



CONNECTED COMMUNITY



Collaborate for Change

SOCIAL SECTOR ECOSYSTEM STRATEGY 2024-2028



**COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION**
OF GREATER FORT WAYNE

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A Connected Community

At the core of any thriving community, are residents who feel connected to their community. The Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne (CFGFW) is committed to advancing a stronger, healthier, more equitable community so that every one of our neighbors can experience greater well-being and quality of life.

Our Let's Rise! Vision Plan reflects that commitment, outlining how CFGFW will address challenges and contribute to our community's momentum in five key pillars. These pillars were developed by assessing well-being indices that create a vibrant community. They answer a single fundamental question: *How are we all doing?*

One of our five pillars is Connected Community. Within this pillar, our goal is to affect change by being an advocate for the underserved, instilling pride, and building relationships to create a sense of belonging. We believe that an effective nonprofit ecosystem contributes to a Connected Community, and set out to understand our social sector as a way to support the work of this pillar.

This report examines the current state of the social sector in the Greater Fort Wayne area and includes opportunities to improve the social sector and create positive change.

CONNECTED COMMUNITY STRATEGIC AREAS OF FOCUS

Social Sector Ecosystem Excellence

Equitable Community

"The social sector is the domain of private action for public good."¹

OUR PILLARS



OUR COMMUNITY DASHBOARD

Our public, user-friendly, one-stop dashboard contains publicly available and local aggregated data detailing key indicators in the Foundation's five pillars. Each pillar has a webpage built around it, showing maps, charts, and more information. Organizations can use this data to help evaluate programs and services and gather additional information needed to research and/or highlight gaps in the community.

Learn more about our Let's Rise Vision Plan, Pillars, and Community Dashboard.



¹ Candid. "U.S. Social Sector." 2023. Retrieved from: <https://candid.org/explore-issues/us-social-sector>

The Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne commissioned Transform Consulting Group (TCG) to conduct the study. Through this research, we sought to answer the following questions:

- What and who makes up the social sector ecosystem serving the community of Fort Wayne?
- What are the structures and collaborative efforts currently in place to address the most pressing social needs in Fort Wayne?
- How effective is the social sector ecosystem in addressing the needs of all individuals in Fort Wayne?
- What is the stakeholder understanding of the social sector ecosystem makeup and its connectedness?
- What could be improved in the social sector ecosystem to improve outcomes for the Fort Wayne community and its residents?

TCG developed and launched two surveys. One was sent to nonprofit organizations to assess their understanding of the sector, barriers, and opportunities for improvement. The second was sent to individuals who have used nonprofits to assess their perceived understanding, access, and use of resources. TCG also completed individual interviews with local government leaders and philanthropic funders to understand their knowledge of the social sector, collaborative efforts underway, the effectiveness of the sector, and areas for improvement.

CFGFW received 189 responses from local nonprofits and 600 responses from individuals who use nonprofit services. TCG conducted nine interviews with individual donors, six interviews with policymakers/key stakeholders, and one focus group with seven grantmakers to gather additional feedback.

TCG also collected publicly available data to understand the current social sector ecosystem in the Greater Fort Wayne area as well as national research on trends in the social sector.

CFGFW convened an Advisory Committee made up of individuals within the sector to support the Connected Community pillar and the research of the social sector.

- 189 nonprofit survey responses
- 600 individual survey responses
- Nine one-on-one interviews with donors
- Six one-on-one interviews with policymakers/key stakeholders
- One focus group with seven grantmakers

Connected Community Advisory Committee

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DEFINING THE SOCIAL SECTOR ECOSYSTEM

The social sector is an ecosystem, capturing the full spectrum of organizations that play a role in addressing social issues or opportunities in a community. The largest number of organizations captured in the social sector ecosystem are 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations, but it also includes foundations and other funders, government entities, businesses, associations, and more.

There are four main types of organizations that are active in the social sector and make up the ecosystem.

Tax-Exempt Organizations Includes more than 20 types of tax-exempt organizations, including 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations, community foundations, endowments, charitable trusts, and more.

Business Includes corporate entities whose primary purpose is to produce a profit but also contribute to and engage in the social sector through philanthropic activities.

Government Includes individuals, structures, and policies that make up formal local, state, and federal government structures.

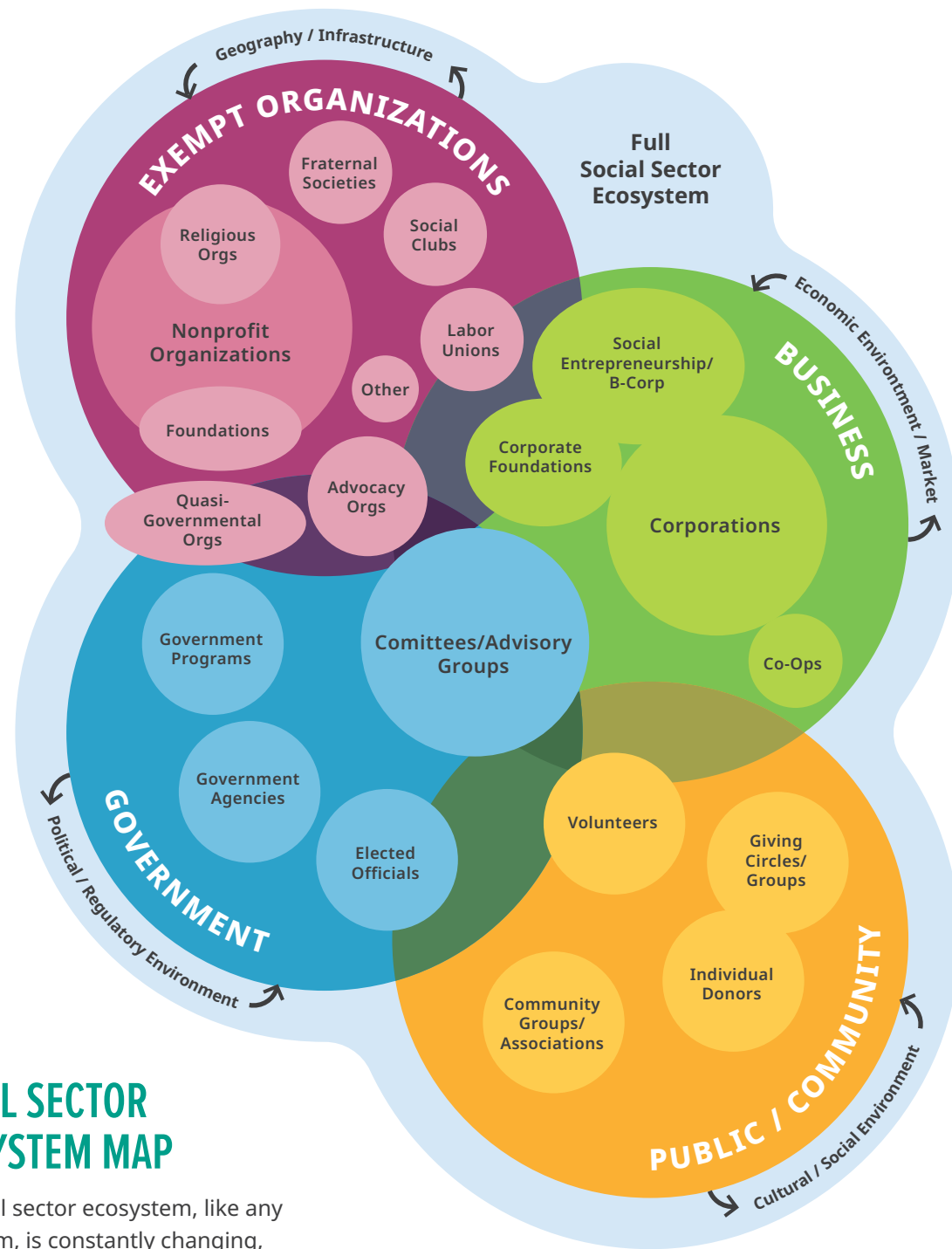
Public / Community Includes individual members of the public who are involved in the social sector as private citizens, who may also play other roles such as business or nonprofit leaders or elected officials.



