

Municipal Outreach Strategy Recommendations for Florida Community Innovation

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ABSTRACT

Florida Community Innovation (FCI) is a nonprofit seeking to expand access to resources for residents across the state of Florida. A central theme of this endeavor is a Florida Community Resource Map, which lists available resources by region and type of service offered. Although many resources exist on the interactive map, these are largely due to nonprofit connections and do not adequately represent the available resources throughout Florida municipalities. A series of interviews were conducted throughout the state to determine how municipalities generally service residents. A literature review highlights central themes of municipality and nonprofit interaction, including a lack of information tracking by municipalities which leaves a gap in resource provision. The recommendations presented in this paper include partnering with municipalities and counties, a greater emphasis on smaller communities, and a review of the municipal structure in Florida. FCI and its stakeholders have an opportunity to increase resource access for the citizens of Florida. This paper provides such recommendations for FCI as they pursue their goal of “building innovative, human-centered technology, and conducting persuasive public education campaigns that move the needle on access to services and compliance with public health guidance” (Florida Community Innovation, 2022).

INTRODUCTION

According to the Florida League of Cities, there are over 400 incorporated municipalities throughout the state of Florida (Florida League of Cities, 2021). Within these municipalities, there are a plethora of local, state and county-wide services, as well as nonprofit organizations that aid residents as needed. However, due to the expansive nature of the geographic area and population of the state, it is unclear whether or not residents are receiving the most accurate information about the types of services available in their communities. In partnership with Florida Community Innovation, American University Graduate students seek to determine whether or not municipalities in Florida are aware of services, have established partnerships with local services, and have developed methods to inform residents of services that may offer support.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Methodology

This review is intended to aid in identifying possible methodologies and priorities for Florida Community Innovation (FCI) to conduct outreach to municipal governments in Florida in order to facilitate closer relationships with those entities. The primary goal is to explore opportunities for FCI to gain information about resources provided by municipalities in Florida in order to add those resources to their resource map and increase access to those resources. Additionally, this review will seek to identify key services that are not provided by municipal governments, which would create an opportunity for FCI to disseminate information to municipal governments about services provided by nonprofit agencies and other community partners. The review analyzes sixteen contemporary sources, focusing on three categories: municipal government structures in the United States, partnerships between nonprofit organizations and municipalities, and studies of the impact that increased information availability has on outcomes for people accessing public resources, including affordable housing and healthcare. All sources were compiled through the American University Library website, using categorical search terms (i.e. “municipal government structure”, “municipal nonprofit partnerships”, “information access and housing outcomes” etc.). Sources were then screened for their relevance via a review of the paper’s abstract, with irrelevant results disincluded from the final review.

Municipal Structure

The structure of municipal governments vary greatly based on both the population of the municipality and the structure of the government at its origination. Some cities’ governments were formed by private charter provided by a state legislature directly to the government of one particular city, meaning that the municipality’s structure, and by extension the authority of its offices and the services the city is capable of providing are set, by statute, in the individual charter for that city from the state legislature (Starnes, 2017). Other municipalities have a ‘general law’ charter, which creates identical charters, and therefore identical structures and similar services provided, to all cities created under the general law charter (Starnes, 2017). Lastly, there are municipalities formed under a ‘home rule’ charter, where the city government can form and amend its charter, and therefore its structure, authority, and ability to provide

services “through local referendum without the approval of the state legislature” (Starnes, 2017, pg. 9). This difference in charter can have an influence on whether a city operates with a mayor-alderman structure, a mayor-alderman-council structure, a city manager-commission structure, or a modified city manager-council structure. This, in turn, influences not only what is provided by a municipal government, but who is responsible for overseeing the various departments, and what services those departments may provide. Administrative structure of a municipal government has a defined impact too on the scope of the services that a city provides. Larger governments, with broader charters and more departments, may have a greater variety of services offered than smaller administrative structures (Starnes, 2017).

It is important to remember that local governance does not happen in a vacuum and is dependent on the population of the municipality and the economic activities taking place in the municipality. Rather counterintuitively, “increases in population are associated with statistically significant decreases in per capita expenditures [by local governments]” (Rosen, 1988, pg. 119). Rosen offers two theories on why this expenditure level decrease exists: either economies of scale are in play, decreasing the unit cost of service provided, or that communities are “sluggish” in responding to increases in population with sufficient public expenditure to provide public services (Rosen, 1988). Neighboring municipalities can also influence what services are provided, and to what degree. “The scope of services provided by local governments, and therefore their size also depends on overlapping functional responsibilities among local jurisdictions” (Eberts and Gronberg, 1990, pg. 169). Demographic variables between municipalities can change the types of services demanded by the public, and by extension, the types of services provided by that municipality. Municipalities provide services based on demands and advocacy efforts of the populous, which means, in turn, that city demographics have a palpable impact on services provided by the municipal government. In a 2009 study aimed at evaluating whether municipalities provided different accessible housing services based on the percentage of the population who may need access to handicap accessible affordable housing, however, the strongest influence on changes to the provision of accessible housing service came from the strength of advocacy efforts demanding such services from the government. “Results indicate that advocacy is an effective strategy to encourage city government adoption of these innovations. The percent of the population with a disability was positively associated, whereas percent of the population aged 65 and older was not associated or

negatively associated, with innovation adoption in the regression models” (Lehning, 2009, pg. 345). A key takeaway from all of these sources is that municipal government structure, and the services that a municipal government may provide, as well as the titles and numbers of individuals responsible for carrying out those services may vary based on demographic, structural, or statutory variances in the municipalities themselves.

