration attorneys and legal-service organizations.

Safer and more flexible access to services. Respondents described creating trusted gathering spaces, limiting the collection of sensitive personal information, moving some programs online, providing home delivery, and meeting people in community locations when fear or safety concerns make it difficult to visit an office or attend public activities.

Culturally and linguistically responsive support. Organizations are expanding interpretation, multilingual outreach, culturally appropriate food, community health navigation, and services designed around the languages, experiences, and concerns of immigrant and refugee families.

Meeting immediate needs and connecting people with resources. Organizations are helping immigrant and refugee community members access food and housing assistance, healthcare and public benefits, workforce development, paid training, and employment support. Respondents also reported connecting people with mental health, education, transportation, and other essential services.

Emotional support, connection, and belonging. Organizations described providing healing circles, support groups, mentorship, cultural events, community meals, and other opportunities intended to reduce fear and isolation and help people remain connected.

Partnerships and advocacy. Many organizations are working more closely with culturally specific nonprofits, schools, healthcare providers, legal organizations, local governments, and community networks to share information, coordinate referrals, advocate for community needs, and respond to issues beyond their own areas of expertise.

Needs Organizations Are Unable to Fully Address

Respondents identified a range of needs that their organizations are unable to address fully.

Housing and rental assistance. Housing was among the most frequently mentioned unmet needs, particularly given the high cost and limited availability of affordable housing. Respondents described a lack of rental assistance, move-in support, emergency housing, and longer-term options for individuals and families experiencing housing instability.

Immigration and legal services. Organizations reported a substantial need for affordable, accessible, and culturally responsive legal assistance, including support related to immigration, deportation, documentation, housing discrimination, and navigating changing policies.

Mental health services. Respondents described continued difficulty connecting people with culturally responsive and trauma-informed mental health care. They specifically noted difficulty finding Black mental health professionals and therapists who understand African and Black immigrant experiences. Additionally, limited provider availability, language barriers, long waitlists, cost, and insufficient organizational capacity prevent many organizations from meeting the level of need they are seeing.

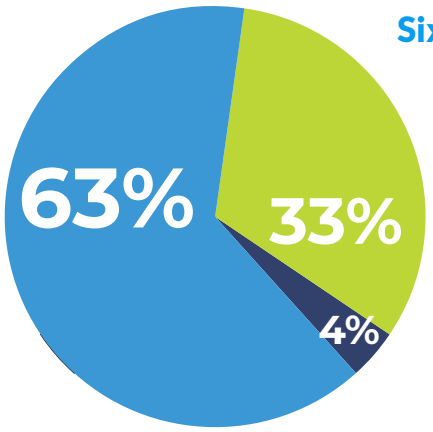
Basic needs and emergency assistance. Food, transportation, childcare, clothing, hygiene supplies, and emergency financial assistance remain difficult to provide at the level needed. Respondents noted that these needs frequently overlap and can prevent people from accessing employment, education, healthcare, and other services.

Economic mobility and financial stability. Organizations identified a need for employment and job training, financial education and coaching, career exploration, industry-recognized credentials, entrepreneurship support, and pathways to living-wage employment. Several emphasized helping youth and families build longer-term financial stability in addition to responding to immediate crises.

Organizational capacity to respond. Respondents often attributed service gaps to limited funding, insufficient staffing, shortages of specialized providers, and the scale and complexity of community needs. Several noted that one-time assistance is inadequate when individuals and families require sustained, coordinated support.

DEMAND FOR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES (cont.)

Effects of the Current Political, Economic, and Social Environment



Sixty-three percent said the current environment had significantly or extremely affected their organization's ability to achieve its mission

Thirty-three percent reported a slight or moderate effect

Just 4% said it had no effect

When asked to characterize the overall effect on their organization, 82% described it as somewhat (35%) or very negative (47%). Another 12% reported a mixed effect. These respondents described significant financial and operational pressures alongside stronger community solidarity, deeper partnerships, greater recognition of the importance of their missions, and new approaches to programs, outreach, and funding. Six percent reported no significant effect, and no respondents described the overall effect as positive.

