



Kent County
**Essential Needs
Task Force**

Food & Nutrition

Organizational Self-Assessment 2024 System Report

Introduction

This report presents results from the Kent County Essential Needs Task Force (ENTF) Food and Nutrition Coalition (FNC) Organizational Self-Assessment (OSA). Sixty-four respondents from 16 organizations completed the OSA survey in November and December 2024. The OSA survey can be viewed in Appendix B. This is the fourth annual FNC OSA, which was developed by the FNC Data-Story Action Team in 2021. Fifteen of these organizations participated in one or more previous FNC OSA, and one participated for the first time this year.

The OSA survey asks about 12 organizational practices, listed below. Respondents were asked to rate their organization's commitment to and implementation of each practice. The practices were divided into four categories, each containing three practices, labelled A1-A3 for advocacy, C1-C3 for community engagement, D1-D3 for data, and E1-E3 for equity. These labels are only intended to aid in navigating between charts, not to convey value. The practices are abbreviated in the graphs throughout this report. Reference the list below for the full wording.

For each category, respondents were asked: "Is there anything else you would like us to know about this?" They were also asked if they would like to receive support with any of the practices. Finally, participants were asked if any changes had been made to advocacy, community engagement, data, or equity practices in the past 12 months.

Organizations were provided three options for participating: 1) have one person take the survey, 2) offer it to a select group, or 3) offer it to everyone in the organization. This report aggregates results from all the organizations that participated. Additionally, five organizations had five or more respondents each and received a confidential report of their organizational results.

Practices

- A1 We actively look for local, state, and national advocacy opportunities
- A2 We engage in governmental planning and budgeting processes
- A3 We promote policies and practices that address the root causes of financial insecurity
- C1 We involve participants in our organizational and program planning
- C2 We empower participants to become leaders in our organization and community
- C3 We adjust our programs based on participants' feedback
- D1 We have a clear understanding of how our programs contribute to our mission
- D2 We identify and track outcomes, not just outputs, for our programs
- D3 We adjust our programs based on data
- E1 Our board and staff are representative of the community we serve
- E2 Diversity, equity, and inclusion training is mandatory for our board and staff
- E3 Our communications explain the root causes of financial insecurity

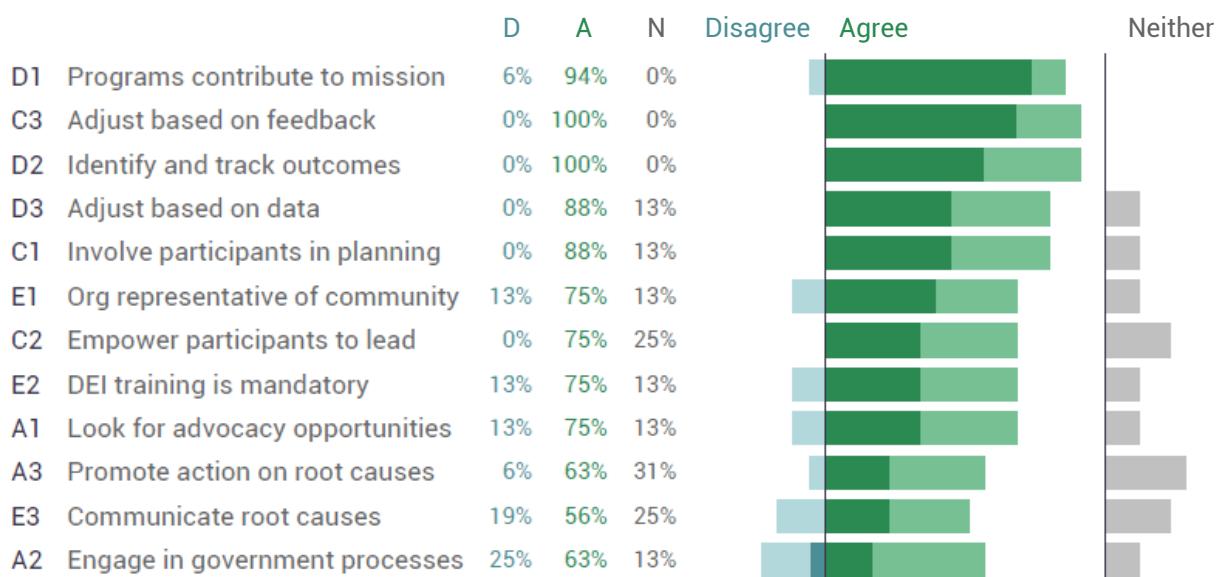
Commitment

Participants were asked to rate their organization on the statement "we are committed to this in theory" for each of the practices. An average over three indicates agreement and under three indicates disagreement.