Municipalities vary in their capacity to track use data for various municipal services, their actual tracking of that information regardless of capacity, and in their use of this information to inform policy decisions. Much of this tendency can be linked to the phenomenon known as ‘siloiing’. In essence, individual, compartmentalized departments do not communicate their operations with one another, and information does not pass across all stakeholders within a jurisdiction, and service is delivered inefficiently. “When policy makers work independently from each other this has a tendency to produce duplication and service gaps” (Froy and Guigere, 2010, pg. 13). Indeed, siloiing can be seen as a key driver of an existent information gap in municipal service access data. Unless a municipality has to report service access data to another stakeholder, as would be the case for services being funded by a federal grant or other external agency, there is no guarantee that a city is tracking service use data at all (Starnes, 2017). If there is an external stakeholder, such as a state or federal agency who has provided funding assistance, that data may be tracked, but only reported to the funding authority, and not to local policymakers (Starnes, 2017).

Partnerships Between Municipalities and Nonprofits

Partnerships between the public and nonprofit sector have been utilized to the mutual benefit of both sectors for decades. “Advocates of collaboration have amassed an extensive list of the potential benefits of interorganizational cooperation, including its ability to address shared problems more effectively, its potential for cost savings and organizational learning, the higher quality service or end product that may result, a gain in competitive advantage, access to new skills or markets, and diffusion of risk” (Grazely and Brundey, 2007, pg. 392). Partnerships between nonprofits and government entities can provide mutual benefit to both parties, as nonprofits can provide more in-depth services to the public than many government entities, particularly smaller entities, such as municipalities. Additionally, public funding can provide

stability and legitimacy to nonprofit organizations that cannot be matched with independent, donation-based funding (Starnes, 2017).

One key problem area facing many municipalities is the lack of interoperability internally with resource information and referral. Some cities have had success in integrating access to services through the 311-telephone system (211 in some localities), but it remains dependent on live operators to provide members of the public with relevant information and is only available in municipalities large enough to fund employment of such operators (Nam and Pardo, 2014). Opportunities exist for cross-sector partnerships to increase information availability at a local level. “The drive toward more integrated service delivery stems from two interrelated streams of thought and reform that have converged during the past two decades: first, a philosophy of citizen-centric governance, and secondly, the emergence of digital technologies that underpin government and widen opportunities for service delivery” (Nam and Pardo, 2014, pg. 58). Nam and Pardo (2014) did not explicitly specify that information integration surrounding public service must lie with the public sector and many practitioners of public management theory suggest that such an informational role could be better served by a nonprofit organization than by a government entity. “Government and nonprofits have been immersed in an enduring and symbiotic partnership that dates to the founding of our nation...[being] more nimble than government bureaucracies, nonprofits have a history of functioning as a sort of research and development arm of the public sector” (Nank, 2009, pg. 365). In cases where services are being provided by the public sector, but information about those services is not aptly available to the public in a manner that provides maximum access to those services, a nonprofit partner could provide informational services more readily than a purely public entity.

The need for informational services and other data-based services being used as connective tissue to provide access to resources throughout the country and, in particular, in smaller municipalities may be catalyzed by the broader effort of downsizing and restructuring of services across local governments. Downsizing has been a popular practice among public managers since the mid-1980s, and typically includes diminishing non-essential services provided by cities, or restructuring so those services are provided by partners other than a purely public entity (Liou and Wang, 2019). Somewhat alarmingly, these downsizing efforts have little to do with the fiscal reality in the municipality. “For the argument about downsizing for

economic concerns, there are theoretical implications about the finding of no relationship between financial conditions and downsizing reforms. Our study of downsizing performance indicated that there are differences between reform attitudes and reform actions because financial conditions are not related to the implementation of downsizing reforms” (Liou and Wang, 2019, pg. 486). In cases where downsizing efforts are made, services that are considered less essential, such as informational services, may be downsized or outsourced to non-government entities, creating an opportunity for a nonprofit partner or other non-public entity to provide informational services at a lower cost to taxpayers.

Information and its Impact on Access

Public access to information about available resources and services has a direct impact on the utilization of those resources and subsequently, the outcomes for those persons accessing essential services.