Participant's at RRCF's Nonprofit Deep Dive at Living Well Kent

Panelists at RRCF's Trust-Based Philanthropy in South King County gathering

Aspects of the Current Environment Having the Greatest Impact

When asked which aspects of the current political, economic, and social environment were having the greatest effect on their organizations and the communities they serve, respondents identified a combination of economic, funding, policy, and social factors.

MOST CITED ISSUES IMPACTING ORGANIZATIONS IN 2026

Inflation and rising costs
90%

Economic uncertainty
84%

Changes in government funding
82%

Changes in philanthropic funding
76%

Federal policy changes
73%

ICE and Border Patrol activity
73%

Inflation and rising costs were cited by 90%. Economic uncertainty was identified by 84%, followed by changes in government funding (82%), changes in philanthropic funding (76%), federal policy changes (73%), and ICE or Border Patrol activity (73%). Respondents also cited workforce conditions, increased public expressions of racism, reduced community trust and cohesion, changes in public discourse, and state and local policy changes.

DEMAND FOR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES (cont.)

Organizational Well-Being

Most respondents (73%) said the current political, economic, and social environment has affected the well-being of their staff, leadership, or board members. Their comments described the following themes:

Heavier workloads and limited capacity. As community needs have grown and become more complex, staff and leaders are being asked to do more, often with fewer resources. Some respondents reported that requests for assistance have increased dramatically, while staffing reductions have left fewer people available to respond. Several described feeling overwhelmed or unable to keep pace.

Emotional strain and secondary trauma. Staff regularly work with people experiencing fear, housing and food insecurity, violence, family separation, and other crises. Respondents described stress, anxiety, compassion fatigue, burnout, and the emotional toll of supporting people when sufficient help is not always available.

Personal connections to the issues affecting communities. Many staff, leaders, and board members belong to the communities their organizations serve. Some have family members directly affected by immigration enforcement, economic hardship, racial inequities, or community violence. They may therefore be managing many of the same fears and pressures facing the people they support.

Funding and job insecurity. Funding cuts and uncertainty have created concern about layoffs, program reductions, and long-term organizational stability. Some organizations have already eliminated positions or reduced contractor and program support. Others noted that salaries have not kept pace with inflation, placing additional financial pressure on staff.

Pressure on leadership and boards. Leaders and board members are devoting more attention to fundraising, financial sustainability, staffing decisions, and preparations for possible funding or policy changes. Board transitions and retention were also mentioned. Several respondents described the challenge of reassuring and supporting staff while leadership is navigating the same uncertainty.

Supporting staff, leaders, and board members. Organizations described a range of responses, including peer support, open communication, shared decision-making, reflection time, wellness activities, flexible schedules, time off, and access to mental health resources. Teamwork and strong partnerships were also identified as sources of support. A few respondents noted that the current circumstances have renewed their sense of purpose and strengthened their commitment to the work.

Organizations were asked what changes they had made in response to the current political, economic, and social environment. Most ***(71%) reported increasing collaboration****, and* ***69% adjusted programs or services. Fifty-nine percent*** *increased fundraising efforts,* ***49% expanded advocacy or public education, and 45% modified their communications.*** *Changing strategic priorities, conducting safety-response training, and delaying or reducing planned activities were each reported by* ***39%.*** *Only* ***4%*** *said they had made no significant changes.*

DEMAND FOR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES (cont.)

Nonprofits' Response to the Current Environment

Respondents' comments provided additional detail about how these changes are taking place:

Adapting programs and prioritizing urgent needs. Organizations described adjusting services in response to food insecurity, housing instability, job loss, mental health concerns, immigration-related uncertainty, and reductions in public benefits. Some prioritized their highest-impact programs or expanded culturally responsive mental health and immigrant-support services.

Expanding trusted and multilingual outreach. Respondents increased public education and communicated through trusted community networks. Several expanded multilingual outreach, shared information about changing policies and available resources, and adjusted communications to reach immigrant, refugee, and other underserved communities.