SOCIAL SECTOR ECOSYSTEM IN GREATER FORT WAYNE

SOCIAL SECTOR ECOSYSTEM MAP

The social sector ecosystem, like any ecosystem, is constantly changing, with new organizations being introduced to or leaving the system. Organizations may also contribute to the community in ways outside of those described in this visualization.



Each organization type within the broader social sector ecosystem supports the system, and by extension, the overall community. However, not every organization type supports it in the same way. All these resources are necessary to make the system successful. Many types of organizations may adopt multiple ways of supporting the ecosystem; for example, a company may provide both financial support and non-financial support in the form of materials or pro-bono services.

Support Strategies Key

- **Financial Resources**
Donations of money or liquid assets
- **Non-Financial Resources**
Donations of materials, equipment, supplies, or other non-monetary items
- **Direct Service**
Providing programs and services to the community
- **Advocacy**
Promoting awareness of or solutions to a particular social need or opportunity
- **Learning/Training**
Education aimed at building knowledge and/or capacity
- **Direction/Governance**
Guidance on organizations' decision-making either informally or formally through a board of directors
- **Relationship Building**
Assistance with knowing or collaborating with external individuals or organizations in the community

Support Strategies Most Commonly Employed in Our Ecosystem

Organization Type	Number of Organizations	Support Strategies
TAX-EXEMPT ORGANIZATIONS		
501(c)3 Nonprofit Organizations	1,853 ^{2,3}	●
Foundations	140	● ● ● ● ●
Religious Organizations	494	● ● ● ● ●
Other Tax-Exempt Organizations	168	● ● ●
BUSINESSES		
Employer Establishments	9,352 ⁴	● ● ● ● ● ● ●
B-Corp/ Social Entrepreneurship	Unknown	●
GOVERNMENT		
Government Programs and Agencies	Unknown	● ● ● ●
Elected Officials	208 ⁵	● ● ●
Government Committees/ Advisory Groups	Unknown	● ● ●
PUBLIC / COMMUNITY		
Giving Circles/Groups	Unknown	● ●
Individual Donors	Unknown, estimated at roughly half of Allen County population at 190,000 ⁶	● ● ● ● ●
Volunteers	Unknown, estimated at over 23% of Allen County population at 89,000 ⁷	● ● ● ● ●

² IRS. Business Master File. 2023.
³ The count of tax-exempt organizations in Allen County was created using zip codes. The counts here demonstrate the number of organizations physically located in a zip code fully or partially contained in Allen County.
⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. County Business Patterns by Industry. 2020. <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/county-business-patterns-by-industry-2020.html>
⁵ Allen County Election Board. 2023 Allen County Elected Officials List. 2023.
⁶ Indiana University Lilly School of Philanthropy. The Giving Environment: Understanding Pre-Pandemic Trends in Charitable Giving. 2021. <https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/news-events/news-item/latest-data-shows-new-low-in-share-of-americans-who-donated-to-charity.html>
⁷ Americorps. Volunteering and Civic Life in America. 2021. <https://americorps.gov/about/our-impact/volunteering-civic-life>

SOCIAL SECTOR HIGHLIGHTS

Total tax-exempt organizations in Allen County

2,238^{8,9}

An estimated 1.8 million tax-exempt organizations exist in the US¹⁰

In Allen County, there is 1 tax-exempt organization for every 178 citizens

Consistent with national average of 1 organization for every 185 citizens

Increase in tax-exempt organizations in Allen County from 2012–2022

20%¹¹

Consistent with national trend of 23%

Allen County nonprofits with annual budgets under \$1M

67%¹²

This number is likely higher, as nonprofits with annual gross receipts under \$50,000 are not required to file annual reports with the IRS

An estimated 92% of nonprofits in the US operate with less than \$1M per year¹³

Allen County workforce employed at a nonprofit

11%¹⁴

Consistent with national trend of 10%

Allen County tax returns that included a charitable contribution deduction in 2020

31%

An estimated half of US households give charitably, a decrease from 66% in 2000¹⁵

The number of residents who give is likely larger, as not all residents file taxes and not all filers who donate request a deduction

Consistent with national average of 30%

Estimated total charitable giving in 2021 in the US

\$485B¹⁶

An increase of 4% from 2020

The implications of COVID-19 are still unknown, with previous statements reflecting the number of donors decreasing but the number of gifts increasing

Allen County nonprofit organizations with an address in the City of Fort Wayne

77%

The next greatest numbers are concentrated in the neighboring cities of Decatur and Auburn

Most common category of nonprofits in Allen County

religious organizations
Consistent with state and national averages

Top 10 Nonprofits by Category¹⁷

NTEE Code Category ¹⁸	Number of Allen County Nonprofits
Religion-Related, Spiritual Development ¹⁹	278
Human Services (Multipurpose and Other)	159
Educational Institutions and Related Activities	145
Recreation, Sports, Leisure, Athletics	113
Youth Development	106
Philanthropy, Voluntarism, and Grantmaking Foundations	101
Arts, Culture, Humanities	94
Community Improvement, Capacity Building	62
Health (General and Rehabilitative)	57
Animal-Related	20

⁸ IRS. Business Master File. 2012; 2023.