Looking at housing, focusing on both private rental housing and publicly funded housing like that overseen by municipal housing authorities, a 2021 study showed that “renters are exposed to fundamentally different types of information depending on the ethnoracial and socioeconomic makeup of the neighborhoods where they are searching” (Besbris and Kuk, 2021, pg. 1197). This study, which was a cross sectional snapshot of more than 3.9 million rental listings across the 50 largest metropolitan areas in the United States, showed that rental and neighborhood amenity information is less available and accessible on a major online rental platform in lower income neighborhoods, as well as neighborhoods that had higher populations of Latinos and African Americans, than is available in neighborhoods of higher income and neighborhoods with White or Asian population majority (Besbris and Kuk, 2021). “Results highlight the importance of understanding the information environment in which housing searches take place for demographic research on residential mobility. Mobility decisions are predicated on available information, and as shown here, landlords’ information-sharing practices do not equalize information across neighborhoods” (Besbris and Kuk, 2021, pg. 1216). Compounding this issue is a recent study about housing searches in Tianjin, China, where it was found that successful housing placement and price spent on identical housing units were associated directly with the information available to those conducting a housing search. “Empirical findings in this research provide supportive evidence to the argument that

better-informed households can secure a better deal, which is also consistent with the theoretical literature...different types of households pay different prices for an almost identical housing unit [based on information availability]" (Qiu and Zhao, 2018, pg. 4966). While there is not comprehensive research about the impact that housing information has on housing placement in the United States, this study does state strongly that information influences market behavior, and housing market behavior may not vary much from country to country. When the conclusions of these two studies are compounded, it becomes apparent that the disparity in information about affordable rental housing from neighborhood to neighborhood directly impacts the price people pay for housing, as well as the possibility of a successful tenancy or housing placement. Equity in housing access is directly associated with equity in access to information about available housing.

There are disparities in information accessibility, and subsequently in outcomes, in other service areas beyond housing. For those experiencing food insecurity, reliable information about access to local food banks is necessary to feed themselves and their families. Given that the supply chains for food banks are not consistent and that food availability and times of accessibility vary for local food banks, it is crucial that people dependent on food banks have access to comprehensive information about food resources in their area. "Although it is free or low-cost and relatively abundant in the neighborhood, obtaining food takes a good deal of time, energy, and knowledge. One must know where to go and when, within a complex and constantly changing landscape of providers and other resources. Programs open and close, hours change, and providers stop serving early because they run out of food" (Meiwald and McCann, 2014, pg. 545). Meiwald and McCann (2014) contend that maintaining a consistent diet for those dependent on food assistance programs and food banks is difficult due to the inconsistent scheduling and erratic availability of food at food banks in many cities. A 2017 ArcGIS study looking at the communities in the United States with the highest concentration of persons living below the poverty line did find that the majority of people in these communities in the lowest income brackets live within 10 miles of a food distribution center (Bacon and Baker, 2017). While this result is certainly encouraging, there are outliers in some urban areas that are of note. "Areas of potential need persist in urban areas. We calculated that 38% of the low-income census tracts had low access to SHFB food assistance. This suggests that there is a need for greater access to food distribution in these areas" (Bacon and Baker, 2017, page 911). These two

resources in conjunction suggest that with the exception of some outlier urban communities, food banks and other distribution centers are, broadly speaking, available to the poorest and most vulnerable populations in the country. This then highlights an opportunity for accessible informational services to disseminate information about these food resources to the public in an accessible way.

In a similar vein to housing and food security, healthcare outcomes are also influenced by the availability of reliable resource information. There have been multiple studies conducted linking neighborhood resource availability to cardiovascular disease. In a study published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* in 2001, surveying neighborhoods in Forsyth County, North Carolina, Jackson, Mississippi, Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Washington County, Maryland, a total of 615 coronary events occurred in 13,009 participants (Roux et al., 2001). As the surveyors wrote, “Residents of disadvantaged neighborhoods...had a higher risk of disease than residents of advantaged neighborhoods, even after we controlled for personal income, education, and occupation” (Roux et al. 2001, pg. 99). The impact that available health resources had on health outcomes was underscored during the COVID-19 pandemic. Preliminary studies out of China show disparities between COVID-19 mortality rates in multiple provinces that have different health resource availability. “In-depth analysis of these data show clear disparities in mortality rates between Wuhan (>3%), different regions of Hubei (about 2·9% on average), and across the other provinces of China (about 0·7% on average). We postulate that this is likely to be related to...an insufficiency of health-care resources [in these provinces]” (Ji et al., 2020). In both of these instances, access to healthcare resources had a direct impact on the mortality rate of people in those communities. In the healthcare sphere, similar to other resources discussed, reliable information and access to resources appears to have a direct impact on outcomes.

INTERVIEWS

Methodology

In conjunction with the information obtained in the literature review, a non-experimental analysis was conducted in order to determine how the relationships between municipalities, nonprofit organizations, and members of the community in Florida mirrored the studies we observed. A series of interviews were conducted via telephone in order to obtain firsthand information regarding these areas.

Per our initial conversation with FCI, interviews were conducted in each of the six primary regions throughout Florida: North West, North East, North Central, South East, South West, and Central Florida. Our team relied on secondary data provided by mapping resources, population data, and client preference in order to determine which cities would be included in which territories. The team then utilized primary data collected through the interview process in order to generate findings discussed below.

