



South
Saskatchewan
Community
Foundation

*Through
COVID-19
and Beyond:*

**Charities at the Heart
of Our Communities**

VitalSigns®

**Vital COVID-19 Focus 2021
for the South Saskatchewan Region**

In 2019 we connected with our communities by way of 50 Vital Conversations. Through these Vital Conversations communities identified five key issues that needed attention: sustaining rural communities, drug abuse and addiction, safety in communities, racism toward immigrants and Indigenous peoples, and homelessness and affordable housing. Shortly after releasing the Vital Conversation results, and before having the opportunity to discuss the implications of the results and future plans, the world was hit with COVID-19. Communities were now focused on how to support those they serve during the pandemic and survive themselves. South Saskatchewan Community Foundation also focused on how to support communities and function within the new world. Everyone switched to living in survival mode.

Supporting timely needs of our communities is important to us as a community foundation. We know COVID-19 has had an impact on our communities and the organizations that serve them, and that we could play a role in reporting on those impacts and how the impacts affect community needs. March 12, 2021 marked the one-year anniversary of the pandemic in Saskatchewan. The anniversary provided the opportunity to reach out to our South Saskatchewan community by way of a short survey and ask organizations to reflect on the past year and share how COVID-19 has affected their ability to support their communities. This report, *Through COVID-19 and Beyond: Charities at the Heart of Our Communities*, is what we learned from that collective input. *

Our survey reveals **three important insights.**

1

The leading issue of concern in our communities is addressing the mental health needs of our public.

2

Our community organizations showed resiliency by being innovative in delivering their programs and sustaining their operations between March 2020 and March 2021. ***However, to recover from the impact of COVID-19 organizations need unrestricted funding and more volunteers and staff.***

3

Charities are vital in supporting the wellbeing of our communities.

* Methodology: An invitation to fill out a 10-question survey was sent to 368 organizations. A total of 68 responses was received and analyzed for this Vital Focus 2021 report. Responses represent a diverse geographical sample in south Saskatchewan. Surveyed organizations also represent diverse focus areas: social services (58%), health (54%), community development (36%), education and scholarship (24%), spiritual and arts and culture (18%), sports and recreation (13%), environment (7%) and animal welfare (6%). Responses to each question were carefully reviewed. Permission to use direct quotes was granted by cited organizations.

South Saskatchewan Community Foundation commissioned and appreciates the professional research analysis and documentation by ***Dr. Iryna Khovrenkov*** for this Vital COVID-19 Focus report. Dr. Khovrenkov is an economist with research interests in philanthropic foundations and charitable giving, social finance and applied microeconomics. Iryna teaches core economics classes in the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy at the University of Regina and serves as a program lead of the school's certificate in Nonprofit Management.

“

We accessed funding to do curbside dropoffs, providing physical equipment, slides and play structures, bikes, puzzles, books, crafts, and essential non-food items. Our p'ship with Salvation Army and a local cattle producer provided stewing meat and ground beef to families. We stayed connected through dropoffs, texting, emailing, and phone. We jumped through hoops to do our summer program for 30 preschool kiddos, and were authorized by Sask Health to transport them to and from our facility. We have continued to program throughout the pandemic within Sask Health guidelines.

Family Resource Centre Swift Current Inc

“

Reaching out to Seniors and Vulnerable to supply meals, groceries, mental health assistance on a bi-weekly and as needed schedule. Visits to check on Seniors and vulnerable in our communities. Assistance in completing forms for those who required help. Distributing masks and gloves. Help in delivering prescriptions, rides to doctor. Assistance in helping children with special events like Easter Parade etc.

Qu'Appelle and District Fire & Rescue

“

We quickly established a Wellness Response Line to provide a point of contact for people experiencing anxiety because of the pandemic who just needed a person to talk to or referral to supports. Regular phone contacts were established to ensure clients were okay.