⁹ The count of tax-exempt organizations in Allen County was created using zip codes. The counts here demonstrate the number of organizations physically located in a zip code fully or partially contained in Allen County.

¹⁰ The true number of active organizations is likely higher than this estimate, as some organizations are not required to register with the IRS. The Indiana Nonprofits Project estimates the total number of charitable organizations is closer to 2.5 million.

¹¹ IRS. Business Master File. 2012; 2023.

¹² IRS. Business Master File. 2012; 2023.

¹³ National Council of Nonprofits. Nonprofits by the Numbers. 2019. <https://www.nonprofitpactmatters.org/data/downloadable-charts/>

¹⁴ Bureau of Labor Statistics. Nonprofit Establishment Employment and Wage Estimates. 2017.

¹⁵ Indiana University Lilly School of Philanthropy. The Giving Environment: Understanding Pre-Pandemic Trends in Charitable Giving. 2021. <https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/news-events/news-item/latest-data-shows-new-low-in-share-of-americans-who-donated-to-charity.html>

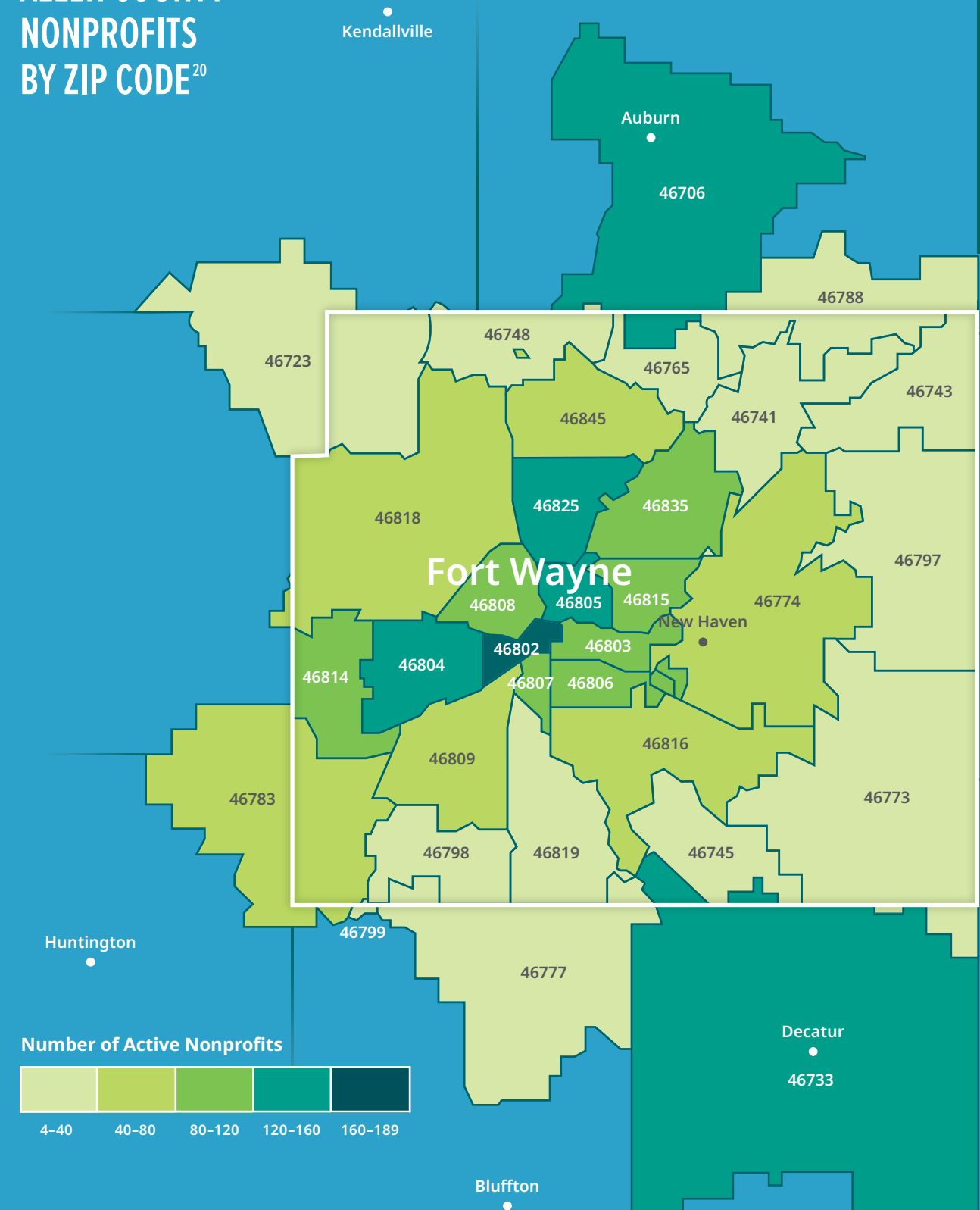
¹⁶ Giving USA. 2021 Giving Overview Dashboard. 2022. <https://givingusa.org/giving-usa-limited-data-tableau-visualization/>

¹⁷ 869 organizations have been excluded as their NTEE code is not reported through the IRS.