The interviews were conducted via phone first, and in some cases potential interviewees requested that the team follow up with an email. In order to maintain consistency with a team of interviewers, a standardized interview template and script was created and used by each interviewer (Appendix 1). Interview questions were created based on the information we desired to obtain, with a focus on creating open-ended questions that encouraged participants to discuss the practices of their particular community freely. Each interview conducted averaged 10-15 minutes from start to finish.

We began each interview with a brief introduction summarizing the project goals and highlighting FCI's mission. The interview consisted of six questions including how local residents may be directed to local resources in their communities and whether or not the municipality tracked information provided to residents. At the end of each interview, participants were invited to share any additional thoughts regarding the relationships between municipalities, nonprofits and social services in their area.

Our team utilized content analysis in order to contextualize responses and identify central themes among the interview responses. Transcripts of each interview are available in Appendix 2. Although no transcripts are available, information is also included regarding municipalities that were contacted and did not return calls. At the time of this writing, none of the municipalities who were left voicemails have responded to the interviewers.

At the conclusion of the interview phase, the interview questions were reworked to smooth out areas of confusion that came up in the first interviews. In addition, a voicemail prompt was created to account for the large number of voicemails left in the interview phase. The updated questionnaire and script are available in Appendix 3.

Findings

The responses to the interviews were then analyzed to gain a deeper understanding of the relationships between municipalities and social services in each community. The qualitative analysis suggested that there may be some confusion about the relevance and efficiency of 211/311 services information line, revealed the presence of ‘siloining’ among employees of municipalities and between organizations in the community, and suggested a lack of sufficient tracking and following up of requests made by residents.

When conducting preliminary research in preparation for the interviews, it was discovered that for many residents throughout the state, Florida 211 appeared to be the first point of contact to inquire about community resources. The 211 line is sponsored and facilitated by United Way and designed to be a centralized location where residents can connect with social service organizations (<https://www.unitedwayncfl.org/211-your-first-call-help>). Interviewers expected that municipalities may rely on 211 as their primary resource when referring residents for assistance, and this was corroborated by at least one municipality during the interview phase (Cape Coral in Lee County). This was concerning, as the literature review addresses that 211 (and similarly 311) require live staffers to provide information to residents. 211 and 311 may also not have the most up-to-date information, as many locations such as food banks frequently close early and may cause confusion for residents relying on such phone services for the most current information.

The literature review highlighted the issue of ‘siloining’, this was also corroborated by the interviews. One of the questions asked of each municipality was whether or not any training was provided to staff who may receive phone calls on local resources and how to refer residents to such services. As the interviews revealed, most employees employed by municipalities do not receive any formal training on local resources or partnerships with the municipality. Several different municipalities (The Town of Orange Park, Orlando, and Fort Lauderdale) stated that knowledge of resources developed as the result of “on the job training” or “experience working in the office”. Other municipalities did not expand on their answers. As the literature review suggests, such training and experience-based information subjects residents to inadequate and unbalanced information. If the resources you are provided access to are based on who answers the phone, certain groups of residents who may only be able to call at a certain time would be disadvantaged if the individual answering the phone did not have adequate training.

Consistent with the research cited in the literature review, the interviews indicated that most municipalities do not maintain records or track residents' requests for services (including name, number or type of request) unless prompted or required by outside stakeholders. Fort Lauderdale and Orlando do utilize a record keeping system for incoming requests, however they do not analyze or follow-up with residents. One municipality (Pace) indicated that the large majority of such requests are routed to Santa Rosa County, who may begin tracking resident requests in order to meet the terms of local partners and grants. Due to the fact that requests for services and referrals to outside organizations are not recorded, there is little to no confirmation that residents requesting services have actually received them. Additionally, this leads to an information gap as to who is using the services and whether or not the services are providing residents the assistance they need. As a result, municipalities could be continually referring residents to resources that provide little or no actual benefit.