Canadian Mental Health Association (Saskatchewan Division) Inc.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Community Organizations in South Saskatchewan

At the Onset of COVID-19:

67% of organizations report that they **needed to shut down** services in March 2020 to regroup and re-envision their further operations and program delivery.

64% of organizations report that they **switched to online programing** and enhanced cleaning protocols.

At the onset, **organizations were also quick to respond to people's immediate needs**, be it counselling, assistance with cleaning or a simple connection.

Organizations that were required to keep in-person operations have adopted necessary COVID protocols such as social distancing, installing plexiglass, and enhanced cleaning and sanitization.

“

[We helped]... ***anyone*** who walked through the door including people who use drugs.

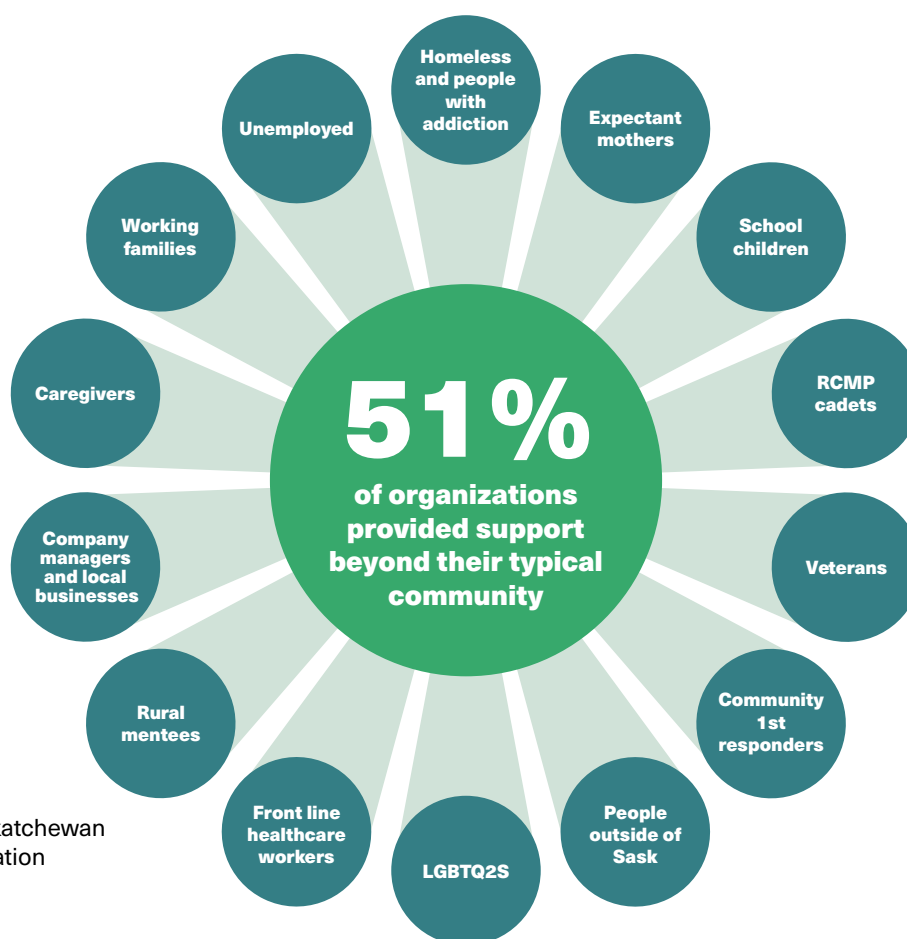
All Nations Hope Network Inc.

The Impact of a COVID Year

All organizations reported adjusting to the new reality. Some have expanded their programs and services, while others have reached larger audiences and built new partnerships. A portion of organizations (8.5% of those that answered the survey question about changes to the mission) have reported expanding their mission because of the pandemic.

Many organizations reported assisting individuals beyond their mandate as seen in Figure 1. This type of unconditional support is a testament to the unwavering commitment that our charities have for the wellbeing of our communities, despite the many difficulties that these charities experienced during the COVID year.