¹⁸ NTEE stands for National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities. It is a system of categorizing tax-exempt organizations by the type of work they do. Source: IRS, Business Master File, 2023. <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/exempt-organizations-business-master-file-extract-co-bmf>

¹⁹ It is important to note laws governing religious organizations are different from other types of nonprofits. They are not required to file annual forms on their revenues and expenses with the IRS, which is what the IRS uses to update the number of active organizations. So, it is possible this data is capturing religious organizations the IRS has listed but that are no longer active.

ALLEN COUNTY NONPROFITS BY ZIP CODE²⁰



²⁰ IRS. Business Master File. 2023. <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/exempt-organizations-business-master-file-extract-co-bmf>

HOW OUR COMMUNITY WORKS TOGETHER

Organizations within the social sector ecosystem find success in engaging with one another to address social needs. Many researchers consider collaboration to be an operating norm and best practice in the nonprofit sector—nationally, 91% of nonprofits engage in some form of collaboration with other nonprofits, businesses, or government agencies.²¹

Government Leaders

Government leaders indicated collaboration in the social sector occurs informally in most cases. They indicated conversations are always occurring with internal and external stakeholders, noting that these conversations occurred informally most of the time. In certain circumstances, formal collaborations occur around key issues.

“It’s [collaboration] ongoing all the time. Talking to constituents concerned about gaps, providers, and agencies in the community.”
– Government Leader

Philanthropic Funders

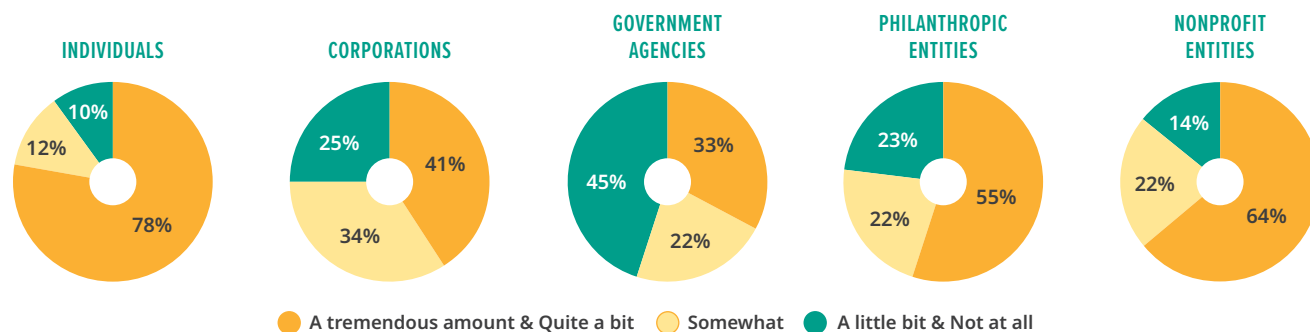
Philanthropic funders indicated similar collaboration efforts as government leaders. There are formal meetings organized where other philanthropic funders or others in the social sector can come together to share ideas and work together around specific topics. Informal collaboration occurs occasionally. Philanthropic funders shared they know who they need to call to get the assistance they need.

“There is a first Friday meeting where we come together in a safe space and share information that we think will help each of us.”
– Philanthropic Funder

Nonprofit Organizations

Within the social sector, nonprofit organizations noted that they collaborate across the sector in different capacities. They collaborate the most with individuals and the least with government agencies.

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU COLLABORATE WITH THE FOLLOWING SECTORS?



A national survey found that 91% of nonprofits engage in some form of collaboration, whether that be with other nonprofit organizations or other types of entities within the social sector structure such as businesses or government agencies.²² An Indiana-based survey found that half of the organizations were engaged in some form of formal or informal collaboration with another organization.²³

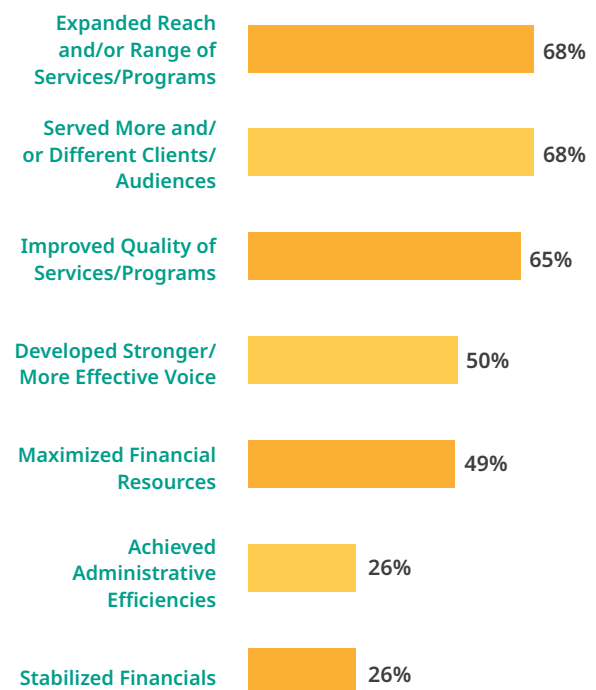
Benefits of Collaboration

- Organizational Efficiency and Effectiveness
- Broader Social and Systems Change
- Reduced Duplication

Barriers to Collaboration

- Defining Partner Relationships and Roles
- Identifying Potential Partners
- Costs of Collaboration

TOP REPORTED OUTCOMES OF COLLABORATION



Respondents selected all that applied.

Surveyed individuals who use nonprofit surveys noted the top barrier to accessing nonprofit services in Allen County is knowledge and awareness of service. While it seems that collaboration is expanding access to services in the social sector, there are still some limitations in reaching individuals in need of services.

Collaboration Recommendations from Government Leaders and Philanthropic Funders

- Increase regular communication between organizations to maintain and build relationships and address challenges and gaps in programs and services.
- Move to the idea that the “Greater good” outweighs the pride or credit factor of an individual organization.
- Garner support and involvement around identified priorities.
- Make it as easy and convenient as possible to get people to the table.
- Develop a centralized resource for information and needs-sharing.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Collaboration in the social sector occurs informally in most cases.
- When collaboration occurs, nonprofit organizations can expand their reach and range of services.
- The three top barriers to collaboration in the social sector are defining partner relationships and roles, identifying potential partners, and the cost of collaboration.

²¹ Samali, Laidler-Kylander, Simonin, Zohdy. “Why and How do Nonprofits Work Together?” Philanthropy News Digest. 2016.

