

Needs Assessment Report 2018



Bringing Together Nonprofit Organizations...

serving Columbia, Lower-Luzerne, Montour,
Northumberland, Union, and Snyder Counties



CENTRAL SUSQUEHANNA
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

For good. For ever.®



Who We Are

The Central Susquehanna Community Foundation (Foundation) is a regional nonprofit organization providing a variety of charitable funds and gift options, large and small, to help our philanthropic partners achieve their hopes for stronger, healthier communities. By bringing together donors, their advisors and nonprofit agencies, the Foundation is a powerful and active leader for building charitable giving and effecting positive change. The Foundation serves Columbia, Lower-Luzerne, Montour, Northumberland, Snyder and Union Counties in Central and Northeastern Pennsylvania.

The funds managed by the Foundation are invested for the community's benefit and then are returned to the community in the form of grants to a wide variety of charitable purposes, from youth and recreation to education to health and wellness. This year, the Foundation is celebrating its 20th anniversary and proudly awards more than \$2.7 million annually in grants. Recognized for our commitment to integrity, best practices, and good stewardship, we oversee more than \$55 million in endowed assets through 240 different funds, for our community's benefit.

History

The Foundation began in 1998 as a result of the Berwick Hospital's conversion to a for-profit. A \$28 million endowment, the Berwick Health and Wellness Foundation, was created to serve 23 townships and boroughs specific to the hospital's patient service area. In 2003, the Foundation's Board of Directors finalized their vision of expanding to a regional foundation and changed its name to reflect 5 ½ counties across the Central Susquehanna Valley. The Central Susquehanna Community Foundation emerged and continued to grow by serving as the umbrella organization for five geographic affiliate community foundations, each having their own restricted service area and purpose.

Regionalism

Regional unrestricted giving fulfills the Foundation's mission of enhancing the quality of life across the Central Susquehanna Valley. The generosity of donors and organizations across this region have made tremendous impact supporting the areas and causes they care most about. Because of current fund restrictions, the Foundation is challenged to offer funding for other areas and needs that are not provided for through existing funding.

Growing the Regional Impact Fund would increase funding opportunities for charities whose important missions are positively impacting the quality of life by meeting common or unique concerns of our residents. Unrestricted giving is one of the smartest and most appreciated ways to give back to the community. The best way to support our communities at large is to plan for change – because no one knows what the needs will be in decades to come. That's exactly what our Regional Impact Fund does. Gifts to this fund will enable local leaders to decide how Regional Impact Fund dollars should best be used to meet our region's needs.

The Central Susquehanna Community Foundation recently led an initiative to assess the ever-changing community needs across 5½ counties. Our first Impact Symposium (Symposium) was held on June 6, 2018, at Bucknell University which provided a regional opportunity to bring nonprofit agencies together to network, learn, collaborate and provide take-away benefits of new ideas, strategies, connections and resources. Through the help of our facilities, we:

- Gathered information to help us identify new ideas and unmet needs in our region
- Provided solid evidence of existing needs for our donors and prospective donors
- Announced the Regional Impact Fund's first competitive grantround

What follows is a summary of the information gathered at the Symposium as well as recommendations based on an analysis of these data.

Contents

Symposium - Overview.....	2	General Trends	8
The Symposium.....	3	Suggestions for the Impact Fund.....	9
The Process.....	3	Program Areas.....	10
Methodology.....	3	Arts and Culture.....	10
Findings.....	5	Civic and Community Development.....	10
Geographic Patterns	5	Education.....	11
County Discussions.....	7	Health.....	13
Columbia and Lower-Luzerne Counties.....	7	Human Services.....	13
Montour County.....	7	Youth and Recreation.....	14
Northumberland County.....	7	Executive Ending.....	15
Snyder County.....	7	Acknowledgments.....	15
Union County.....	7		



Symposium

This is a report on the first regional Impact Symposium hosted by the Central Susquehanna Community Foundation (CSCF) and held at Bucknell University, June 6, 2018. There were 119 staff and volunteer representatives from nonprofit organizations working in Columbia, Montour, Northumberland, Union, Snyder, and Lower-Luzerne Counties. The conference gave CSCF a chance to partner with a wide range of nonprofits and to explain the community foundation concept. The Foundation used the conference to gain information about program needs and announce its first competitive grant through their Regional Impact Fund.

A major goal of the conference was to emphasize that our 5 ½ counties form a region where communities and organizations share a sense of what community means. We recognize that certain challenges are reproduced from town to town and affect the whole area. Findings from this report support this assumption. For the first time, it provided a forum where people in local nonprofits who work on specific kinds of issues can meet each other, share perspectives, network, and strategize with others so they can share knowledge and partner on new projects.

Despite the needs and challenges documented in the pages that follow, the overall tone of the focus groups was positive. People talked about the beauty of our area and how much people enjoy nature and the rich array of activities that are available. Also, despite acknowledging the problems that come from poverty and social isolation, participants also said over and over that the people in their communities were their main asset. People reach out to help others, often without being asked. People take on leadership roles to serve nonprofits. People also draw satisfaction and personal support from strong extended family networks and the clubs and associations that are part of local and religious communities. Older people enjoy relationships that they have had for decades. Towns are woven together with lifelong acquaintances and friendships that often provide the means for solving problems through cooperation when funding cannot do the job. Our towns also have strong local cultures and traditions that give places distinctive identities. Social capital is strong and valuable throughout the region.

Much of what you will read in this report will be familiar to our nonprofit partners across the 5 ½ counties. One of the themes voiced across agencies, counties, and substantive areas is that agencies need sustainable funding and that all are affected by general problems like poverty, transportation needs, better access to food, quality housing, mental health and addiction care, support for child care, and education, to name a few. Funding commitments from other community organizations and private sources were recognized and reviewed.

As a community foundation, we are looking for current problems and issues that have not yet been worked into established funding initiatives by other organizations. We are interested in problem solving approaches and supporting challenges across the region while building collaboration when possible and impactful. Examples of regional project ideas were identified during this conference and organizations are working hard to build those ideas into fundable projects. We also look forward to a future Symposium where we can support regional networking and fresh approaches to defining and addressing issues that affect the region.