Strengthening collaboration and referrals. Organizations reported working more closely with nonprofit partners, healthcare providers, food suppliers, faith communities, public agencies, schools, employers, volunteers, and culturally specific organizations. These partnerships helped coordinate resources, strengthen referrals, extend outreach, and respond to needs beyond the capacity of a single organization.

Increasing fundraising and diversifying revenue. Respondents described pursuing additional grants, expanding fundraising efforts, diversifying revenue streams, and seeking new sources of support as public and philanthropic funding became less certain.

Making difficult operational tradeoffs. Some organizations delayed expansion plans, reduced administrative staffing to preserve frontline positions, consolidated transportation routes, or scaled back deliveries and other activities because of fuel costs, staffing limitations, and insufficient funding.

Strengthening safety and access. Comments described training staff on how to respond to possible ICE activity, offering virtual or flexible services, prioritizing home delivery for medically vulnerable residents, providing rideshare support, and using individualized assessments and warm referrals to improve access.

Looking Ahead: Organizational Concerns for the Next 12–24 Months

Most respondents (80%) expressed at least moderate concern about their organization's ability to navigate the current political, economic, and social environment over the next 12–24 months. ***Of these respondents, 54% were very or extremely concerned.*** *Eighteen percent were slightly concerned, and 2% were not at all concerned.*

PROGRAM CHANGES

Changes in Specific Areas of Organizations in the Past Year

Nonprofit organizations continue to adjust their programs and operations in response to changing community needs and external conditions.

Areas of Expansion in the Past Year

Organizations reported expansion across many areas of their work during the past year. Collaboration with other nonprofits increased most often, reported by 76% of respondents, followed by communications and marketing (75%) and the number of people served (71%).

TOP AREAS OF EXPANSION IN 2026	
76%	Collaboration with Nonprofits
75%	Communications and Marketing
71%	Number of People Served

Areas of Reduction in the Past Year

In terms of areas of reduction, the number of programs offered decreased for 21% of respondents, while fundraising activities and staff size each decreased for 20%, and 17% reduced the number of people served. Comments included that some organizations maintained the same number of programs but reduced how often programs were offered or limited the number of people who could participate.

TOP AREAS OF REDUCTION IN 2026	
21%	Number of Programs
20%	Staff Size
20%	Fundraising Activities
17%	Number of People Served

Areas That Remained the Same

Organizations also identified areas that remained unchanged during the past year. Diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts were most frequently reported as staying the same (44%), followed by service area (40%) and staff size (38%).

AREAS THAT STAYED THE SAME IN 2026	
44%	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
40%	Service Area
38%	Staff Size

PROGRAM CHANGES (cont.)

How Organizations Are Adapting

Organizations described changing where, when, and how services are delivered. These adaptations included virtual programming, home visits and delivery, revised service hours, and offering programs in community settings where participants feel safe and comfortable. Some organizations expanded Know Your Rights education, immigration and legal navigation, multilingual outreach, and communications through trusted cultural and faith-based networks.

Respondents also described listening to participants and adjusting programs around their needs and priorities. Organizations revised schedules, application processes, curricula, and training models to make services more accessible. Some continued offering programs free of charge or introduced paid training opportunities so that cost or the need to earn income would not prevent participation. Others expanded culturally responsive mental health support, culturally relevant food distribution, and spaces intended to promote healing, belonging, and community connection.

Programs related to food, housing, mental health, youth development, and workforce development were expanded or redesigned in response to growing demand. At the same time, limited funding and staffing required some organizations to streamline programs, reduce their frequency, delay planned activities, or become more selective about the communities and partnerships they could support.

Operational Responses

As a result of program adaptations, respondents reported needing to make organizational changes such as cross-training staff, redistributing responsibilities, freezing salaries or positions, and relying more heavily on volunteers and partnerships. Some changed intake procedures, upgraded facilities or equipment, adjusted workflows, or added outside support to meet new compliance requirements.