On average, participating organizations agree they are committed to each of these practices with **strong agreement on five.**



When looking at the spread of responses, **agreement is almost 90% or higher on five of the practices, and **disagreement** only exceeds 10% on five.**



The practices towards the bottom of the charts above (A3, E3, and A2) have lower percentages of agreement and higher percentages of disagreement. This presents an opportunity for FNC to explore why these practices matter. What benefits could implementing these have for our member organizations and our community?

In both this section and the following, the graphs are sorted by the system average. Organizational averages were calculated by adding the recode values of all the responses from an organization and dividing by the number of responses from that organization. There was also a "don't know" option, which was excluded from this calculation. System averages were calculated by adding all the organizational averages and dividing by the number of participating organizations.

Agreement (green text) is calculated by adding the percent of organizational averages in the agree and strongly agree ranges. **Disagreement (blue text)** is calculated by adding the percent of organizational averages in the disagree and strongly disagree ranges. In the graphs showing the spread of responses, the second axis with gray bars and plain text indicates the percentage of organizational averages that were neutral.

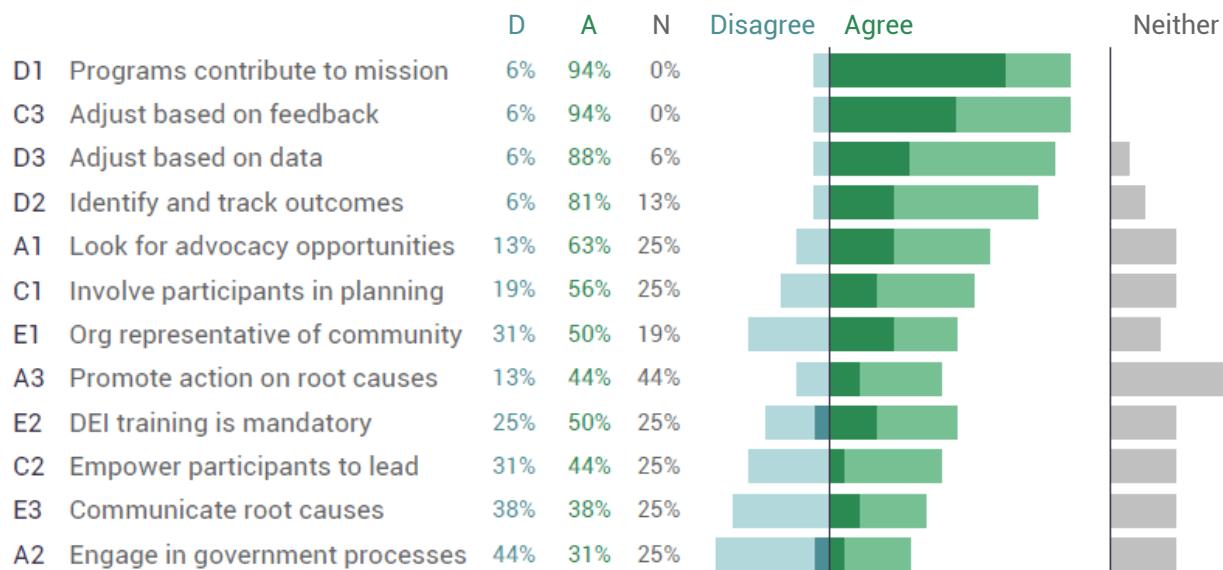
Implementation

Participants were asked to rate their organization on the statement "we have implemented this as practice" for each of the practices.

On average, participating organizations agree they are implementing all these practices except one with strong agreement on three.



When looking at the spread of responses, agreement exceeds 80% on four of the practices, and disagreement exceeds 20% on five.



Unlike in the commitment section above, identifying opportunities to improve our implementation scores is less straightforward. It requires looking at additional data and will be discussed further in the next section. One factor to consider is where participants express a desire for support.

Participants would like to receive support with all these practices, and almost a third want support with the top four. Even the practice at the bottom of the chart was selected by 10 of the 64 respondents.