“Today’s Impact Symposium was exceptional. The ability to bring in this sector, responsible for assisting individuals obtaining basic needs, together in producing an in-depth understanding of what our community needs, is admirable and necessary. This is a huge first step in developing a fully connected community that can identify, address and solve its own needs. I can’t wait to see the action from this feedback. Attendees felt valued, heard and overly positive given the struggling individuals they work with. There is so much motivation for change and resilience in the nonprofit employee sector, and yet so much support (staffing, financial, professional development) is needed by nonprofit organizations to make this change happen.”

Athena Aardweg, NEPA Alliance

The Symposium

The Symposium was a one-day conference with an introductory message from the Foundation's Regional Impact Fund Campaign Chair, Dr. John Kurelja. Opening guest speaker, Brad Ward from the Council on Foundations, gave an overview of community foundation work while his message focused on getting at the hearts of nonprofits. His keynote was followed by two sets of "focus group" meetings. Participants met in county groups in the morning to discuss special qualities of the county, major priority needs, and available local resources. In the afternoon, focus groups were organized around program areas—social welfare services, education, health, community needs, youth and recreation, and arts and culture. This report presents a summary of the discussions that occurred in each of these focus groups.

The Process

Invitations to the Symposium were shared with nonprofit organizations across the region via USPS mail, email, county human service coalition groups, social media and word of mouth. Nonprofit leaders and their staff members were encouraged to attend. Through the registration process, participants were able to select specific geographic counties and program areas that they were interested in attending.

As individuals registered for the Symposium they filled out a survey, which allowed organizers to understand who would attend and what their needs were. One-hundred and nineteen individuals participated, of which 82% were paid employees of a nonprofit and 18% were volunteers. The largest group of attendees came from human services organizations (31%), followed by education (24%), youth and recreation (13%), arts and culture (11%), and healthcare (6%). There was good representation across all target counties.

Most attendees reported attending the Symposium for networking (38%), personal growth and development (25%), or to learn about a grant opportunity (22%). Attendees were very satisfied with their experience at the Symposium, with 100% indicating that the keynote speaker was good or excellent, 96% rating their breakout sessions as excellent or good, and 93% saying that they would recommend the Symposium to others in the future.

Many of the organizations represented are small with 31% reporting that their organization has less than five employees, and an additional 18% having between five and 10 employees. Most (81%) say that employees are

able to attend professional development opportunities relevant to their position. When asked what professional development opportunities would be most useful, there was overwhelming interest in opportunities that would allow them to obtain resources to support their organization including fundraising and sustainability (67%), writing grants and proposals (40%), grant assistance (35%), and donor relations (28%). This is not surprising given that 44% of attendees indicated that their organization does not currently have the resources to ensure that each of its programs can achieve its established goals and objectives.

Other areas of professional development that interested attendees were creating strategic plans (31%), effective communication (29%), donor relations (28%), team building (27%), and time and organization management (20%).

When asked what their clients' needs are, the most common answers were getting a job with better wages and benefits (39%), transportation (34%), housing (30%), additional education or training (23%), money management or budgeting (23%), healthcare (20%), finding employment (17%), childcare (17%), family or individual counseling (17%), parenting skills (16%), food (16%), and utility assistance (10%).

Methodology

During the Symposium breakout sessions participants had the opportunity to learn about the experiences of other individuals and organizations, to learn what is working and not working for others in meeting community needs, and to provide us with current information on true patterns and needs within their communities and specific service types. These breakout sessions were organized by county for the morning sessions and by program area for afternoon sessions.

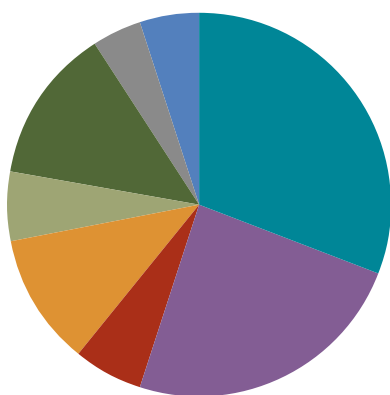
The breakout sessions at the Symposium were facilitated by local nonprofit and/or community leaders. These individuals were sought out by Foundation staff based on their experience in nonprofit work in the region and their expertise in specific program areas, counties, and municipalities. Facilitators included professionals from Penn State Extension, Bloomsburg University, United Way, Union-Snyder Community Action Agency, Central Susquehanna Opportunities, Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit, Geisinger Medical Center, and other nonprofit and government organizations.

The facilitators met throughout the year leading up to the

Symposium to plan their session outlines with input and discussion from others. Facilitators shared common goals of collecting information for use in a final outcomes report.

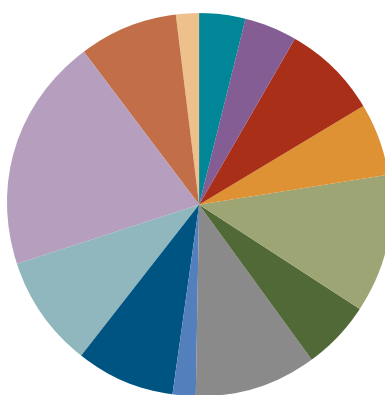
Symposium data was collected in a variety of ways. Session facilitators came prepared to lead their group discussions and provided summaries after the event. Student interns captured notes during each session and summarized recorded data from room charts. Additional feedback was again collected from facilitators after a period of reflection. We also used pre- and post-event surveys from participants to further gain demographic information from participants and their community perceptions.

After this data was gathered, Dr. Carl Milofsky of Bucknell University and Dr. Heather Feldhaus of Bloomsburg University collaborated to analyze the data and generate both summaries of the key discussion points from the sessions and suggestions regarding actions indicated by the data.