Organizations also pursued new grants, fundraising strategies, earned revenue, and other funding sources. Several strengthened referral networks and partnerships so that community members could access services beyond the organization's own scope. These operational changes helped organizations preserve essential services, although respondents frequently noted that growing demand continues to exceed available staff, funding, and administrative capacity.

Partnerships

Eighty-eight percent of respondents partner with other nonprofit organizations, and 77% reported that these partnerships increased during the past year. Organizations described partnerships as a way to coordinate services, share information and referrals, extend geographic or cultural reach, advocate collectively, and respond more effectively to complex needs.

According to respondents, collaboration remains one of the sector's greatest strengths; however, it was also noted that effective partnership requires time, coordination, trust, and resources. In their comments, respondents identified continued convening, relationship-building, and investment in organizational infrastructure as ways funders and community leaders could help strengthen collaboration.

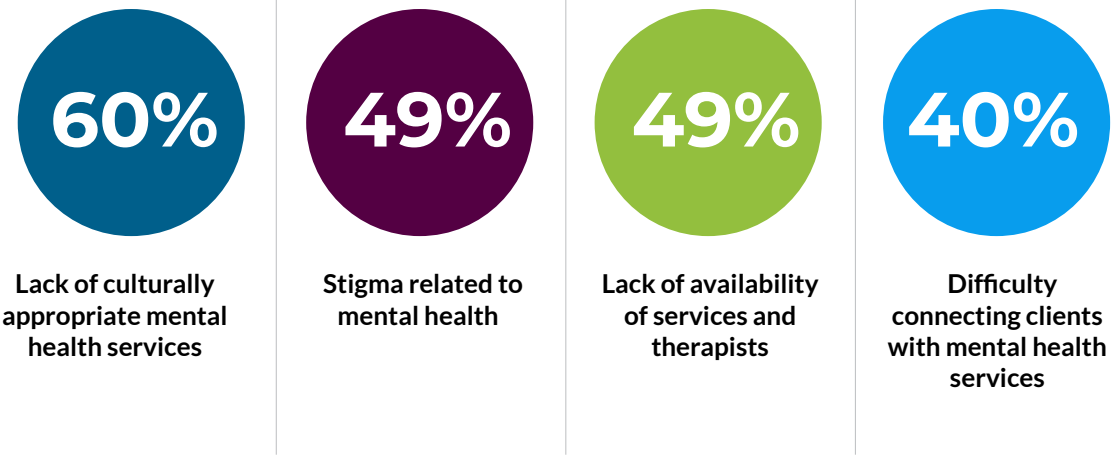
CHALLENGES TO CONSTITUENTS

Respondents reported on several challenges they are both facing and addressing.

Barriers to Mental Health for Staff and Community

The leading mental health barriers remained largely consistent with 2025. The lack of culturally appropriate services continued to rank first, identified by 60% of respondents, followed by stigma and the limited availability of services and therapists, both at 49%. These same barriers were the top three in the 2025 findings. The most notable change was difficulty connecting clients with mental health services, which rose from 27% in 2025 to 40% in 2026 and became the fourth most frequently identified barrier.

TOP BARRIERS TO MENTAL HEALTH:



Comments provided more detail about these barriers. Respondents described long waitlists, limited insurance coverage, language barriers, and difficulty finding providers who understand the experiences of the communities they serve. Several specifically noted the shortage of Black mental health professionals and providers familiar with African and Black immigrant experiences. Cultural stigma, concerns about confidentiality or judgment, and a lack of time were reported as also preventing some people from seeking care.

Respondents also connected mental health to housing instability, food insecurity, economic stress, transportation barriers, community violence, isolation, and uncertainty. For nonprofit staff and leaders, growing workloads, compassion fatigue, funding instability, and the pressure of responding to increasing community needs were frequently mentioned concerns.

CHALLENGES TO CONSTITUENTS (cont.)

Addressing the Mental Health Barriers

Organizations described a range of approaches to supporting mental health and well-being. Some provide counseling through staff therapists or interns, while others partner with culturally responsive providers, offer referrals, or use therapy vouchers and other financial assistance to help people access care. Healing circles, peer-support groups, maternal mental health programs, community gatherings, and other trusted spaces give participants opportunities to discuss stress and trauma, reduce isolation, and build supportive relationships.