Please note that support was not defined. Therefore, responses to this question could have several meanings. For example, this could indicate that staff have too many

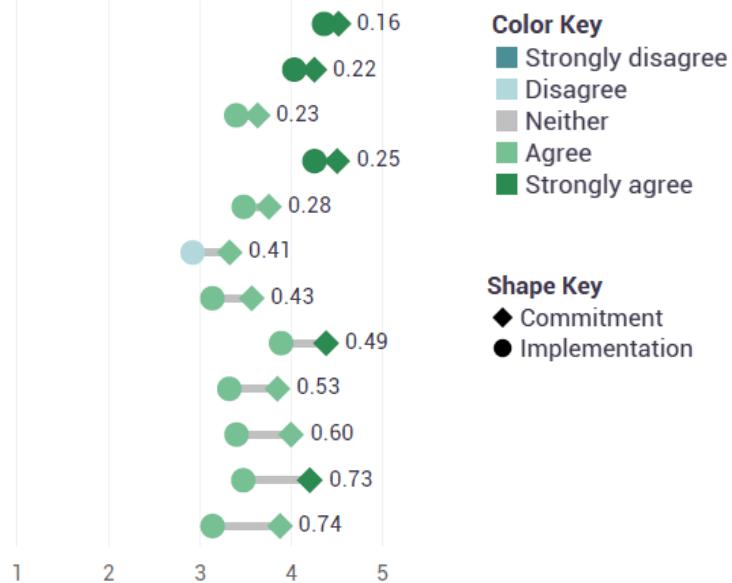
things to do and not enough time (i.e. this work is a lower priority than their other responsibilities). In which case support might look like hiring more staff and redistributing job responsibilities. It could also signify that staff do not possess the knowledge or skills for this work and would like training and guidance as they learn.

Comparing Commitment and Implementation

The chart below compares the system averages for commitment and implementation (commitment minus implementation). The larger the number, the larger the difference and vice versa. The graph is sorted from smallest to largest difference (top to bottom).

The practices with the largest difference between commitment and implementation present the greatest opportunity to further implementation efforts.

- D1 Programs contribute to mission
- D3 Adjust based on data
- A3 Promote action on root causes
- C3 Adjust based on feedback
- A1 Look for advocacy opportunities
- A2 Engage in government processes
- E3 Communicate root causes
- D2 Identify and track outcomes
- E2 DEI training is mandatory
- E1 Org representative of community
- C1 Involve participants in planning
- C2 Empower participants to lead



Scores were higher for commitment than implementation on all practices. This is not surprising because implementing these practices takes work, which is necessarily preceded by a commitment to doing that work. For practices where the difference is smaller, there is less opportunity to advance implementation, and our focus should be on improving commitment. Articulating how these practices are important to our organizations can increase commitment and align our members around this shared understanding. This will ensure buy-in from our teams, which is essential for successful implementation.

There are opportunities for improving implementation of practices where the difference is larger. It is important to understand that this self-assessment does not actually

measure implementation of these practices. It measures respondents' current opinions about implementation. Perceptions do not always align with reality and can change even when circumstances remain the same.

We know that respondents believe that implementation is lagging behind commitment, especially on E1, C1, and C2. We do not know if this is actually the case or if respondents are just unaware of work being done by their organizations. The latter could indicate a need to improve internal communications and relationships between different teams. We should discuss why implementation scores are lower for these practices and explore opportunities to improve implementation.

Participants were also asked if any changes had been made in the past 12 months to their organization's advocacy, community engagement, data, or equity practices. This data is only included in the organizational reports as a possible indicator of areas where internal communications may need to be improved.

Feedback from Open Ended Questions

Twenty-eight respondents from 11 organizations provided 56 comments in response to the open-ended questions in the OSA survey. The question "Is there anything else you would like us to know about this?" was asked about each category of practices and about their organization in general. In addition, each category contained a check all that apply question with an "other (please specify)" option where respondents could write in practices with which they would like to receive support.

These responses were analyzed, and four main themes emerged. The largest theme was comments made about something the organization is currently doing. In the second theme, participants shared something new their organization is doing or a change they recently made to their practices. The third theme consists of comments expressing a desire to do more or an acknowledgement that their organization is not currently doing enough. In the fourth theme, participants described the challenges their organizations are facing as they try to implement the practices in this assessment. The following table shows the number of comments, number of participants, and number of organizations represented by each theme.