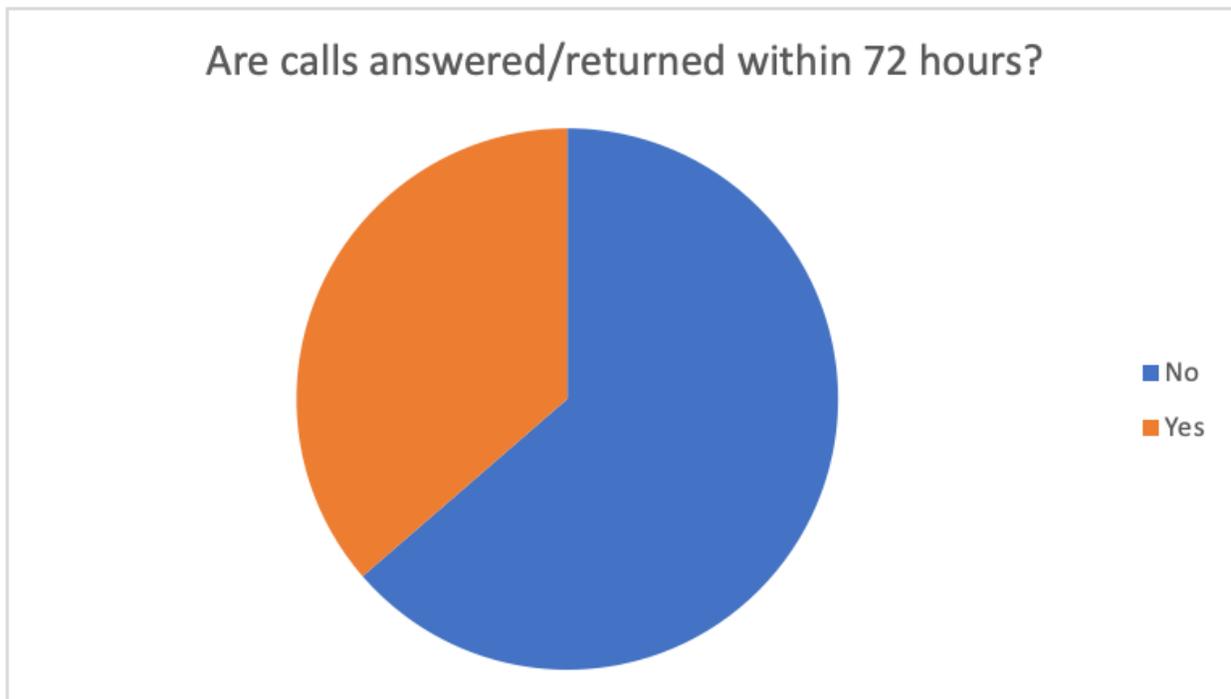
Graphs and Charts

In this section, charts were created to visualize the areas of opportunity that currently exist in Florida. Pertinent questions are graphed below.