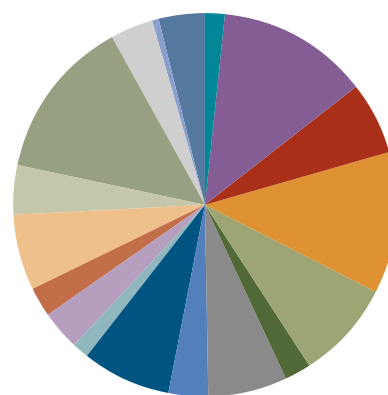
Attendee Representation Areas

- Human services
- Education
- Health care
- Arts and culture
- Civic and community development
- Youth & recreation
- Faith-based
- Other



Professional Development Opportunities

- Budget preparation
- Managing staff (HR)
- Team building
- Time and organization management
- Writing grants and proposals
- Writing measured outcomes
- Grant assistance
- Presenting at internal and external meetings
- Effective communication (*public speaking, social media/blogs, newsletter*)
- Creating strategic plans
- Fundraising and sustainability
- Donor relations
- Other (please specify)



Client Greatest Needs

- Necessities such as clothing, toiletries
- Getting a job with better wages and benefits
- Obtaining/furthering education and/or training
- Housing (*having safe, affordable, quality housing*)
- Utilities (*keeping utility bills current*)
- Money management/budgeting
- Food
- Parenting skills
- Healthcare
- Weatherization services
- Heating costs
- No current concerns
- Finding employment
- Childcare/daycare
- Transportation
- Family/individual counseling
- Building credit
- Other

Findings

Geographic Patterns

During sessions where attendees met with others from their own county, they were asked to consider a series of questions about trends, needs, and how needs are met within their own area. Responses were remarkably similar across the region on many issues.

With regard to current trends, professionals from across the region agree on several key themes. All counties noted that poverty is a central challenge in their community and most noted an increase in poverty. With poverty comes challenges finding appropriate housing, maintaining good health, accessing health care, arranging transportation, providing appropriate childcare, gaining education and training, and finding life-sustaining employment. A related challenge is that programs often address critical needs but offer temporary rather than long-term solutions. For example, one participant said that we need to help get people in their own kitchens where they can care for themselves rather than just keep a soup kitchen available. The existence of so much poverty is attributed to lack of life skills, inadequate education and training, lack of jobs or jobs that offer inadequate wages, lack of transportation, inadequate mental and behavioral health care, and addiction.

Every county involved in the Symposium struggles with transportation issues. Lack of public transportation and problems affording private transportation lead to difficulties accessing healthcare, educational opportunities, and employment. Lack of transportation also contributes to unhealthy lifestyles as it limits access to fresh foods and opportunities for recreation and social interaction. Even for those for whom walking or biking to needed services would be an option, there are often significant challenges such as a lack of bike lanes, sidewalks that are difficult to traverse with a walker or stroller, and poor lighting.

Professionals from all counties in the region noted that there are many challenges surrounding addiction, and opioids in particular. There is a lack of treatment options, difficulty accessing mental health care, and challenges associated with helping family members of those suffering from addiction including children and grandparents who often take on the role of parent when their children become addicts.

All counties in the region report housing issues that include a lack of affordable housing, a lack of safe housing, and a lack of housing options for specific populations. Housing that accommodates aging or disabled individuals so that

they can live independently is difficult to find in these communities. Amenities such as single-story living, doors wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs, and ramps, are rare and can be costly to retrofit to older housing. Housing accommodations for larger families is a challenge. It is also difficult to find lower-income housing, especially near educational and employment opportunities.

Access to desirable, life-sustaining employment is another universal challenge. As with most issues, it is multidimensional. The region needs the kinds of jobs that keep skilled people here, draw new workers to the region, and provide a standard of living that sustains families and builds our economy. We also need job opportunities that are a good match for our workforce and that facilitate workforce development to ensure that employees can earn a living wage. There is also a relationship between lack of access to have enough flexibility to actually take advantage of employment opportunities that exist.

Funding challenges also were discussed in each county. Common problems noted were a general reduction in the availability of funds from many traditional sources of revenue, a tendency for funding sources to be more interested in helping start a program than in sustaining existing successful programs, and challenges faced by many of the small organizations in these rural counties because they do not have enough personnel or personnel with the correct expertise to be effective in pursuing grants.

Access to healthcare is an issue of concern in all of our counties. It is gratifying that in our area people do not report problems finding or gaining access to a physician. Access to health insurance is also less of a problem than it would have been several years ago, although there is a chronic shortage of good information about how to gain access to health insurance provided through the Affordable Care Act. Transportation is an impediment to accessing healthcare in that people often delay seeking treatment, miss appointments, and forego follow-up care when transportation is a problem. However, Rabbit Transit does provide an effective transportation option if people have appointments at a hospital or medical center, with advance notice and during their hours of service.

As noted above, there are problems accessing behavioral and mental health services as well as services for those struggling with addiction. There is a particular deficit in mental health services for children and teens, which is particularly problematic given the risks associated with this population and the fact that obtaining care early

“I felt humbled to hear about the amazing work being done in our communities and to hear the passion people have for doing good. This event is an amazing opportunity to communicate across regions about the true needs of the region. My biggest take home is that thinking regionally to increase our power and to avoid duplication of services.”

Heather Feldhaus, *Bloomsburg University Center for Research and Consulting*

can alleviate educational disruptions and prevent the development of patterns that can lead to lifelong problems. All of these factors drive up healthcare costs and reduce the quality of life for residents.

Food insecurity is another universal concern. Residents of these counties have problems accessing healthy food because of poverty, lack of transportation, and long distances between some residential areas and supermarkets. While there are programs to provide emergency food access, some of these programs offer processed foods that are not appropriate for long-term consumption. For example, backpack programs for children must hand out foods that will not go bad, and are therefore highly processed.

A more serious problem for emergency food distribution centers is a lack of means to deliver food to people in need. Those in charge of distribution centers report that they receive plenty of high-quality food including dairy products and fruits and vegetables thanks to the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, which delivers food even to small centers in the area. Many of these centers lack adequate refrigeration equipment, however, so they cannot hold food long enough for those in need to get it. The local centers also lack sufficient numbers of volunteers, struggle with effective management, and have trouble convincing people with food need to identify themselves and come out to pick up what is available.