Figure 1: *Charities Opening Their Doors and Lending an Extra Hand*



Source: South Saskatchewan Community Foundation survey responses



[help] anybody anywhere in the world [...].

Regina Lyric Musical Theatre Inc.



[We] continued to serve this vulnerable sector of our community despite the challenges of potential contact.

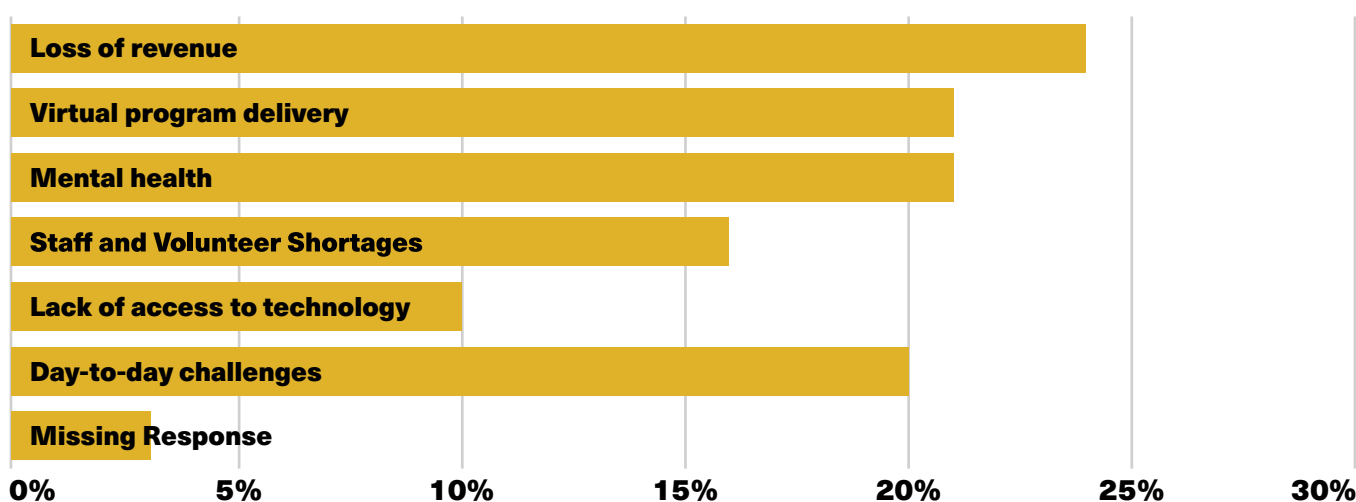
Oxford House Saskatchewan

The Impact on Organizations' Program Delivery

Program Delivery Challenges

Surveyed organizations experienced a range of challenges between March 2020 and March 2021 as depicted in Figure 2. Almost all organizations (93%) are expecting these challenges to last beyond March 2021. While some organizations anticipate the timeframe to be Fall 2021 to one year, others remain cautious about these challenges and anticipate the timeframe to last up to three years.

Figure 2: *Challenges in Program Delivery, March 2020–March 2021*



Source: South Saskatchewan Community Foundation survey responses



Of those who responded to our survey, a **loss of revenue** (24%) is the leading challenge, which encompasses a drop in fundraising revenue, decline in direct donations and decrease in grant funding.



Virtual program delivery (21%) is reported as a challenge since many organizations were unable to ensure a safe space for clients to take virtual programs (e.g., counselling); clients would develop online fatigue; and creating a meaningful connection was often difficult. Organizations have also indicated experiencing a steep learning curve regarding technology and the use of online tools for staff, clients and volunteers.



Mental health challenges (21%) include staff burnout, anxiety, loss of connection, and continued isolation.