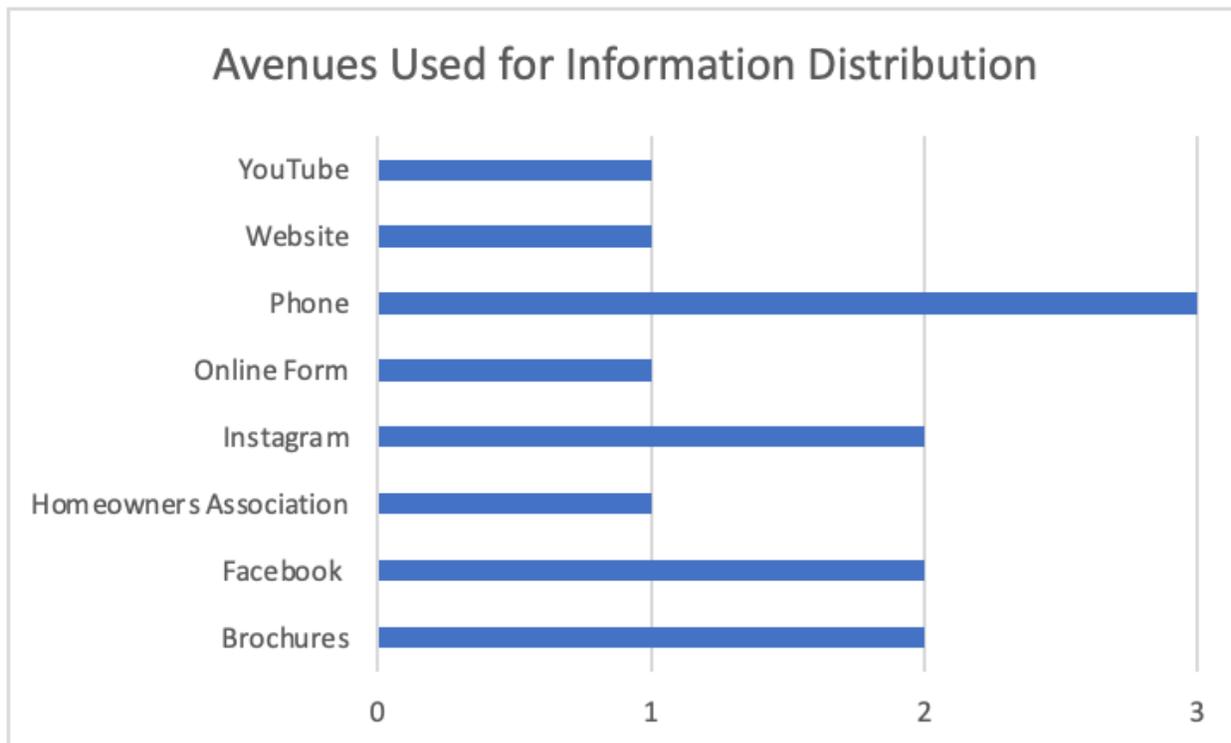
Graph 1



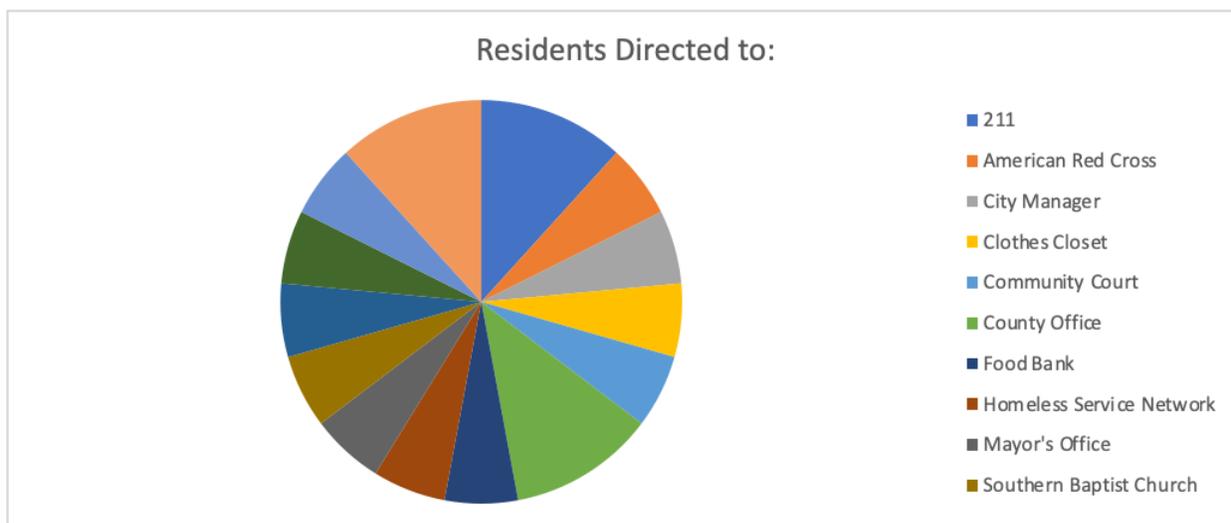
Graph 2



Graph 3



Graph 4



These graphs were chosen based on what they represent for FCI in terms of areas of opportunity. Graphs 1 and 2 indicate that all municipalities are receiving calls from residents, but Graph 2 highlights that many residents are not timely receiving the information that they may need. 72 hours is a significant amount of time if one is facing food insecurity or the loss of

housing. FCI is successful because it provides immediate information that can be accessed 24/7. Residents are not beholden to call centers or operating hours when they need help.

Graph 3 highlights the areas that municipalities are using to disseminate information. An inconsistency is certainly addressed in this area, as few municipalities appear to have dedicated social media teams, and in some areas the social media pages reviewed had not been updated in weeks. This sends a signal to residents that pages are not heavily monitored, so they may be hesitant to reach out to their municipality using an online forum.

Graph 4 lists places interviewees stated residents are referred to when they call for assistance. Although other places may also be utilized, they were not listed and so are not included in the graph. This graph also highlights discrepancies among municipalities, as some municipalities may not provide resources that are available in other neighboring areas (Eberts and Groberg, 1990).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Various organizations throughout Florida aim to provide community services to residents in need, but those organizations are only effective if they are able to reach their target population. With over 400 incorporated municipalities, 67 counties, and countless nonprofit organizations that each provide various services, it is difficult to determine if Florida residents are able to gather accurate, up-to-date information regarding critical services in a time of need. Our research revealed that municipal structure, organizational partnerships, and accessibility of information are the three of the most influential factors when determining a municipality's ability to connect residents with vital community services. Florida Community Innovation provides a vital service that can bridge many of the gaps experienced in these areas, particularly the accessibility gap experienced by residents who may not be able to communicate with their local municipality. We recommend that FCI:

- Expand future research to include county governments. As observed in both the literature review and interviews, municipal structure of an entity can significantly impact what

community services are available on a municipal level in comparison to a county level.

By expanding future analyses to include county-level governments, FCI will gain a more comprehensive view of resources available at all levels, and subsequently better form relationships at all levels of local government.

- Strengthen organizational relationships with municipal governments. Establishing and maintaining effective relationships with municipal governments on an organizational level will ensure that FCI is being utilized to its full potential and eliminating the resource gaps that exist within these communities. A suggestion for FCI would be to advocate for linkage to municipal websites (similar to that existing on the United Way and Central Florida Foundations webpages). Although municipal websites are likely to be the first stop, a suggestion to navigate to FCI's Community Resource Map (particularly after business hours) could assist residents in obtaining needed resources and information immediately.
- Focus on smaller municipalities that are historically underrepresented. Some municipalities have insufficient resources that result in extended wait times thus preventing residents from receiving critical resources. This problem is especially prevalent in small communities that may not be represented on the Community Resource Map. FCI could reduce this shortfall by focusing future efforts on the inclusion of smaller municipalities on the Community Resource Map. Additionally, FCI could advocate for smaller municipalities to provide the FCI website as an alternative to calling the municipal offices; residents will then be able to self-select the specific resource needed instantly.