All counties noted that older residents and younger residents present special concerns. Older residents are often isolated by both rural geography and transportation issues and can struggle with limited incomes, mobility issues that are compounded in communities that do not have infrastructure such as accessible housing to support them, and a lack of available services to meet their changing needs. Meals on Wheels can be an effective way of reaching out to people with mobility problems, providing social contact along with the food they provide. There are big community-to-community variations in

how this program is organized and an emphasis on frozen meals in some centers cuts down on the social contacts that are an important by-product of the distribution of meals. Participants also noted a lack of service for children and teens to keep them positively engaged in healthy recreation and on a path for successful educational and career development.

A need for improved coordination was discussed during each county session. Challenges related to effective planning, making efficient referrals, and providing coordinated services were attributed to a lack of shared information. Providers are often unsure what organizations offer which services at any given time due to shifts in rules and funding.

An encouraging pattern is that all counties note that their people are a significant asset. Each offered examples of individuals and organizations that work hard to improve the community through leadership, donations, and volunteerism. All note a desire for greater collaboration and mutual support, but a few fear that collaboration could lead to some areas, populations, or issues being neglected as attention becomes focused through a shared lens.



County Discussions

Columbia and Lower-Luzerne Counties

Columbia and Lower-Luzerne Counties overlapped significantly with the other counties who participated in the Symposium, but were unique in stressing a need to do a better job of reaching hidden or hard-to-reach populations. They suggest that this can be accomplished through an emphasis on programs that build trust with potential clients and emphasize the dignity of clients regardless of their current situation. Respondents from this area also noted the need for a central place where people could obtain information on how to meet a variety of needs. Ideally they suggest a physical place where services are accessible and coordinated in order to allow for the most efficient provision of services. They note that many people feel overwhelmed by both their needs and the process of seeking help, including the perception that the paperwork will be beyond their skill set, that they must be very skilled with computers to assess what they need, and the fact that they will require a great deal of transportation assistance as they drive throughout the county seeking services.

Montour County

Montour County is unique in that it is a relatively small county. They suggest that their small population size means that the area is not prioritized, they struggle to recruit board members to help lead their organizations, and it is harder to gather data and general knowledge and history about their communities. Similarly, they feel that there are not enough young people engaged in service to the community and that engaging this population will be critical as older generations are aging out of their leadership positions. Montour County also noted some challenges in establishing cooperation across areas and groups due to fears that cooperation will take the focus off of specific areas of need.

Northumberland County

Northumberland County participants noted several unique challenges in their area. They were the only group to note that language barriers are a problem in their community. They also note that not just poverty, but extreme poverty is a growing problem in their area evidenced by the number of children coming to school exhibiting signs that their basic food and health needs are not being met. Northumberland County also faces challenges related to prisoner re-entry as people exiting prison often struggle to find housing and work because landlords and employers are often reluctant to work with them. There is also a

pattern of grandparents serving as parents to grandchildren when a child's parent is incarcerated. This requires assistance to the grandparents and the children as they often experience unique challenges.

Snyder County

Snyder County identified top unmet needs which are similar to what brings people to human service organizations. Those needs include living-wage jobs, transportation, mental health, healthcare access, resource communication, drug crisis, food distribution, poverty and early childhood education. Trends were also noted and discussed. Within the last six months, CSO (Central Susquehanna Opportunities) has faced a huge number of mental health referrals from the county assistance office and a drug treatment organization. Childhood depression cases have increased while resources are thin. The group agreed that focusing on the causes of mental health and adverse life experiences during childhood, which lead to lifetime effects, would be beneficial. Lack of basic skills, healthcare costs, low wages and affordable housing contribute to poverty and need to be addressed. Similar to other counties, the effect of the opioid crisis and transportation are ongoing challenges that need to be addressed. Snyder County is unique in that some areas of the county are extremely isolated. Residents of the west end of the county can experience significant struggles with transportation which include accessing food and other services. Backpack programs are serving school-aged children but oftentimes are not nutritional. Community referrals from human service organizations, doctor offices and county offices, are how clients are finding local resources.

Union County

Union County is unusual in having several large institutions, the Allenwood Prison Complex and the US Penitentiary at Lewisburg, as well as Bucknell University, whose employees and participants (students at Bucknell) have created residential communities that somewhat stand apart from the traditional Central Pennsylvania residents who have a large presence in the county. Growing diversity associated with the Allenwood Prison Complex, as well as Bucknell University, has led to changing demographics. Conference participants who work in local nonprofits reported a lack of sense of community within the county. They perceive large differences between groups within the community and a loss of solidarity and mutual cooperation where this was once a source of community strength. This

“Our Union County group was high energy and so invested in discussing and identifying local trends, qualities of a good community, and prioritizing local needs. It was a valuable way for the foundation to connect with community partners. We are excited to see the results and the report.”

Sue Auman and Robin Barbour, *Union-Snyder Community Action Agency*

is partly a result of social and cultural differences among residents. “Urban” sprawl creates a geographic source of community breakdown. There is not strong planning control of how new residential or industrial developments will be created. Neighborhoods that are not meant for walking and that foster economic class divisions make it hard for the kinds of informal relationships to develop that make so many rural towns strong communities. Because of these social and geographic divisions there are increasing differences between Lewisburg and other areas of the county.

General Trends

When it comes to what makes a good community, there was agreement across counties. Community efforts that adequately address the problems listed above were considered critical to a good community. Safety, access to educational opportunities, good jobs, good healthcare, transportation, connections between community members, and services for people in crisis were also necessities. Affordable, enriching activities such as arts and recreation for all demographic groups were also considered critical to a good community. General access to goods and services, social opportunities, and green spaces are also important amenities. The presence of investors who develop the community are also necessary for continued growth and improvement.

The ways that clients find out about services within the community are also the same across counties. Referrals are clearly critical throughout the region. Clients often need multiple courses of help to meet all of their needs, and providers do their best to connect clients to all of the groups that can help them. However, there was a fair amount of discussion about how challenging this can be. Because funding for different programs and knowing which groups are providing what services is so often in flux, it can be very challenging to stay current on the proper referrals to make. Directories such as 211 or the phone book style directories some organizations maintain are critical tools, yet they are widely acknowledged to be insufficient.