²² Samali, Laidler-Kylander, Simonin, Zohdy. “Why and How do Nonprofits Work Together?” Philanthropy News Digest. 2016.

²³ Indiana Nonprofits: Collaborations – Purposes and Impacts, Indiana Nonprofit Survey Series III, Activities Series #2, Report 6, by Kirsten A. Grønberg, Leah Clemenson, and Anna Doering (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University O’Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs, December 2022). <https://nonprofit.indiana.edu> DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.17468.92801

HOW THE SOCIAL SECTOR MEETS THE NEED

Nonprofit Effectiveness in Allen County

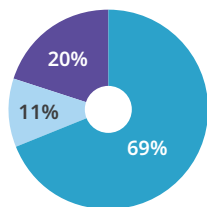
Nonprofit effectiveness is the impact an organization has on the community it serves, and more specifically on the social issue, need, or opportunity its mission focuses on. It is not the number of individuals served, number of meals provided, or other similar measures of what an organization's activities are. Instead, it is the extent to which food insecurity is reduced in a community, increased housing stability is provided, or students' literacy rates are increasing.

76% of nonprofit decision-makers said that measuring impact was a top priority, yet only 20% thought they were "very effective" at demonstrating outcomes.²⁴

Resident Experiences

Overall, individuals who use nonprofit services believe the needs in the community are being addressed. Seniors ages 65 and older (32%) and individuals with graduate degrees (32%) are the most likely to say the nonprofits are addressing community needs; younger respondents (18 to 34 years old; 17%), Black respondents (16%), and Hispanic respondents (15%) are the most likely to say the nonprofits are not addressing community needs.

ARE NEEDS BEING MET?



Approximately three in five individuals who use nonprofit services indicated that they were "very satisfied" with the overall experience. Overall satisfaction differed by the type of nonprofit service individuals indicated using in the past year as well as by demographic group.

- Very much and somewhat
- Not very much and not at all
- Not sure

Satisfaction by Services

- Satisfied with nonprofit religious services – 76%
- Satisfied with nonprofit arts, culture, and humanities services – 70%
- Satisfied with environment and animal services – 58%

Satisfaction by Demographic Group

- Seniors satisfied with nonprofit services – 68%
- Black respondents satisfied with nonprofit services – 65%
- Hispanic respondents dissatisfied with nonprofit services – 21%

How demand or need for survey respondent organizations' programs, services, or activities have changed over the last 36 months

- Decreased – 6%
- Stayed the same – 11%
- Increased – 82%
- Don't know – 1%

Some outcomes in Allen County in recent years have worsened or have remained below state or national averages, despite an increase in the number of local nonprofits and an average increase in charitable giving over time. One potential reason for this in recent years could be COVID-19, which, in general, negatively impacted some measures of social well-being. Local statistics such as these could be tracked and used in the future to understand the impact the social sector is having on them. Stagnant or decreasing outcomes could indicate the need for changes to make the social sector ecosystem stronger and more effective. Very rarely can any organization working alone have an impact on wider community issues like these. Rather, the entire social sector ecosystem must work together toward the same goal to have a significant or lasting impact on larger societal needs.

Potential Areas of Improvement

- Per capita personal income in Allen County is \$29,951, below the state average of \$30,693 and the national average of \$35,384.²⁵
- The percentage of ALICE (Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed) families in Allen County has increased from 20% in 2012 to 25% in 2021.²⁶
- 53% of Allen County high school graduates enrolled in college in 2022, a decline from 68% in 2012.²⁷
- Fort Wayne's tree canopy has declined 5% between 2010 and 2021.²⁸

Survey respondents believe the nonprofits' role in helping to respond to social needs is to

- Fill the gaps by providing services where other entities cannot.
- Provide services to address the community's emotional, economic, and physical needs, such as housing and food.
- Quickly and creatively identify solutions.
- Be the "boots on the ground," meaning know what the community needs the most because they experience it firsthand.

There is some satisfaction with the overall experience of users who accessed nonprofit organization's services, but the demand for services is rising. Nonprofit organizations reported the change in demand for their programs, services, or activities in the last 36 months. **More than four in five indicated the demand or need has increased over the last three years.**

²⁴ OracleNetSuite. 2019. Connecting Dollars to Outcomes in Nonprofits.
²⁵ U.S. Census Bureau 2016-2020 ACS 5-Year Estimate Tables. Table DP03.
²⁶ United for ALICE. Research Center, Indiana County Reports 2021. <http://www.unitedforalice.org/county-reports/Indiana>
²⁷ Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne. Community Dashboard. 2022. <https://cfgrfw.org/community-dashboard/>
²⁸ City of Fort Wayne Parks & Recreation - Urban Forestry, TreeKeeper Canopy, 2021.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Overall, individuals who use nonprofit services indicate that the needs in the Greater Fort Wayne community are being addressed, especially seniors.
- When looking more closely at different groups, young adults, Black, and Hispanic groups indicate that nonprofits are not addressing community needs.
- Individuals' satisfaction with nonprofit organizations varies by different groups, with the Hispanic community indicating the lowest satisfaction.
- Nonprofits report that the demand for their services is rising in the community.

CONNECTIVITY IN THE SOCIAL SECTOR

Cross-Sector Understanding

To have a fully functioning social sector, there must be a mutual understanding between all entities within the sector and the public regarding the work the social sector is doing, how this work is being done, and the realities organizations within the social sector face while doing this work.