The **'Day-to-day challenges'** (20%) category incorporates difficulties with day-to-day operations such having poor access to a stable Wi-Fi, enough time for cleaning, and facilitating in-person essential programs during heightened restrictions, all whilst managing the overall fear of infection.

While some organizations found online program delivery to be a reasonable alternative, others have emphasized that virtual programming would never replace the need for real human connection.



Virtual connections between mentors and mentees are a good short-term fix but they in no way whatsoever, even with numerous supports/activities, etc. is not a replacement for face to face mentoring relationship.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Regina & Area



Not being able to meet face-to-face [creates a] connection gap between students, school families, system and staff [...].

Anonymous



We increased the number of programs we delivered 10-fold in the virtual environment. We were able to reach more participants and run more programs in the virtual environment. It took some skill building with our participant base on zoom and teleconference options, but more people embraced the technology than we anticipated. We moved kids' camps to virtual as well. Very few programs were stopped, for the most part, we adapted in a virtual world.

Canadian National Institute for the Blind

Post-Pandemic Program Delivery Expectations

Despite the challenges with maintaining presence in the virtual setting and online fatigue, some organizations highlight that online programming has allowed them to connect with and benefit larger audiences. As a result, 47% of organizations plan on adapting their programming to a hybrid format where possible. The other 7% of the surveyed group will continue with their outreach programs. Another practice that organizations plan to incorporate into their operations especially with face-to-face programs is enhanced cleaning and sanitization protocols (18.5%).

What do organizations need to address program delivery challenges?



7%

need to hold effective fundraising events to attract donations



44%

need more long-term, unrestricted institutional funding



11%

need more staff and volunteers

*Note: The findings are based on the 79% of organizations who have responded to this survey question. Some organizations have been double/triple counted as they have mentioned all three factors.

Communities Embracing a New Reality of the COVID-19 Pandemic

In 2019, as part of the [50 Vital Community Conversations report](#), communities identified five areas that were of concern to them at the time:

- 1) **sustaining rural communities,**
- 2) **drug abuse and addiction,**
- 3) **safety in communities,**
- 4) **racism toward immigrants and Indigenous peoples, and**
- 5) **homelessness and affordable housing.**

By connecting with communities through the organizations that serve them in 2021, we invited these organizations to share their input on issues that remain pertinent in their communities and on issues that have become pressing. We learned that communities and organizations alike were consumed by dealing with the implications of COVID-19. While some organizations were able to reflect on the 2019 issues of concern in their communities, in many instances, the focus on COVID has been more dominant because of so many challenges that this pandemic presented.

Survey responses revealed that





-  **mental health of the communities became the leading issue of concern** (35% reporting) followed by
-  **economic hardships** (17%),
-  **loss in the sense of belonging** (15%) and
-  **food insecurity** (12%).

Table 1 presents the comparison of the community needs between 2019 and 2021, while Table 2 outlines the new issues brought on by COVID-19.

Additionally, Tables 1 and 2 situate our local community needs within both provincial and global contexts. This parallel is drawn to demonstrate that wellbeing of our communities is not just a local matter. At the provincial level, the [Saskatchewan Index of Wellbeing](#) (2019) urges decision-makers and citizens to focus on eight key domains of wellbeing: education, living standards, healthy populations, democratic engagement, leisure and sport, time use, community vitality, and environment. Equally concerned with the wellbeing of our global community, the United Nations created 17 [Sustainable Development Goals](#) as a benchmark for countries looking to improve their wellbeing. The key message that seems to prevail in these reports, including our own, is that we need to look beyond economic indicators such as GDP. We need to look at all the facets of wellbeing and we need collective action to create change.



I think there will be trauma in the community for a significant period and how long this lasts will be dependent on how well our community responds to these challenges.

Regina Early Learning Centre Inc.