Other common sources of information about available services are social media, word of mouth, religious or fraternal groups, schools, and caseworkers. The challenge with all of these sources is that they are dependent on potential clients being in the correct networks to obtain timely, accurate, and supportive information. Thus, those who are connected to the right networks are likely to become aware of a wide range of services, while others receive inaccurate or limited information.

Brochures, pamphlets, and posters are other common means of spreading the word about available services. These are limited by the places where they are displayed and the reading level and language proficiency of those who encounter them. Various media outlets such as newspapers, radio, Internet ads, and television reports are also common means of raising awareness about available services.

Across the region, when clients have a need, they are often assisted by friends, family, and neighbors. Beyond these close networks, participants note that when there are problems there are also many traditional helping groups willing to assist such as social service agencies and faith based groups to social groups, volunteer fire departments, and local businesses. School districts and healthcare providers also provide resources or referrals.

Discussion of who actually meets the needs of community members led to a discussion of the need for better coordination within the Montour/Columbia County groups, but what they described seems relevant to the whole region. This group noted that there are not enough organizations or a clear and reliable directory of what organizations exist and what service each provides. This creates the potential for overlapping and redundant effort as well as wasted time searching for the correct referral. A combined organization that would help coordinate services could both provide more efficient services and more accurate information.

When asked how their agencies deal with crisis and about community plans for crisis, there was a collective sense

that there is not adequate planning. Some providers noted that, given the limited resources many agencies are working with, they only have the resources to address current needs and respond to additional challenges as they emerge.

However, because of the experience these communities have had with crises they believe they will be able to adapt to serve their communities effectively should the need arise. They note that they already rely on one another when funding or other crises occur and assume that style of collaboration will serve them well in other forms of crisis. During the 2011 flood, agencies were able to quickly establish working structures that met community needs even during unprecedented disruptions to normal operations. Existing relationships facilitated through human service coalitions and other groups became increasingly collaborative and less competitive during crises. These relationships proved sufficiently powerful yet flexible enough to meet community needs in the past.

When challenged to create a fund to meet an unmet need in their community, participants strongly emphasized coordination of services and efforts. Specific ideas ranged from ways to better communicate available services across the region, to ways joint grant applications could be facilitated, to the establishment of central physical hubs where services are clustered to facilitate collaboration across agencies and one-stop-shopping for clients. One group suggested the establishment of a multigenerational community enrichment center that would allow local needs to be met at a central location.

Suggestions for the Impact Fund

Participants had a variety of suggestions for funding opportunities. Some suggested microloans directly to clients. Others would like to see grants that run multiple years to reduce the need for agencies to be constantly

struggling to find funds when they need to focus on administering the programs. Others note that too many funds are set up to only help those who are in crisis, while funds to help those who have need before disaster strikes would be effective in preventing larger crises. Another challenge is that many funds support new projects, but fewer support ongoing operational costs for projects. In general, participants would like to see some funds with less restrictions that allow professionals in the field more freedom to design innovative programs and adapt them quickly to changing community needs.

The group from Union County was focused on capacity building. They suggested training for different groups including community leaders and emergent leaders. Training for clients in crisis would provide tools to better address their own needs and those of the community in order to make long-term changes. These changes would include general leadership, advocacy, self-advocacy, and resilience training. Several groups emphasized education from pre-K to adulthood as a means of making lasting multigenerational change.

Other suggestions were focused on specific topic areas including transportation, programs that take clients the whole way from crisis to self-sufficiency, mentoring programs, arts and culture programs, temporary disability help, homeless services, property investments, home buyers assistance, beautification projects, parenting classes, mental and behavioral health, addiction, economic development, general healthcare access, and food access.

One group would like to see funding linked to new government regulations. Whenever a regulation will cost funds to implement, there should be funding to cover those costs to assist organizations as they make a transition.

“I was very pleased to lead the Columbia County Human Service discussion. The participants were engaged and enthusiastic in sharing their views. This event allowed me to meet with a broad group of organizations to encourage collaboration. I have worked in human services in Columbia County and surrounding counties for many years. It is great to still see the importance of working together, learning from each other and even sharing resources. Many new and innovative services have and can arise from these types of discussions.”

Cynthia Lombard, Columbia County Human Services Coalition

Program Areas

Regional professionals also met in groups based on their relevant program area. The groups were arts and culture, civic and community development, education, health and human services, and youth and recreation. Conversations within these groups were centered on priorities and the resources they need to meet those priorities along with trends, performance indicators, and collaboration.

Arts and Culture

This group stressed the ways in which the arts are critical for the well-being of the community which can be overlooked when assessing community needs. Success can be particularly difficult to define when it comes to the outcomes of the arts. The group discussed examples of successes that included the ability to engage and empower community members across all demographic categories. Arts groups facilitate conversations that provide community members with unique ways to learn about and engage with the world. The arts help people learn about, explore, and process ideas through mediums and in settings that are uniquely engaging and welcoming. Examples discussed include the ways that sharing stories about opioid addiction allowed the community to think about the many dimensions of this problem in a new way even if they have not personally encountered these situations.

The group identified funding, effective marketing, and staying inspired as critical priorities. The group also discussed a secondary set of priorities surrounding needs assessment, courting audiences across ages, and looking deeply at processes in the community.

Critical trends in arts and culture include funding changes as well as the influence of new technologies. A reduction in funding for programs has created challenges but also inspired groups to collaborate and innovate. Other challenges include the fact that technologies such as Netflix have discouraged people from interacting as much with local culture and art. People are increasingly drawn to use these low-cost and low-effort means of consuming arts and culture instead of supporting events in their home communities. This trend also threatens the existence of local culture and identity as people across groups consume the same mass culture rather than developing and enjoying local culture and a sense of a local community identity.