Theme	Comments	Participants	Organizations
Doing Something	30	14	9
Doing more/making a change	16	11	6
Want to do more	10	8	6
Challenges/barriers	14	10	8

In the advocacy section, participants talked about what their organizations are already doing: "We participate with a number of policy and advocacy groups as a collective." Some told us about new activities and/or expressed a desire to do more: "Advocacy was added as a strategic priority in our most recent strategic plan." They also revealed some of the challenges they experience: "This is a new area that we'd like to be more involved in with more resources and added capacity."

For community engagement, participants shared ways that their organizations are empowering participants: "Recently, we implemented a process that connects community members to existing community groups, leadership opportunities and trainings to raise awareness and encourage further involvement in community." Some talked about changes they made as a result of their community engagement activities: "I have conducted some 1-on-1 interviews with community members to get their perspective on some issues and have started a new group based on their feedback." Still, they experienced challenges: "We are struggling with participation in our efforts."

With regard to data, some participants talked about the tension between collecting meaningful data and their funders' requirements: "Sometimes, it feels like our data practices have more to do with our funders than our participants, as we only have so much capacity for data collection and funders often require us to follow their own data practices." Others shared successes and ongoing improvements: "Our data coordinator has since taken over all data responsibilities from the last person in the role and has done an amazing job." They also requested support "connecting the dots between community data and our program data."

In the equity section, participants discussed their progress: "Our staff is better made up of representatives of our community. Our board is better than it was in the past... but it still is not inclusive to all." They also expressed their frustrations: "My team feels like they are committed to this but struggle to get the backing of the organization." Some even shared how these practices differ in their already diverse organizations: "This organization is diverse in its leadership, governance, programming, and those served. We have had discussions pertaining to the differences for Caucasian-led versus minority-led organizations and the needs around training... The training we engage in would not look like the training referred to in this survey as our needs pertaining to DEI are different." "We continue to struggle to find a solid DEI / unconscious bias / anti-racism training that is well received by all - which we (as admin team) feel stems from having a diverse staff and needing the training to be relatable and applicable for all."

These quotes provide several examples of how the identified themes show up. Minor changes to quotes were many to ensure confidentiality as needed. Special thanks to Allison Guffey, Evaluation Specialist at Kids' Food Basket for assisting with coding.

Conclusion

It is affirming to see so many of ENTF's partner organizations committed to and implementing the organizational practices assessed in this report. These practices are not a traditional part of essential needs work and show dedication to creating better organizational cultures and changing our systems to address the root causes of financial insecurity. ENTF provides resources and training to build organizational capacity for advocacy, community engagement, data, and equity work. We also provide one-on-one support in these areas as requested by partner organizations.

The information in this report will help the Food and Nutrition Coalition determine what to focus on throughout the year. The practices with the greatest opportunity for increasing commitment are:

- A2 We engage in governmental planning and budgeting processes
- A3 We promote policies and practices that address the root causes of financial insecurity
- E3 Our communications explain the root causes of financial insecurity

The practices with the greatest opportunity for improving implementation are:

- C1 We involve participants in our organizational and program planning
- C2 We empower participants to become leaders in our organization and community
- E1 Our board and staff are representative of the community we serve

Based on current capacity, ENTF staff recommend that FNC select 1-4 of these practices to address over the next 12 months. The next step in prioritizing our efforts is to discuss the following questions as a group:

1. What in this report is the most surprising to you?
2. Are perceptions more positive or negative than you expected?
3. Where would you focus your attention and why?

The lowest system averages for commitment have included A2 and E3 in all three previous OSAs. This year, A3 replaced A1 in the bottom three. The three practices with the largest difference between system averages for commitment and implementation included C1 and C2 in two of the past three years and E1 in all three years. For more information on how this year's results compare to past years, see Appendix A.

For questions about this report, you can contact our team at entf@hwmuw.org or reach out directly to our data analyst, Emily Madsen, at emadsen@hwmuw.org.

Participating Organizations

We are thankful to all those who participated in the FNC OSA this year. An asterisk has been placed by the names of the organizations that received an organizational report.