Table 1: *Comparison of Community Needs between 2019 and 2021*

Key Issues in Communities	Sustaining Rural Communities	Drug Abuse & Addiction	Safety in Communities	Racism towards Immigrants and Indigenous Peoples	Homelessness & Affordable Housing
50 Vital Conversations (2019)	22% of conversations	20% of conversations	20% of conversations. Crime is the safety concern.	13% of conversations	9% of conversations
Vital Focus (2021)	Prevailing COVID focus	6% of organizations reported this issue	6% of organizations reported this issue. Intimate partner violence is the safety concern.	Prevailing COVID focus	15% of organizations reported this issue
Alignment with the Saskatchewan Index of Wellbeing Indicators	Healthy Populations; Community Vitality	Healthy Populations	Community Vitality	Community Vitality	Living Standards
Alignment with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals	Goal 11 "Sustainable cities and communities"	Goal 3 "Good health and well-being"	Goal 11 "Sustainable cities and communities"	Goal 16 "People, Justice and Strong Institutions"	Goal 11 "Sustainable cities and communities"

Source: researcher's calculations; SSCF 50 Vital Conversations Report, 2019; Saskatchewan Index of Wellbeing Report, 2019; United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Report, 2021.

Table 2: *Community Issues Brought on by COVID-19*

New Issues	Mental Health Concerns	Economic Hardships	Decline in the Sense of Belonging	Food Insecurity	Timely Access to Healthcare
Reported by Organizations (%)	35%	17%	15%	12%	7%
Alignment with the Saskatchewan Index of Wellbeing Indicators	Healthy Populations	Living Standards	Healthy Populations; Time Use; Community Vitality	Healthy Populations	Healthy Populations
Alignment with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals	Goal 3 "Good health and well-being"	Goal 8 "Decent work and economic growth"	N/A	Goal 2 "Zero hunger"	Goal 3 "Good health and well-being"

Source: researcher's calculations; SSCF 50 Vital Conversations Report, 2019; Saskatchewan Index of Wellbeing Report, 2019; United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Report, 2021.

Creativity in the Community:

What are organizations doing to address their needs?

Mental Health

- Established “Mental Health bites” - presentations on a variety of relevant topics at no cost.
- Implemented monthly wellness check-in with a counsellor for Centres.
- Established a Wellness Response Line to give individuals someplace to speak to a staff member to provide non-crisis support and some referrals into services if needed. Over 1,000 individuals across Saskatchewan received support.



Homelessness & Affordable Housing

- Launched a new housing project in Regina to address the need for low barrier housing for seniors involved in the criminal justice system.
- Provided mortgage relief to Habitat homeowners during the COVID year.
- Developing a partnership with a Friendship Centre to build a home for people at-risk (those returning from incarceration, youth who can't survive at home and homeless people with addictions).



Drug Abuse & Addictions

- Implemented Naloxone training program.



Food Insecurity

- Provided grocery gift cards to individuals.
- Added nutrition programming and services for clients.
- Offered extra food delivery services, city wide lunch programs, emergency food hampers, and more food for First Nations Reserves (as they went into lock down).
- Provided meals via delivery or pickup to around 4,500 people in Swift Current.
- Initiated a drive-by hamper pickup service.
- Made arrangements with a local restaurant to provide gift certificates and dropped them off to those in need.
- Introduced a new food hamper program to housing clients in 2020 to deliver groceries to housing clients who are immunocompromised.
- Added a food security program for individuals who struggled with not having staff be able to come in and help with food preparation or grocery shopping as often.



Communities need more **funding** (37%) and more **staff** (12%) to address existing challenges.

