

STEPPING FORWARD

INSIGHTS FROM ENGAGING FRONTLINE CIVIC LEADERS

The Harwood Institute recently completed a nationwide questionnaire of over 300 frontline civic leaders from libraries, United Ways, foundations, nonprofits, faith institutions, and others across the US. Here's what we heard.

Main Findings

COVID-19 HAS EXPOSED EXISTING INEQUALITIES

Current crises have laid bare deep and profound disparities and challenges that communities must tackle now.

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PUBLIC HEALTH IS A MAIN PRIORITY

Physical health and safety are a main priority for civic leaders who fear these aren't being taken seriously.

COMMUNITIES GROUPS FEAR FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

The negative economic impact of COVID-19 is being felt deeply by community organizations and jeopardizes their ability to respond.

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A NEW CIVIC CULTURE IS EMERGING

Amid the challenges, communities are working in new and innovative ways that demonstrate our innate capacities to get things done.

BUSINESS AS USUAL WON'T CUT IT

Many civic leaders fear we will go back to business as usual and we will come out weaker.

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COMMUNITIES NEED A NEW WAY FORWARD

While business as usual will not work moving forward, there is a lack of shared agreement about how to move forward.

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WHAT CAN WE DO?

Recommendations for Communities

Create a robust conversation on how we seek to move forward, together, based on our shared aspirations.



It's only when we articulate our shared aspirations to one another that they become real in our lives. We must focus on what we seek to create together rather than sliding back to business as usual.

Build a new shared responsibility where we tap into our innate capacities.



People are looking to bring about change in their own lives and in our collective lives. A Shared Responsibility approach leverages both big-ticket actions and human scale actions.

Come together to build public will for sustainable change.



People—their lives, what matters to them, their aspirations—must always be at the center of what we do. We need to recognize people's desire to find ways to express their agency, together. This cannot be built on a foundation of false hope.






Tell a new can-do narrative.



Stories of the good work people are doing become proof points that we can come together and rebuild our communities.

MOVING FORWARD

We have the opportunity to transform how we work in communities. Communities are demonstrating a renewed ability to come together and there is a new civic awakening occurring in America. For the last 30 years, The Harwood Institute has worked with communities across the world to bridge divides and tackle shared challenges. Work with us to build a more hopeful path forward:

-  Take part in a regional or local roundtable! Visit steppingforwardcampaign.org to learn more.
-  Get trained in the Harwood practice of Turning Outward in the Fall 2020 Virtual Public Innovators Lab. Register at harwoodvirtuallab.eventbrite.com.
-  Read Rich Harwood's newest book, [Stepping Forward](#), and write a review or share the book with a colleague.
-  Explore resources, reports and tools at theharwoodinstitute.org.
-  Contact us to help you move your community forward!