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

Questionnaire Revisions

After completing the first round of interviews the following revisions were made to the interview questionnaire:

- Incorporating the heading that allows interviewers to record the municipality's contact information.
- Addition of statement "Is this the correct point of contact to collect this information?".
- Inserting the final question "Is there anything you would like to add regarding the relationship between your municipality and the social service providers in your community?".
- Including a voicemail prompt to use in the event of no answer.

Identifying the Correct Point of Contact

As we conducted interviews, we found it difficult to determine which municipal department would be the best point of contact for each community. Due to positions, job titles, and online contact information varying greatly across each municipality a large portion of our time was spent locating the correct point of contact. When searching for the correct point of contact we recommend:

- Exploring the municipality's website in depth. Some municipal websites did not provide contact information and department listings on the same page and additional searching was required.
- Contact the Mayor's office/ Mayor's secretary. In smaller municipal governments the Mayor's office or secretary will typically be able to provide which department to contact and that department's contact information.
- Reach out to the Housing Department. Occasionally, you may encounter an unresponsive municipality; if several attempts have been made to contact the municipality and no response has been received, it may be beneficial to contact the housing department. In our experience, the housing department was either able to answer the questions or point us in the right direction of someone who could.

Expanding Interviews

As our team began analyzing the compiled interview data and comparing our individual experiences we discussed our ideas of how FCI could continue research into this topic. When continuing the research process we recommend:

- Conducting interviews with call center representatives. Some larger municipalities and counties had call centers that they typically refer to. These call centers may have some valuable information and would likely be a great organization to gather data from and provide possible training resources for. If referrals to the call center are frequent there could be a huge benefit to educating their employees on social services available.
- Expand interviews to include county government. Many of the smaller municipalities rely on county services to provide social service information to beneficiaries due to budget restraints or local government structure. By including the county governments the data collected will likely provide a more clear picture of the issue at hand.
- Interview local libraries. Libraries are a consistent source of information regardless of the size of the municipality. Many possible beneficiaries looking for social services will begin their search at the library due to the availability of information, internet access, and programming provided.

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Clay County Interview

County: Clay County

City: Orange Park

Population: 8,692

Interviewee: Sarah Campbell, Town Manager

Interview Date: March 24, 2022

Interview Transcript:

Q: Residents in your area may need social service resources throughout the course of their lives; does your office regularly receive inquiries regarding resources that could assist residents in these periods? Give examples of jobs, housing, or healthcare if prompted for an example – might be good to keep it broad at first to see what they say.

A: Occasionally the office receives such requests. However, most social services are available at a county level. When residents reach out with an inquiry (by phone, walk-in, or email), they are referred to a county office.

Q: Does your office provide specific training for employees that would help them match stated needs to available resources in your area, either government sponsored or nonprofit?

A: The office does not provide training specifically on resource referral. However, since the administrative assistants are typically the first point of communication, they do receive initial training on how to contact the county and refer residents as needed. It's considered an informal part of the administrative assistant training.

Q: How does your office share information with residents regarding resource availability?

A: Primarily, our office utilizes social media. When we become aware of a new program or see a rise in a specific need, we find that social media has the best reach. Facebook is the main social media platform utilized for disseminating information, but Instagram is used as well.

Q: Does your office maintain physical or digital copies of community resources at local gathering places, for example: libraries, schools, churches, community centers?

A: The office maintains a brochure stand in the lobby of the town council. The brochure mainly has resources for utility bill assistance provided by churches and one or two other nonprofits. The library system is under the County, so the only other town resource is the police station.

Q: Does your office monitor, track, or otherwise analyze data that indicates how many residents you have assisted in finding resources?

A: The office does not track this information.

Q: Does your office contract or otherwise have relationships with nonprofits and/or community resource providers, either local or national, that you direct community members in need to?

A: There are a couple that come to mind. For instance, the local clothes closet and food pantry. Both operate on city-owned property. The city has a lease agreement with their programs. There

is also a summer youth camp or day care program, and occasionally we partner with other non-profit organizations (primarily St. Vincent DePaul, which is a church).

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to add regarding the relationship between your municipality and nonprofits or other organizations in your community?

A: Clay County is trying out a centralized system for agencies to communicate under one centralized umbrella. It's a countywide service. Each one of the municipalities have a representative, as well as a representative from the county. The idea being that any nonprofit that wants to do a project gets vetted in one central place. It's supposed to be a centralized place for all the non-profits to use to communicate with the county.

Impact Clay – Gabrielle Gunn, <https://impactclay.org>

It's kind of amorphous for residents, and ultimately the residents won't be utilizing it, as it seems like the end use is for organizations. There are only 4 small municipalities within the county.

Santa Rosa County Interview

County: Santa Rosa

City: Pace

Population: 22,860

Interviewee: Kim Boulter, Emergency Services Department Manager

Interview Date: March 29, 2022

Interview Transcript:

Q: Residents in your area may need social service resources throughout the course of their lives; does your office regularly receive inquiries regarding resources that could assist residents in these periods?