Education and outreach were also identified as important parts of this work. Respondents reported offering Mental Health First Aid and trauma-informed training, workshops, podcasts, community conversations, and multilingual programs intended to increase awareness and reduce stigma. Other organizations are incorporating mental health into youth development, mentorship, cultural activities, creative expression, outdoor experiences, and programs addressing food security, employment, financial stability, and other conditions that affect well-being.

For staff, organizations described regular check-ins, peer support, flexible schedules, time off, mental health days, EAPs and health benefits, team-building activities, and efforts to maintain manageable caseloads. Several emphasized open communication, healthy work-life boundaries, and creating a workplace where staff can seek support without stigma.

Transportation Challenges and Reasons for Such Challenges

Eighty-one percent of respondents identified transportation as a challenge for the people they serve, an increase from 67% in 2025 and the highest level reported during the six-year survey period.

Comments described several overlapping barriers, including long distances, multiple transfers, lengthy travel times, limited transit routes, and the cost of fares, gas, rideshares, and car repairs. Transportation was noted as especially difficult for young people, seniors, people with disabilities or health conditions, and families without reliable vehicles. Some immigrant community members reportedly avoided public transportation because of concerns about immigration enforcement or arrest.

TOP BARRIERS TO TRANSPORTATION

60% lack of money for public transportation or gas

51% unable to drive

33% health or saftey concerns, fear about leaving home

30% no appropriate bus route is available

Respondents noted that transportation also impacted nonprofit operations, such as the logistical difficulty of transporting participants to programs and events or sending staff across multiple communities and school districts. In some cases, limited transportation funding restricts where programs can be offered and who can participate.

Addressing the Transportation Challenges

Organizations are responding to the transportation challenges by providing bus passes and ORCA cards, gas cards, taxi vouchers, Uber or Lyft support, organization-provided transportation, and rides from volunteers. Some help community members register for free or reduced-fare transit programs or provide limited support for driver education.

Others reported bringing services closer to the people they serve through home delivery, home visits, virtual and telehealth options, and programs offered in accessible community locations. Respondents also described rotating program sites, coordinating trips with schools and partner organizations, grouping service locations to reduce travel, and connecting people with transportation resources available through other organizations.

Despite these efforts, respondents reported that transportation needs continue to exceed available funding and capacity.

Some organizations cannot provide transportation directly and must rely on referrals or community partners. Others have developed delivery or transportation programs, but they are unable to serve everyone who needs assistance.

Participants at RRCF's Trust-Based Philanthropy in South King County gathering

FUNDRAISING AND CAPACITY

Financial stability remains one of the most significant challenges facing nonprofit organizations in 2026. Respondents described declining or uncertain revenue at the same time that costs, demand, and the complexity of services are increasing. The findings point to a sector that continues to expand and adapt in important ways while operating within substantial financial constraints.

Fundraising in the Past Year

Fifty-six percent of respondents did not meet their fundraising expectations in 2026, while 40% met expectations and 5% exceeded them. Although fundraising remains difficult, this represents an improvement from 2025, when 68% reported not meeting their fundraising goals.

The improvement should be understood alongside the broader funding picture: most respondents still reported decreased total revenue, and fundraising remains their highest organizational priority.

Declines were reported across several major sources of funding. Government funding saw the sharpest decline, with 60% of respondents reporting a decrease and 12% reporting an increase. Forty-five percent experienced a decline in individual giving, compared with 33% who reported an increase. Public foundation funding decreased for 42% of organizations, while 23% reported an increase and 28% saw no change. These changes contributed to a broader decline in organizational revenue: 52% reported lower total revenue, compared with 21% reporting an increase and 26% reporting no change.

According to respondents, this represents a shift that has become more visible in recent years. Early pandemic-related resources helped many organizations respond to extraordinary community needs, but those resources have receded.