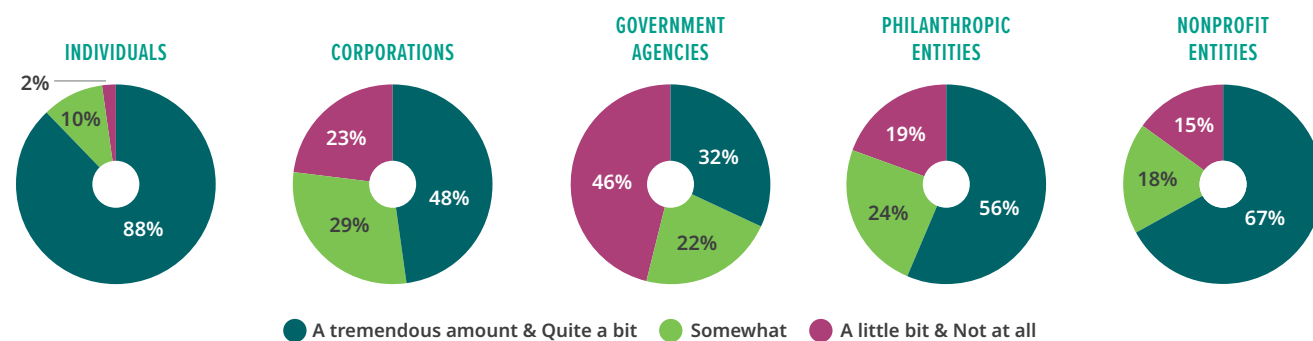
Within the social sector, philanthropic funders, government leaders, and nonprofit organizations have varied levels of understanding of each other. Government leaders shared that they often engage with others in the social sector through invitation from those with questions or concerns. They operate in a more reactive approach instead of a proactive approach.

“ I literally meet with anyone who reaches out to me. Sometimes there are multiple agencies involved or a variety of groups will convene, and it is driven by what the constituents want.”
 – Government Leader

Nonprofit organizations communicate with others in the sector at various levels. Approximately nine in 10 nonprofits indicated that they communicate with individuals “a tremendous amount” and “quite a bit.” Roughly half of nonprofits shared that they communicate with government agencies slightly less at “a little bit” and “not at all.”

How Nonprofits Communicate with Other Sectors

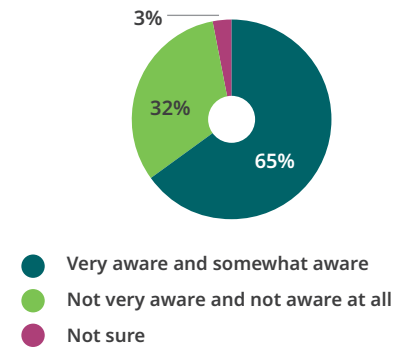
TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU COMMUNICATE WITH THE FOLLOWING SECTORS?



Resident Experiences

Approximately two-thirds of individuals who use nonprofit services said they were aware of the nonprofit services available and how to access them. Some populations are more aware than others.

AWARENESS OF NONPROFIT SERVICES AND HOW TO ACCESS THEM



Individuals who used a nonprofit service in the last year
82%

High Awareness of Nonprofit Services

- Individuals accessing educational services – 73%
- Individuals with a graduate degree – 68%
- Black individuals – 66%

No Awareness of Nonprofit Services

- Hispanic individuals – 20%

Most-Used Nonprofit Services

- Health
- Education
- Arts, culture, and humanities

Individuals who had used a nonprofit service in the past year indicated some barriers to accessing these services. Over half of individuals who indicated using a nonprofit service in the past year shared they have experienced no barriers; however, more than two in five experienced at least one barrier. Approximately two-thirds of individuals who used a nonprofit service in the past year shared it was “very easy” to do so. Services were harder to access for Hispanic respondents, more than one quarter (27%) of whom experienced at least some difficulty.

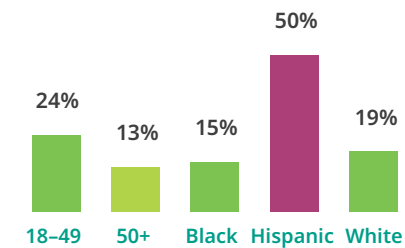
Experienced no barriers to services
58%

Experienced at least one barrier
42%

Top Barriers to Accessing Nonprofit Services

- Affordability – 19%
- Personal knowledge and awareness of service(s) – 15%
- Limited availability of service(s) – 13%
- Staffing shortages – 12%
- Work-related – 11%

EXPERIENCED AFFORDABILITY BARRIERS BY AGE AND RACE/ETHNICITY



Not all races are displayed due to low confidence levels.

Individuals with Ease of Access to Services

- Individuals using environmental and animal services – 84%
- Individuals using religious services – 81%
- Individuals ages 50 or older – 73%

Types of Services with Greatest Affordability Barriers

- Human services – 26%
- Health – 25%
- Environment and animals – 24%

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Philanthropic funders, government leaders, and nonprofit organizations have varied understandings of each other.
- Most individuals who use nonprofit services are aware of the nonprofit services available.
- Individuals from the Hispanic community were least aware of nonprofit services available and identified increased barriers to accessing nonprofit services.
- Black respondents report knowing how to access services, but have little confidence in them.
- The top three barriers for individuals to use nonprofit services are affordability, personal knowledge, and awareness of the service(s).

STRENGTHENING THE SOCIAL SECTOR

In addition to understanding the social sector ecosystem, we also sought to collect feedback on what steps can be taken to improve it. Each stakeholder group identified opportunities that could be addressed to make the system—and community—stronger. Drawing on interviews and survey responses, six key recommendations emerged.



Consolidate Efforts and Eliminate Silos

Key stakeholders, especially funders and government leaders, identified an opportunity for increased efficiency and effectiveness through greater nonprofit collaboration. Potential strategies include combined programs, shared overhead resources, and funding to prioritize collaborative projects.

“I think there are some silos, but they are trying to work better together to layer their services...wondered if {similar players} have ever considered working under an umbrella to improve some efficiencies.”

– Government Leader

Promote and Resource Innovation

The most critical social needs the Greater Fort Wayne area is facing are complex. We will need innovative solutions to promote significant and lasting change, and innovation requires resources, including funding, expertise, and staffing to be successful. Potential strategies to address this recommendation include procuring new funding streams focused on the promotion of innovation, cross-sector discussions, and increased nonprofit knowledge and capacity-building support.

“All roads lead back to where you are going to find the dollars to do this.”

– Government Leader

Simplify Collaboration Under One Convener

Collaboration across the social sector ecosystem is essential to addressing the community’s most critical social needs. However, stakeholder feedback also revealed though collaboration is currently taking place, much of it is informal and ad-hoc. The community lacks one main convener to bring disparate groups together. Most stakeholders also acknowledged the challenges inherent in bringing the social sector ecosystem together. They advised efforts to make collaboration easy for participants such as limited time commitments for meetings, focused agendas, and backbone support for logistics and facilitation.