In thinking about resource sharing in the region, many participants noted ways in which they support their communities or specific groups within them. For example, representatives say that their organizations offer discounts

and benefits to the people in the community, collaborate with schools to share student art with the town, offer discounts for schools and daycares, provide free museum memberships and passes, connect students with opportunities to work or intern with outside organizations, and host free special-needs events. The organizations also listed numerous ways that they support one another including shared advertising and findings ways to amplify the advertising of other organizations. While this collaboration was seen as positive, it was acknowledged that more such efforts could occur. Some members proposed the creation of a regional Arts Alliance to facilitate such collaboration.

Civic and Community Development

In the area of civic and community development, the group discussed multiple goals. These goals included workforce development, increased housing access, increased awareness of resources, increased organizational identity, and expanding the meaning of 'community' for the region.

The group identified multiple resources that can be utilized moving forward. In general, they want to focus on clearly identifying and defining problems and then connecting to appropriate funding sources. Critical elements in this process include getting all of the relevant constituents involved and utilizing community resources such as the Human Service Coalitions and regional universities effectively.

Performance indicators were acknowledged to be critical to the success of these efforts, but the group discussed multiple challenges with using them effectively. Obtaining quantitative data that demonstrates progress is critical during every aspect of development work, yet obtaining meaningful, accurate, clear data and reports is both labor intensive and costly during a time when funding is a challenge. In some cases the most critical information for understanding a need or project is not well expressed numerically. The fact that there is no standard set of measures used across organizations further complicates communication. The group identified a need for more communication across organizations regarding performance indicators.

The importance of networking was clear within this group. They stressed the importance of good, working relationships. Examples included relationships between workforce development organizations and educational institutions, between housing authorities,

local organizations, and municipal governments, and between chambers of commerce and international businesses. There was then a discussion regarding whether collaborative relationships need to be formalized, particularly when grants are involved, with representatives having differing opinions on this issue.

In thinking about current and past successes and challenges, the group noted that generating community energy to work on projects can be challenging because everyone is pressed for time. However, they were able to identify multiple successful initiatives. The group stressed that holding individuals and organizations accountable when they are receiving any kind of support is critical and that empowering groups to be responsible for collaborating to solve their own problems is valuable.

The group cataloged many resources that they find valuable within the region. These include collaborations such as the use of interns and work-study students from colleges and universities, partnerships with chambers, libraries, religious organizations, civic organizations, and Human Services Coalitions. The importance of collaborations for creating opportunities for peer support and for helping stabilize organizations was stressed. Existing clients were noted as a significant source of information about possible collaborators as they can often suggest other helpful organizations with which to partner.

Education

The group focused on education included representatives from preschool to postsecondary educational institutions as well as libraries and community education organizations. Given this diversity, it is no surprise that their discussion was complex and wide-ranging.

The group began with a discussion of trends. A trend that touched nearly every aspect of education was funding challenges. Funds for pre-K and early childhood programs are especially scarce. This means that fewer families can afford high-quality, early childhood learning experiences, extracurricular activities for K-12 children, and college educations without significant debt. Lack of funding leads to low wages and staff turnover, which creates weaker relationships between students and teachers. Beyond wages, cuts in benefits such as retirement funds and healthcare options also make teaching less appealing. Lack of funding and teacher turnover often means that there are more students in each classroom, which also decreases students' ability to learn and increases teacher

stress. Coupled with a general lack of funding, there are mandates from outside organizations that are expensive, yet there is no increase in funding to allow for the coverage of those costs. While seeking grants is one way to alleviate funding pressure, organizations need support in writing and managing grants.

A related issue is what is perceived to be an overemphasis on STEM education. This means that resources are designated for these programs and sometimes even diverted from other areas. Participants note cuts in the arts and humanities specifically.

Families lack funds as well. Participants note a rise in the number of children and young people who are living in poverty and struggling to meet basic needs such as food, housing, and clothing. It is challenging to educate individuals who are uncomfortable because they are not dressed for the weather, transient because of inadequate housing or hungry. Participants note a rise in the number of families changing schools frequently. Families that are in crisis do not provide an environment that is conducive to learning and development. Poverty is also associated with a lack of transportation that limits family's access to educational opportunities. Even in school districts that provide buses to get children to and from school, participation in extracurricular activities typically requires private transportation before or after school.

In general, participants note a lack of family resources to support education. They perceive that some families do not value education and that others lack the skills to support and encourage children's educational efforts. We also see negative behaviors from children whose parents fail to provide support and encouragement for reading, doing homework, or even just attending school. Truancy rates are high. Some participants believe that certain families simply do not care about education nor do they value hard work while others attribute these challenges to parental lack of education and/or a lack of parenting skills.

Another key theme was the mental and behavioral health needs both of individuals seeking education and of the caretakers who support those seeking education. Participants report growing behavioral issues among children and teens as well as other mental health challenges. They also note a rise in parents and grandparents who have addiction issues that impact young people's educational success. There are not enough resources within the educational settings to provide adequate care and support for those who need it and there

are also not enough services within the communities to provide services outside of school.

Specialized services for individuals in need of special education support as well as students who speak English as a second language are also lacking. As schools see an increase in these student needs, they have not seen a corresponding increase for funds to accommodate the needs.

The ongoing trend of measuring school outcomes through quantitative testing remains a concern. Participants note that this leads to stress for teachers and students as well as to less creative and engaging teaching. This emphasis on what will be asked on standardized tests also leaves less room in the curriculum for teaching life skills that participants feel young people need.

Participants would like to see a greater emphasis on exposing learners to real-world career options through apprenticeship and job shadowing opportunities. At this point only high school students are typically offered these opportunities and even they are not all exposed to the range of opportunities available to them. Participants would like to see more partnerships that expose K-12 students to career options including careers with and without the need for a college degree. Students should understand that a college degree does not guarantee a good career and that there are other avenues to employment than those provided by a college education.

The needs of older learners who are changing careers later in life also needs to be addressed. Outreach to help this population become aware of the range of opportunities available to them as well as services to support this population are needed.

Distractions associated with social media were also a common theme in this discussion. In general, an excessive focus on technology was seen by some to have a detrimental effect on education.