Image courtesy of SafeFutures Youth Center

Image courtesy of Crece Conmigo

Impact of RRCF Grantmaking

While not all respondents had received a grant from the Renton Regional Community Foundation (RRCF), those who had received RRCF grants described the funding as supporting both immediate community needs and longer-term organizational capacity. Grants supported a wide range of work—from helping families meet immediate needs for food, housing, utilities, and transportation to expanding culturally relevant food access, mental health and healing services, and youth programs. Some respondents reported the funding allowed organizations to keep services free and accessible to community members.

Organizations also used the funding to strengthen the staffing, operations, infrastructure, and equipment needed to sustain their programs. According to respondents, this support helped them reach more people, respond to emerging needs, and maintain services in a difficult funding environment. Smaller and newer organizations also noted that RRCF funding increased their credibility and helped build trust with other funders and partners.

Respondents reported particularly valuing RRCF's flexible and responsive approach to funding, which allows organizations to direct resources where they are most needed and respond quickly as community needs change. Additionally, appreciation was expressed for RRCF's understanding of the close relationship between direct services and the organizational capacity required to deliver those services effectively.

Participants at RRCF's Trust-Based Philanthropy in South King County gathering

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Professional Development

The 2026 findings point to a strong and growing need for fundraising knowledge and organizational capacity. Advanced fundraising was selected by 74% of respondents—the highest percentage for this topic during the six years of the survey and a substantial increase from 45% in 2025.

Board governance was the second most frequently identified need at 58%, followed by communications and marketing at 49%.

TOP PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNICAL RESOURCES NEEDED	
74%	Fundraising (Advanced)
58%	Board Development/Governance
49%	Communications/Marketing
47%	Strategic Planning
42%	Fundraising (Basics)
42%	Leadership Recruitment and Development
33%	Program Evaluation
30%	Advocacy Training
30%	Financial Management and Budgeting

LOOKING AHEAD

Priorities in the Next Year

Nonprofit leaders are looking ahead with a combination of commitment and concern. Their priorities reflect a desire to sustain and strengthen essential services while building the financial, operational, and relational capacity needed to navigate continued uncertainty.

In their comments, respondents focused most often on financial stability and building the capacity to maintain or expand services over the next 12 months. Sustainable, multi-year funding was central, whether an organization's goal was to stabilize existing programs or reach more people. Many are also preparing for the future by strengthening their internal systems and planning, investing in facilities and staff, and improving how they evaluate and communicate their work. For some organizations, however, the immediate priority is more fundamental: maintaining current programs and remaining financially stable in a difficult funding environment.

Fundraising is the leading organizational priority for the coming year (72%), followed by improving the quality or depth of programs (65%), and increasing collaboration with other nonprofit organizations (58%).

Image courtesy of Angolan Community in Washington

Images courtesy of Crece Conmigo

How Funders and Community Leaders Can Help

Nonprofit leaders were asked what support they need most from funders and community leaders as they navigate the current political, economic, and social environment. Their responses reflected four primary themes:

Funding for stability and responsiveness. Flexible, multi-year operating support was the most frequently expressed need. Respondents emphasized that this type of funding provides greater stability and allows organizations to respond as circumstances change.

Support for the organization behind the programs. Many respondents said that funding individual programs is not enough. They identified support for staff, organizational systems, and infrastructure as important to sustaining effective services.

Trust in community expertise. Respondents emphasized the importance of listening to organizations and community members closest to the issues. Many asked funders to trust organizations with deep community relationships, provide flexibility in how resources are used, and reduce administrative burdens. Community leaders were encouraged to include smaller and culturally specific organizations in decisions affecting the communities they serve and ensure that community priorities inform policies and responses.

Connections, collaboration, and advocacy. Respondents asked funders and community leaders to introduce organizations to potential donors, partners, and broader networks. They also requested help creating opportunities to convene, build relationships, share resources, and strengthen collaboration. Several called on funders and community leaders to advocate for nonprofit organizations and the communities they serve, amplify community-based work, and stand publicly with communities facing vulnerability and uncertainty.