“It needs to be a concerted effort, but someone has to convene that.”

– Funder

How to Improve the Social Sector

Consolidate Efforts and Eliminate Silos

Promote and Resource Innovation

Simplify Collaboration Under One Convener

Increase Support for Nonprofit Partnerships

Increase Awareness of Nonprofit Services

Break Down Barriers to Accessing Services

Increase Support for Nonprofit Partnerships

Collaboration and partnership-building between nonprofit organizations is a best practice leading to greater impact and/or improved efficiency. However, feedback from nonprofit leaders revealed there are barriers to collaboration for organizations in the Greater Fort Wayne area. The top three barriers to collaboration identified by nonprofits in stakeholder feedback were: defining partner relationships and roles, identifying potential partners, and costs of collaboration. The social sector ecosystem can break down those barriers through support for relationship-building and resources to make partnerships successful.

“I believe nonprofits have an essential role in responding to social needs. Many organizations could benefit from collaborating and working together to provide services but don’t have the staff resources to spend time making and nurturing the connections.”

– Nonprofit Organization

Increase Awareness of Nonprofit Services

Despite the large number of nonprofit organizations active in the Greater Fort Wayne community, individuals who use nonprofit services revealed not all community members are aware of the nonprofit services available to them. There is an opportunity to increase overall community awareness of specific nonprofit services. Potential strategies to accomplish this could include the development of a nonprofit resource hub cataloging nonprofit services, the introduction of a staff member dedicated to helping connect members of the community with nonprofit organizations, or events designed to introduce community members to nonprofit resources.

Break Down Barriers to Accessing Services

Individuals who use nonprofit services revealed inequalities in barriers to accessing nonprofit services. Some communities—in particular, members of the Hispanic community—indicated increased barriers to accessing nonprofit services due to issues like affordability. Potential approaches to addressing this key finding include increased resources to support nonprofits in serving the Hispanic community, a dedicated liaison to connect the Hispanic community with available services, additional translation resources and programs, or funding to increase access to services and programs for the Hispanic community.

A New Model and Plan for the Social Sector Ecosystem

Informed by this stakeholder feedback and research, the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne, in partnership with other leaders in the social sector ecosystem, is embarking on a process to improve the social sector ecosystem and promote broader community impact. This plan will produce a more connected and supported system—improved internally through workgroups and increased opportunities for cross-sector communication, and externally through increased resources for infrastructure, innovation, and community awareness. Ensuring that Allen County residents have access to the services and resources they need to thrive will affect powerful change in our community.

THE NEW MODEL



- Increased Effectiveness & Efficiency through Partnership
- Improved Nonprofit Infrastructure
- Clarity & Unified Action on Top Social Needs
- Increased Mutual Understanding Within & Outside the System

THE NEW PLAN



GOAL

1

Increase
Awareness



GOAL

2

Improve
Data and
Information
Sharing



GOAL

3

Strengthen
Infrastructure
and
Collaboration



GOAL

4

Ensure Equal
Access for All

GOAL 1: Increase Awareness

	YEARS 1-2	YEARS 3-4	YEAR 5
STRATEGY Grow awareness of the social sector and promote its impact.			
TACTICS	Promote the community dashboard to all entities in the social sector ecosystem.		
	Promote collaboration stories to educate on the benefits of collaboration and highlight successful approaches.		
METRICS	Annual 10% increase in visits to the community dashboard webpage in years 2-5.		
	At least one success story is featured each quarter by the end of year 2.		
	4 success stories featured annually.		
	Annual 10% increase in nonprofit organization survey participants report collaborating across sectors.		
STRATEGY Provide information sharing, educational, and networking opportunities for those serving and supporting the sector.			
TACTICS	Promote 211 as the go-to resource to find existing support and services.		
	Host quarterly gatherings by interest areas to promote resource sharing and communication across the social sector ecosystem.		
METRICS	Annual 5% increase in 211 calls in years 2-5.		
		Quarterly gatherings are launched by quarter 1 of year 3.	Quarterly gatherings include an average of 20 or more organizations by year 5.

GOAL 2: Improve Data and Information Sharing

	YEARS 1-2	YEARS 3-4	YEAR 5
STRATEGY Utilize stakeholder feedback to better understand the nonprofit sector and promote its impact.			
TACTICS	Conduct a survey of nonprofit organizations in the Greater Fort Wayne area annually/biannually to understand challenges and needs.	Provide results of annual nonprofit surveys to funders, donors, and the public to promote increased awareness of and action on filling critical needs for nonprofit organizations.	
METRICS	At least 20% of organizations participate in the nonprofit survey.	First public report on nonprofit survey findings is published by the end of year 4.	
STRATEGY Develop an evaluation structure to better understand the overall performance and progress of the social sector on key community metrics, and provide resources to support evaluation.			
TACTICS	Collect and analyze data to understand what inequities may exist within the sector, with an eye toward supporting a representative and diverse social sector ecosystem.		Develop funding and other resources to support nonprofit evaluation competencies and capacity.
		Identify top data metrics within key interest areas to show the impact of the social sector and measure progress.	Update community dashboard based on top data metrics.
		Create agreement on and alignment around key reporting metrics within interest areas across different funders and funding programs.	
METRICS	At least 20% of organizations participate in the nonprofit survey.	First public report on nonprofit survey findings is published by the end of year 4.	Formalized evaluation support grant is established with at least one grant awarded by the end of year 5.
	Research is complete and synthesized by the end of year 1. Research is reported out to key stakeholders within the social sector including funders and nonprofits during year 2.	Evaluation plan is developed by the end of year 4 with at least 5 key metrics identified in at least 4 interest areas.	Identified focus data metrics are integrated into the community dashboard by year 5.
		Funders are convened to discuss key reporting metrics at least once per year in years 3 and 4. A new plan is developed and implemented to streamline reporting and unify metrics within key interest areas across funders by the end of year 5.	

Five-Year Social Sector Ecosystem Plan



GOAL 3: Strengthen Infrastructure and Collaboration

YEARS 1-2

YEARS 3-4

YEAR 5

STRATEGY
Develop formalized spaces and opportunities for collaboration.