Some participants feel that the rise of on-line or cyber education also creates problems. Some see these schools are drawing resources away from traditional schools and some see these as generally inferior ways to educate.

Finally, school safety is seen as an issue. Concerns surrounding gun violence as well as bullying were discussed.

Each organization has specific priorities but there was general agreement on several general priorities within the realm of education. Given the discussion of trends, it is

no surprise that increasing budgets, balancing budgets, fundraising, and obtaining grants are all priorities for many organizations. Specific goals associated with fundraising include recruiting and retaining staff, training staff, purchasing updated supplies and technology, increasing the number of people they can serve, recruiting more participants, and providing scholarships. Many organizations have specific populations that they would like to serve better, including low income and special-needs learners, but note that funding will be necessary to implement these new or expanded programs.

More collaboration is another priority. Most organizations would like to use partnerships to expand their reach either by creating joint programs, working with other organizations as a means of recruitment, or engaging in joint marketing.

Most organizations noted a need for more publicity for all or some part of their program offerings. Part of this awareness raising for many groups seems to include better engagement with the community either as an avenue to more participants, donors, volunteers, or all of the above.

Many of these educators feel that they are under constant pressure to prove the value of what they do and that activities surrounding constantly defending this value can detract from their work. They recognize a need to more clearly articulate the value of education to a wide range of constituencies.

Other priority areas noted by multiple organizations include providing students with more real-world experiences including apprenticeships, internships, and job shadow opportunities and increasing safety within schools.

The group was able to easily identify a substantial list of resources that they use for achieving their goals. Valued resources include other educators, food banks, religious groups, local businesses, regional foundations, Geisinger Health System, and civic groups.

When it comes to performance indicators, this group notes that for the most part the government or other funding agencies determine which measures they must use but that local funders do offer some more flexibility in defining and measuring goals. Specifically, local funding sources allow for adjustments in measures based on the number of individuals served and sometimes allow simple measures such as decreasing wait lists or pre- and post-event surveys of participant satisfaction. Sometimes detailed observations or long-term tracking of cases is acceptable.

The group did note that collecting data and paying for costs associated with data collection is a challenge. Also, participants often do not fill out surveys that are needed for performance indicators.

Health

The main priority discussed by the healthcare group was expanding donor bases and finding additional funding to expand services as it becomes ever harder for nonprofits to obtain funds. Grants are becoming increasingly restrictive in their scope, use and compliance. Funding initiatives chosen by donors don't support the actual service needs of the community. More and more data/metrics are expected, yet data has not been gathered, is not easily gathered, or is not reflective of the true landscape/needs. Funders do not understand the data they are requesting and often misinterpret the meaning of data they are provided. Increasing collaboration is expected by funders, yet funding is not necessarily designed to support collaborative projects and can create competition for funds. Short turn-around times for applications do not allow time for collaboration or well-thought-out proposals.

The main trend identified within healthcare is also related to funding. Less and less unrestricted funding is making it difficult to cover administrative costs. Initiatives are specific and agencies are forced to alter/add services to get funds. Those services may not be the core mission of the agency and agencies struggle with the quality of the service and the sustainability beyond the funding cycle.

Human Services

Priorities for the human services group centered on finding ways to move community members from poverty and other crisis situations into sustainable self-sufficiency. The group sees finding ways to break individuals and families out of poverty permanently as the solution they need, and stress that too many programs are band-aids that

temporarily stop a crisis but do not offer a true path to self-sufficiency. Specific priority areas discussed by the group include transportation, affordable housing, addiction, mental health, high-quality affordable childcare, and mentorships programs to provide ongoing support and advice to keep people on track. The group also recognizes a need to find new and better funding sources that provide both support and stability to programs.

Another priority discussed by this group was the challenge of reaching the many people who do not seek services out of fear, shame, or the belief that they do not need help. Engaging these individuals with the support structures available to them and their families presents very different challenges and requires different kinds of support structures from programs designed for those who actively seek help. The increase in popularity of social media has helped raise awareness of available services and helped alleviate some of the stigma associated with receiving services as people can easily become aware of opportunities and gather information with relative anonymity.

As with other groups, funding is a major priority for this group. They have experienced losses in funding from multiple sources including cuts to government funding as well as decreases in donor support. This is especially challenging in a time when they are seeing more poverty and addiction issues, and thus more need.

The group already collaborates a great deal and was able to offer many examples of effective short- and long-term collaborative efforts at the local and regional level. This group offers support across organizations from simple referrals to organized support networks that offer advice and assistance. Their collaborations cross geographic and organizational boundaries with religious organizations being an important source of volunteers and funding and universities providing interns and assessment support. However, the group notes a desire to collaborate more and communicate more effectively to make optimal use of limited resources and assist clients in meeting their needs. The kind of holistic approach to creating long-term self-sufficiency that this group desires requires effective coordination of multiple services to ensure that clients receive the right services at the right time.

Funding agencies could make collaboration easier by setting policies that both reward and facilitate collaboration. Collaborative efforts cost organizations extra time and administrative efforts, so small grants can cost more to administer than the grant total. Successful



collaborative efforts require attention to creating and maintaining relationships and communication strategies in order to ensure that everyone needed is invited to the table, that all involved are contributing and accountable for performance indicators, and that the mission and needs of each organization are respected. All of this is especially challenging for the many small organizations in our communities and those that are understaffed. Grants that truly support collaboration need to have streamlined processes and total dollar amounts that take into account the unique challenges and benefits of collaboration.

This group indicated that most of them do have performance indicators because these indicators are often dictated by funding agencies of government programs. However, this is truer of the larger organizations as smaller organizations sometimes struggle to collect appropriate data with limited staff and funding. Also, some measures are considered inadequate in that “We know how many people we serve, not how well we affect those we serve.” Developing assessment strategies that are effective at measuring the wide range of services offered by these organizations, finding the staff time and expertise to collect and store appropriate data, and producing reports that effectively communicate complex data to stakeholders, are all challenges for most human services organizations.