CLOSING REFLECTIONS

The 2026 survey reflects a nonprofit sector responding to persistent community needs in an increasingly difficult economic, funding, political, and social environment. Housing and rental assistance, food security, and mental health remain the three leading needs overall. At the same time, the rise of immigration-related policy concerns among respondents' number-one choices represents an important change in 2026 and reflects the evolving circumstances facing communities and the organizations that serve them. Demand continues to exceed organizational capacity, and nonprofits face considerable uncertainty about the resources available to sustain their work.

This year's findings make visible the human effects of these current conditions. Staff, leaders, and board members are carrying heavier workloads, responding to fear and uncertainty within their communities, and managing the emotional and practical consequences of funding instability. Respondents emphasized the importance of supporting not only programs, but also the people, systems, relationships, and infrastructure that make those programs possible.

Despite these challenges, organizations continue to adapt by modifying services, strengthening partnerships, expanding advocacy and education, and finding safer and more accessible ways to reach community members. They are also drawing on the knowledge, relationships, and leadership already present within the communities they serve.

Image courtesy of Living Well Kent

What RRCF is Doing in Response

RRCF and our community partners are working to address the issues outlined in this report through a number of ways:

- Our 70+ funds provide financial support to a variety of organizations in the region, including our largest partner, First Financial Northwest Foundation Fund.
- Our CARE Together Fund prioritizes funding small South King County organizations addressing the top needs expressed in this report: housing, food security, mental health, and immigrant and refugee support
- Our newly established South King County Immigrant and Refugee Futures Fund (SIRFF) supports the health and wellbeing of immigrant and refugee organizations and other communities impacted by federal policies in South King County. This Fund is community-led and is made possible through a partnership with King County Communities of Opportunity and Best Starts for Kids, Sheng-Yen Lu Foundation, community-based leaders, and private donors.
- We love connecting organizations doing good work on the ground with individuals, businesses, and funders looking to make a difference. Two ways we do this are through our annual "Trust-based Philanthropy in South King County" gatherings and quarterly Deep Dive visits to nonprofits in the region.

Ways to Get Involved

- Get involved with and/or donate to one of the nonprofits listed on page 39.
- If you are interested in volunteering with RRCF, please call us at 425-282-5199.
- If you are interested in learning more about RRCF and/or donating, or opening a fund, visit www.rentonfoundation.org

RRCF is grateful to the nonprofit leaders who shared their experiences and perspectives. Their responses provide important guidance for funders, civic leaders, and community members seeking to support the organizations and people working each day to strengthen South King County.

Image courtesy of BLAST Haus

thank you

We are so grateful to these organizations that participated in the 2026 survey.

Afghan Health Initiative

African Young Dreamers Empowerment Program Intl.

Agape Love of Renton

Al Bait Al Sudani

Alimentando al Pueblo

BLAST Haus

Businesses Ending Slavery & Trafficking (BEST)

Cedar River Clinics

Compukidz Worldwide

Congolese Integration Network

Crece Conmigo

Domestic Abuse Women's Network (DAWN)

Environmental Science Center

Essentials First

Family First Community Center

BRAVE - Building Resilience Awareness and Variations of Excellence

Integration Family Service

Iraqi Community Center of Washington

Key to Change

King County Sexual Assault Resource Center

Living Well Kent Collaborative

Luther's Table

New Walk Christian Church / New Walk Outreach Ministry

Outreach & Transform Lives

Para Los Niños de Highline

Partner in Employment

Progress Pushers

Project Feast

Puget Sound Training Center

REACH Renton

Reclaiming Our Greatness

Rehoboth Community Development Center

Restoration House Ministries Northwest

Somali Family Safety Task Force

South King County Neighborhood Council (DBA Nested Communities)

Sustainable Renton

The IDEA Project

Trinity Helping Hands

Tukwila Pantry

Ubumwe Women Association Services

UTOPIA Washington

Vine Maple Place

Vision House

WA Therapy Fund Foundation

Wakulima USA

Washington State Coalition of African Community Leaders

Your Money Matters Mentoring

RENTON REGIONAL
COMMUNITY
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