TACTICS	Establish peer round table/affinity groups by interest area including cross-sector staff at different levels to increase and solidify collaboration.	
		Create an online collaboration hub for NPOs to access key resources that would support their infrastructure, especially for smaller organizations.
		Identify a collaboration space that can be branded as a dedicated place where those in the social sector convene organically to work, network, and innovate.

METRICS	At least 3 interest area groups meet annually. Each interest area group has at least 20 consistent attendees.	
		Base hub website is launched by the end of year 4, and at least 50 organizations engage with it in the first year. At least 50 resources for nonprofits are highlighted on the hub website. Visits to the hub website increase by 10% or more year-over-year after initial launch.
		Collaboration space is identified and funded/supported to the nonprofit community by the end of year 5.

STRATEGY
Develop a wider social sector ecosystem that addresses barriers to success for nonprofits and provides resources to support increased efficiencies.

TACTICS	Research unique funding models that allow social sector innovation.	Provide capacity building grants to address gaps identified as nonprofit needs in the annual nonprofit survey.
		Explore the feasibility of developing a standard, unified grant application, perhaps by subject area first, then tiered out to include other areas.
	Explore opportunities to partner with businesses for back-office support, discounted services, or other types of non-funding support.	

METRICS	Research findings are reported out to collaborative funder group by end of year 2.	By the end of year 4, a grant program is developed to address gaps identified in the nonprofit survey. At least one grant has been awarded as part of the new capacity building grant program by the end of year 4.
		Unified grant application has been completed and compiled by the end of year 4. By the end of year 5, at least one convening of funders to discuss the possibility of a standard unified grant application has occurred.
	10 local businesses have signed on to provide pro-bono or low-bono support services for nonprofits.	



GOAL 4: Ensure Equal Access for All

YEARS 1-2

YEARS 3-4

YEAR 5

STRATEGY
Build trust and understand the needs of those within the sector and who the sector serves.

TACTICS	Convene community leaders engaged in serving diverse communities throughout Greater Fort Wayne (i.e. refugee and immigrant populations) to build a platform for knowledge sharing on how best to promote equal access for all.	
		Implement a stakeholder feedback system that involves all voices across Fort Wayne's diverse communities.

METRICS	Initial convening of community leaders takes place, including at least 5 leaders.	Convening of leaders has continued annually, growing to 10 community leaders.
		Using feedback from the community leader convening, an inclusive stakeholder feedback plan has been developed. At least 50 community members engage in the stakeholder feedback process in its initial year.

STRATEGY
Increase knowledge within the social sector ecosystem around diversity, equity, and inclusion.

TACTICS	Provide access to and invest in existing certifications for cultural competency and implicit bias training for leaders in the social sector ecosystem.	Share knowledge highlighting any disparities that exist in the broader community and within the social sector ecosystem itself with respect to overall outcomes, access to services, and awareness of services.
METRICS	A program is established offering funding and other resources for existing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training.	DEI professional development support program has supported at least 5 organizations. Utilizing stakeholder feedback, key findings have been shared with the wider social sector ecosystem regarding disparities and gaps for Fort Wayne's diverse communities.

STRATEGY
Work to build a social sector ecosystem that fully reflects the diversity of the community the system serves.

TACTICS	Promote diversity in leadership by developing programs to grow and support leaders of color and other leaders from diverse backgrounds within the nonprofit and social service space.	
		Develop strategies to increase representation and diversity within staff and volunteer leadership roles in funding organizations across the community.

METRICS	Develop strategies to increase representation and diversity within staff and volunteer leadership roles in funding organizations across the community.	Developed leadership support program has supported 5 or more leaders of color.
	Best practices are identified to increase diversity of staff and volunteers in leadership roles in funder organizations.	Collaborative funder group has received key findings from research on strategies to increase diversity in their leadership.



Thank you

As we look to the future, we find new and unique challenges to take on, and systemic issues to overcome. We will meet those challenges, united, with resolve. Thank you to all who shared their time and expertise to inform this research, and to those who will champion this work alongside us.

Together, we will advocate for the underserved, instill pride, and build relationships to create a greater sense of belonging for each Allen County resident. **Let's Rise!**



About the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne

The Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne does three things: help people make their charitable giving more impactful, connect funding to nonprofits through effective grantmaking, and provide leadership to address community needs to improve quality of life. The organization connects people and resources daily to build a more vibrant community. As of December 31, 2022, the Community Foundation held charitable assets of approximately \$194 million and awarded more than \$9 million in charitable grants and scholarships throughout the same year. Since its formation in 1922, the Community Foundation has awarded more than \$184 million in charitable grants.

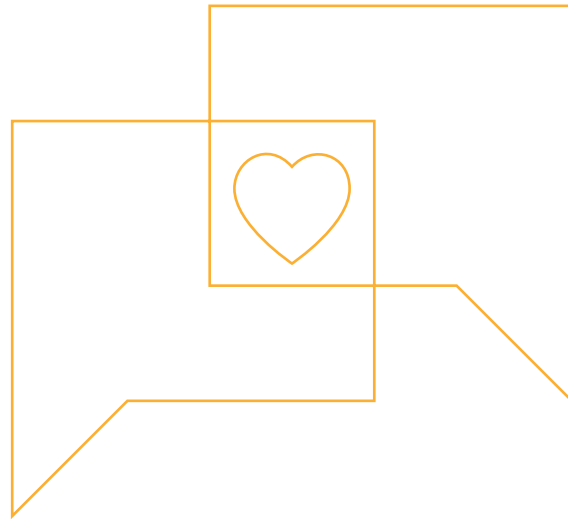
We encourage our community partners to leverage this data as they seek funding and support for the important work they do. Please cite the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne's *Social Sector Ecosystem Strategy* in any instance where information from this report is used.



About Transform Consulting Group

Transform Consulting Group (TCG) is a national data-informed consulting firm located in Wabash, IN serving nonprofits, education, government, and philanthropic partners. Everything TCG does is rooted in data and aligned to their clients' missions. TCG uses that lens as they come alongside their clients to work together to solve complex problems. TCG works with clients to build the roadmap for transformation of organizations, communities, and the lives of the people they serve.





Collaborate for Change

SOCIAL SECTOR ECOSYSTEM STRATEGY

2024-2028



**COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION**
OF GREATER FORT WAYNE