Municipalities & Areas Represented

The following list depicts communities that are served by the respondents who contributed to this report. *

*Abernathy Admiral Alameda
Allan Arcola Assiniboia Avonlea
Balcarres Balgonie Broadview
Cadillac Central Butte Climax
Coronach Craik Cypress Upland
Drake Dysart Eastend Estevan
Fillmore Fort Qu'Appelle
Glen Ewen Govan Gravelbourg
Great Sandhills Gull Lake
Indian Head Hague Herbert
Hodgeville Kelliher Kyle Lanigan
Leader Lebreton Lemberg Lipton
Lumsden Maple Creek Melville Midale
Milk River Watershed Missouri Coteau
Moose Jaw & Area Moosomin Morse
Mossbank Nokomis North Battleford
Ogema Oxbow Pasqua First Nation
Pense Ponteix Prince Albert Qu'Appelle
Radville Raymore Regina & Area
RM of Lac Pelletier No. 107 Rocanville
Rockglen Rosetown Rosthern Rush Lake
Saskatoon Semans Shaunavon
Standing Buffalo First Nation
Star Blanket First Nation Stewart Valley
Swift Current Tompkins Val Marie Waldeck
Watrous Weyburn & Area White City
Wymark Yellow Grass Yorkton*

* Various respondents represent municipalities across
Saskatchewan and/or southern Saskatchewan.

The above communities are the ones specifically named
by respondents in the survey.

Organizations Who Contributed

The following list details the 68 respondents who provided insights for this report.

- All Nations Hope Network Inc.
- Amakon Women Empowerment Inc.
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Regina & Area
- Birthright Regina
- Calvary Baptist Community Church
- Canadian Mental Health Association (Saskatchewan Division) Inc.
- Canadian Mental Health Association Swift Current Branch
- Caring Hearts Counselling Inc.
- Carmichael Outreach Inc.
- Catholic Family Service Society Regina
- Cecilian Concert Series Inc.
- Dress for Success Regina
- Estevan Humane Society Inc.
- Family Resource Centre Swift Current Inc.
- Farmland Legacies GTC Inc.
- Food Banks of Saskatchewan
- Fort Qu'Appelle Community Outreach Management Centre Ltd. (x2)
- Habitat for Humanity Saskatchewan Inc.
- Health Arts Society of Regina Corp
- Heritage Community Association
- Mental Health Association Regina Branch
- Moose Jaw and District Chamber of Commerce (Moose Jaw and District Literacy Network)
- Moose Jaw Art Museum Incorporated
- Moose Jaw Association for Community Living
- Moosomin Bethel United Church
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD Canada)
- Munch Cafe & Catering Inc.
- Nokomis District Museum
- Osteoporosis Canada
- Oxbow Community Emergency Support
- Oxford House Saskatchewan Incorporated
- Phoenix Residential Society
- Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan, Inc.
- Qu'Appelle and District Fire & Rescue
- REALM
- Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry (RAPM)
- Regina Catholic School Division
- Regina Early Learning Centre Inc.
- Regina Education and Action on Child Hunger Inc. (REACH)
- Regina Little Theatre Society, Inc.
- Regina Lyric Musical Theatre Inc.
- Regina Sexual Assault Centre, Inc.
- Rural Municipality of Lac Pelletier No. 107
- Saskatchewan African Canadian Heritage Museum Inc
- Saskatchewan Association for the Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured
- Saskatchewan Book Awards
- Saskatchewan Stock Growers Foundation Inc.
- Saskatoon Zoo Society Inc.
- Schizophrenia Society of Saskatchewan Inc.
- South West Crisis Services Inc.
- Spinal Cord Injury Saskatchewan
- St. John Council for Saskatchewan Inc.
- Swift Current Community Youth Initiative
- Teen Challenge Canada Inc.
- The Board of Education of South East Cornerstone School Division No. 209 of Saskatchewan
- The Canadian Institute for the Blind (CNIB Foundation)
- The Canadian National Institute for the Blind
- The Caring Place Regina Inc.
- The Catholic College of Regina Campion College
- The John Howard Society of Saskatchewan
- The John Howard Society (Regina)
- The Moose Jaw & District Food Bank
- The Regina Work Preparation Centre Inc.
- The Salvation Army Waterston Centre
- Theatre Regina Inc.
- Town of Arcola
- Weyburn Wor-Kin Shop Corp.



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