Access of West Michigan*

Baxter Community Center

Buist Community Assistance Center

Feeding America West Michigan*

Flat River Outreach Ministries

Health Net of West Michigan

HOPE Gardens*

Kent County Community Action

Kids' Food Basket

Meals On Wheels Western Michigan

North Kent Connect

The Other Way Ministries*

Plainsong Farm

The Salvation Army of Kent County

United Church Outreach Ministry

United Methodist Community House

YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids*

Appendix A

Year Over Year Tables

The following tables contain the system averages for commitment and implementation of each practice by year. The system averages are ranked from high (1) to low (12) with the bottom three highlighted. For commitment, the lowest ranked practices are those with the greatest opportunity for increasing commitment. The bottom three practices were consistent for commitment from 2021-2023 with just one changing in 2024. The top two practices were also consistent across all four years.

For implementation, the bottom three practices were the same as commitment from 2021-2023 with just one changing in 2024, and the top two practices were the same in all four years. Because the system averages were low for both commitment and implementation, there is less room for improving implementation based on rank alone. For the greatest opportunity to improve implementation, we look at the comparison table to see where there is the largest difference between the system averages for commitment and implementation. The comparisons are ranked from smallest (1) to largest (12). Four practices consistently ranked in the bottom three.

It is also important to note that changes were made to the wording of many practices to help clarify the intended meaning. In 2022, there were changes made to nine out of 12 practices (A1, A2, C1, C2, D2, D3, E1, E2, and E3). In 2023, there were no changes. In 2024, there were changes to just two practices (A3 and E3).

Commitment	Average				Rank			
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2021	2022	2023	2024
A1 Look for advocacy opportunities	3.66	3.83	3.64	3.75	10	10	11	9
A2 Engage in government processes	3.48	3.56	3.47	3.32	12	12	12	12
A3 Promote action on root causes	3.92	4.12	4.21	3.62	8	9	7	10
C1 Involve participants in planning	4.36	4.34	4.32	4.19	3	4	3	5
C2 Empower participants to lead	4.00	4.31	4.14	3.87	7	6	8	7
C3 Adjust based on feedback	4.48	4.49	4.67	4.49	2	1	1	2
D1 Programs contribute to mission	4.57	4.40	4.59	4.51	1	2	2	1
D2 Identify and track outcomes	4.30	4.18	4.23	4.37	4	8	6	3
D3 Adjust based on data	3.90	4.39	4.27	4.24	9	3	5	4
E1 Org representative of community	4.23	4.34	4.29	3.99	5	5	4	6
E2 DEI training is mandatory	4.08	4.30	4.09	3.84	6	7	9	8
E3 Communicate root causes	3.48	3.77	3.77	3.56	11	11	10	11

Implementation	Average				Rank			
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2021	2022	2023	2024
A1 Look for advocacy opportunities	3.42	3.40	3.29	3.47	10	10	11	5
A2 Engage in government processes	3.27	3.16	3.12	2.91	11	12	12	12
A3 Promote action on root causes	3.80	3.66	3.86	3.39	5	8	6	8
C1 Involve participants in planning	3.96	3.82	3.91	3.47	4	6	5	6
C2 Empower participants to lead	3.72	3.68	3.67	3.13	8	7	7	10
C3 Adjust based on feedback	4.38	4.36	4.42	4.24	2	1	2	2
D1 Programs contribute to mission	4.52	4.27	4.51	4.35	1	2	1	1
D2 Identify and track outcomes	4.05	3.92	3.98	3.88	3	4	4	4
D3 Adjust based on data	3.61	4.11	4.02	4.02	9	3	3	3
E1 Org representative of community	3.72	3.65	3.51	3.39	7	9	9	7
E2 DEI training is mandatory	3.72	3.89	3.67	3.31	6	5	8	9
E3 Communicate root causes	3.19	3.36	3.48	3.13	12	11	10	11

Comparison (commitment average minus implementation average)	Difference b/w averages				Rank			
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2021	2022	2023	2024
A1 Look for advocacy opportunities	0.24	0.43	0.34	0.28	5	8	6	5
A2 Engage in goverment processes	0.21	0.40	0.36	0.41	4	5	8	6
A3 Promote action on root causes	0.12	0.46	0.34	0.23	3	9	7	3
C1 Involve participants in planning	0.40	0.53	0.41	0.73	11	10	9	11
C2 Empower participants to lead	0.28	0.62	0.47	0.74	7	11	11	12
C3 Adjust based on feedback	0.10	0.12	0.25	0.25	2	1	4	4
D1 Programs contribute to mission	0.05	0.13	0.09	0.16	1	2	1	1
D2 Identify and track outcomes	0.25	0.25	0.24	0.49	6	3	2	8
D3 Adjust based on data	0.30	0.28	0.25	0.22	9	4	3	2
E1 Org representative of community	0.51	0.69	0.78	0.60	12	12	12	10
E2 DEI training is mandatory	0.36	0.41	0.42	0.53	10	6	10	9
E3 Communicate root causes	0.29	0.41	0.29	0.43	8	7	5	7