Youth and Recreation

Priorities in youth and recreation focus on a need to offer a range of programming that appeals to different groups while also keeping costs to participants reasonable. One means of accomplishing both goals are effective collaborations and partnerships, and the group stressed the importance of their existing collaborative work as well as a desire to develop better communication and more partnerships. They note that an important goal for collaboration is to reduce redundancy while strengthening all organizations.

This group discussed regionalism as a way to increase capacity and better serve the community. They stressed a need to expand our definition of community and find ways

to help organizations collaborate across the region.

Specific needs of concern to this group include workforce development, access to family-sustaining jobs, housing, healthcare, addressing social needs, and literacy. The group also discussed a need to raise awareness of what resources are available and increase attendance at events. Ideally, youth and recreation opportunities could serve as community hubs, facilitating multigenerational connections and enhancing everyone’s sense of community. They would also like to see services that engage the whole family and services that engage youth during the day while parents work.

The group also has concerns about resources and funding. They too have faced reductions in funding at the same time that they are seeing increased need within their communities. Several participants note that their organization has needs surrounding facility expansion and upkeep. There was discussion of the need to diversify funding sources as a means of achieving stability. The group also notes that they need to recruit and retain more volunteers as well as create active and engaged boards.

Better communication with program participants or customers could be facilitated with better data collection. The group also discussed technology that could help with data collection as well as collaboration. Entities that provide technical assistance would be useful in both of these endeavors. Regional universities were mentioned as good sources for this kind of support.

This group is cognizant of the role cultural trends play in shaping both community need and what the community responds to. They note that they have seen an increase in apathy and disconnected youth. They also note changes in youth spending and a focus on electronics that leads to less youth participation in other activities. Another challenge is a tendency for youth to focus on a single sport or other activity to the neglect of other potentially useful or fulfilling opportunities. There is also a pattern where some young people have nothing to occupy their time while others are overscheduled and suffering from stress and burnout.

“Despite the different services offered, agencies share a wealth of common ground. Many experience the same challenges in delivering services, finding ways to not only sustain but also expand, and gathering data that reflects the true level of impact they are making in the lives of others.”

Melissa Wagner, Geisinger Child Advocacy Center

Executive Ending

The Impact Symposium was an advantageous event for everyone involved. Participant feedback solidified the point that the Foundation's 5 ½ county service area truly forms a region that should prioritize working together. Networking, seeing how resources could be shared, and drawing insights and ideas from peers working on similar agency and client problems, was a big gain for participants. Despite its relatively small size, people across the region often do not know each other and county boundaries can present formidable obstacles. People met others during the Symposium who are located nearby and can provide them with new resources and new kinds of help.

Problems like poverty and economic development challenge the entire region and perhaps can only be addressed regionally. To some extent we do this now, thanks to organizations like SEDA-COG, collaboration of United Ways, the Central Susquehanna Community Foundation, and others. But there are opportunities for more support where wealthier communities and institutions might help those with greater need. Participants said over and over that local universities and interns provide them with important resources and help. The same is true for the major health care institutions in the area that provide opportunities for experience building including high school student programs. There are opportunities for other kinds of cross-community and cross-institution support that could use strengths of the region to address problems in different towns.

Transportation is also a universal problem where effective solutions are likely to require a regional effort. While Rabbit Transit provides an effective transportation service, it does not address the transportation needs of many people. United Way research has identified ways local nonprofits focus resources on helping their clients meet needs, whether it be vans agencies use to bring clients in to their office, or their willingness to reach out to clients in their homes. The flexibility of transportation resources could be improved and expanded, such as university vans used to transport their students. These vans could also be made available to other local residents or bus companies that allow idle vehicles to be used to transport children to camp. One United Way group has explored the use of revolving loan funds to help low-income residents purchase vehicles. As these people pay off auto loans, funds would become available for other residents to purchase cars.

Solutions like these are available for those who use imagination and innovation to tackle community problems. The Central Susquehanna Community

Foundation aims to use its capacity to build resources and the Regional Impact Fund to make this kind of innovation possible. The Foundation has been successful in leveraging new funding streams for the entire region. Our regional resource leveraging efforts began in 2001, when we helped to secure approximately \$1.3 million in state and federal funding annually to provide the Nurse-Family Partnership Program (NFP). NFP is a program for first-time mothers during pregnancy and the first two years of a child's life. This program has shown many positive outcomes over the years including reductions in abuse and neglect, improved prenatal care and birth weights, and fewer arrests to name just a few.

At the same time, the Central Susquehanna Community Foundation also established the Dental Health Clinic in Berwick. The clinic serves uninsured or underinsured patients throughout the Central Susquehanna Region with a wide range of services including cleaning, exams, sealants, fluoride treatment, fillings, root canals, crowns, bridges, dentures, extractions and patient education.

Our staff at the Foundation views its role in the region as a leader to and for our nonprofit partners focusing on their specific needs and development. We realize how hard they work for their clients, and we are champions assisting with their desired outcomes. This was our first Impact Symposium, but not our last; we view ourselves as the conveners for the leaders of our regional nonprofit organizations. It is our goal to continue to attract donations to our unrestricted fund, the Regional Impact Fund, so that we may in turn provide more resources for those being served through our friends in the nonprofit sector.

Acknowledgments

Central Susquehanna Community Foundation would like to express our deep gratitude to all of the individuals who took time to share their expertise and information with us. We appreciate the opportunity to work with Brad Ward, Director of Community Philanthropy at Council on Foundations, our expert session facilitators, student note-takers, and our attendees. In addition, we are indebted to Heather Feldhaus of Bloomsburg University and Carl Milofsky of Bucknell University for their vital contribution to data analysis for the completion of this Impact Symposium Report.

Making an *Impact*
with the Central Susquehanna
Community Foundation



CENTRAL SUSQUEHANNA
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

For good. For ever.®

725 West Front Street | Berwick, Pennsylvania 18603
570.752.3930 | csgiving.org

Affiliate Foundations:

Berwick Health and Wellness Fund | Bloomsburg Area Community Foundation | Danville Area Community Foundation
Selinsgrove Area Community Foundation | Sunbury Area Community Foundation