Appendix B

Organizational Self-Assessment Survey

The ENTF Economic and Workforce Development Committee invites you to take part in an organizational self-assessment. This project will help us understand your perspectives on organizational practices around:

- Community engagement
- Data
- Advocacy
- Equity

All responses are voluntary. You may skip questions that you do not understand or prefer not to answer. If you do not provide your email address, your response will be anonymous. If you provide your email, your response will be kept confidential by ENTF.

ENTF will create two types of reports.

1. System Report – This report will look at the results from all the organizations that participated in the project. In it your organization's results will be anonymized or aggregated with other organizations. This report will be made publicly available.
2. Organizational Reports – These reports will look at individual organization's results and will only be created for organizations with five or more respondents. In them individual responses will be anonymized or aggregated with other respondents. These reports will only be provided to the corresponding organizations and will be kept confidential by ENTF.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Emily Madsen.

- Email: emadsen@hwmuw.org
- Phone: 616-752-8623

Before getting started, please tell us the name of your organization.

This is required.

Community Engagement

This section looks at how your organization includes participants in its work.

Please rate your organization on the following statements.

We involve participants in our organizational and program planning.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

We adjust our programs based on participants' feedback.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

We empower participants to become leaders in our organization and community.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Would you like to receive support with these practices? *Select all that apply.*

- Involving participants in our organizational and program planning
- Adjusting our programs based on participants' feedback
- Empowering participants to become leaders in our organization and community
- Other (please specify) _____
- None of the above

Has your organization changed its community engagement practices within the past 12 months?

- No
- Yes
- Don't know

Is there anything else you would like us to know about this?

Data

This section looks at how your organization uses data in its work.

Please rate your organization on the following statements.

We have a clear understanding of how our programs contribute to our mission.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

We identify and track outcomes, not just outputs, for our programs.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

We adjust our programs based on data.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Would you like to receive support with these practices? *Select all that apply.*

- Building understanding of how our programs contribute to our mission
- Identifying and tracking outcomes for our programs
- Adjusting our programs based on data
- Other (please specify) _____
- None of the above

Has your organization changed its data practices within the past 12 months?

- No
- Yes
- Don't know

Is there anything else you would like us to know about this?

Advocacy

This section looks at how your organization engages with elected officials and other policy makers to inform their work.

Please rate your organization on the following statements.

We actively look for local, state, and national advocacy opportunities.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

We engage in governmental planning and budgeting processes.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

We promote policies and practices that address the root causes of financial insecurity.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Would you like to receive support with these practices? *Select all that apply.*

- Looking for local, state, and national advocacy opportunities
- Engaging in governmental planning and budgeting processes
- Promoting policies and practices that address the root causes of financial insecurity
- Other (please specify) _____
- None of the above

Has your organization changed its advocacy practices within the past 12 months?

- No
- Yes
- Don't know

Is there anything else you would like us to know about this?

Equity

This section looks at how your organization embeds equity in its work.

Please rate your organization on the following statements.

Our board and staff are representative of the community we serve (e.g. geographic, race/ethnicity, experience, income, etc.).

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Diversity, equity, and inclusion training is mandatory for our board and staff.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Our communications explain the root causes of financial insecurity.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Would you like to receive support with these practices? *Select all that apply.*

- Attracting and retaining board members and staff that are representative of the community we serve
- Providing diversity, equity, and inclusion training for our board and staff
- Explaining the root causes of financial insecurity in our communications
- Other (please specify) _____
- None of the above

Has your organization changed its equity practices within the past 12 months?

- No
- Yes
- Don't know

Is there anything else you would like us to know about this?

Before you go...

Please consider providing your email address if you would like support with any of the practices in this assessment.

This is optional. Your survey will no longer be anonymous, but your responses will be kept confidential.

Is there anything else you would like us to know about your organization?