A: Yes, we do get these calls. Sometimes we get more than others. We get them fairly often, at least once a week. Ultimately the volume of calls depends on what is going on in the community. We typically see an increase in these calls around holidays or after a disaster. Since the onset of Covid, there have been more calls for housing and food assistance. We try not to get too deep in the woods, serving primarily as a referral service.

Q: Does your office provide specific training for employees that would help them match stated needs to available resources in your area, either government sponsored or nonprofit?

A: No, the office does not provide this kind of training

Q: How does your office share information with residents regarding resource availability?

A: The office shares information about local resources whenever residents call in. The city has partnerships with different services throughout the county. One of the partnerships established with 211 and United Way has given them "street survival guides". Local people are typically referred to nonprofits and churches in the immediate area. There are not many services offered for residents at the county level. Local resources typically have the best reach in the community.

Q: Does your office maintain physical or digital copies of community resources at local gathering places, for example: libraries, schools, churches, community centers?

A: There are physical copies of community resources at local gathering places, but the office of emergency services does not coordinate this effort. Typically, the gathering spaces maintain relationships with the organizations themselves to keep a supply of copies available.

Q: Does your office monitor, track, or otherwise analyze data that indicates how many residents you have assisted in finding resources?

A: The office does not typically monitor or track referral requests. However, the office may begin tracking these calls. Recently, one of their partners has requested this information as part of a city growth initiative. The initiative is designed to identify what resources the community has, which it needs and how many people are utilizing them.

Q: Does your office contract or otherwise have relationships with nonprofits and/or community resource providers, either local or national, that you direct community members in need to?

A: Yes, the office coordinates with national resources, regional resources (including Red Cross and United Way), as well as small local organizations, such as local churches United Methodist (they have a larger reach for disaster work in the local community), Uncore, Southern Baptist Church.

During a disaster, Santa Rosa County might deal with these organizations on a larger basis. Santa Rosa County and its partners are looking to expand the partnership by working to expand with “Share your heart” (<https://victoryforyouth.org/shareyourheart/>), seems to also be seeking information about the same type of resources and referrals and being able to reach across the state to larger organizations.

Q: Does your organization have any way to track or follow up with those residents who have been referred to local or county services?

A: No real follow up. Occasionally people will call to follow up if a referral didn’t work or they were not able to find the resource they were looking for. However, there is no intentional follow up. There is a long-term recovery group organization in the community. It is 100% donation based and volunteer based. This organization is often tasked with case management for those requiring Hurricane Sally relief and general coordination of relief efforts. The county also works with SAFER alliance for emergency readiness.

Orange County Interviews

County: Orange County

City: Orlando

Population: 280,832

Interviewee: Jessica Fry, Housing Department Planner III

Interview Date: March 22, 2022

Interview Transcript:

Q: Residents may need social service resources throughout the course of their lives; does your office regularly receive inquiries regarding resources that could assist residents in these periods?

A: Yes, we receive many inquiries.

Q: Does your office provide specific training for employees that would help them match stated needs to available resources in your area, either government sponsored or nonprofit?

A: No formal specific training is conducted. There is some internal, informal training that occurs within each department. Specific to the Housing Department, there is no set case manager to essentially direct someone to for resources because the department allocates money to the Homeless Service Network and United Way (each of which act as specific case managers). The Department primarily handles Community Development Block grants (CDBG), federal grants, state grants, and local grants. They try to avoid transferring calls continuously to prevent people from getting “lost” and never being able to find the info needed, so they forward to those nonprofits or 211.

Q: How does your office share information with residents regarding resource availability?

A: They do utilize some print materials like brochures, but the two main avenues are community outreach and online forms. There are several annual community outreach events such as the Mayor’s Summit where information is shared. They also maintain an online database.

Q: Does your office maintain physical or digital copies of community resources at local gathering places, for example: libraries, schools, churches, community centers?

A: Community resources are always available online through the city website. Physical copies are available “as needed” and are typically specific to the place. For example, the library would have information regarding educational resources/internet, but not necessarily have the information on health centers.

Q: Does your office monitor, track, or otherwise analyze data that indicates how many residents you have assisted in finding resources?

A: They do keep records of beneficiary data, but it isn’t ever analyzed. The purpose is more of a record keeping requirement for grant purposes. She said that the housing counseling office sends them the beneficiary information and they have a system that keeps it.

Q: Does your office contract or otherwise have relationships with nonprofits and/or community resource providers, either local or national, that you direct community members in need to?

A: Yes, they tend to outsource a good bit. Some departments do have their own resources (example given was Youth Resources within the Parks Department). Resource providers mentioned were United Way, Homeless Service Network, 211. The Housing Department does a lot of managing federal, state, and local grant funds that they match to residents who become grant subrecipients.

Broward County Interview

County: Broward County

City: Fort Lauderdale

Population: 180,124

Interviewee: Denise, Office of Neighborhood Support

Interview Date: March 25, 2022

Q: Residents in your area may need social service resources throughout the course of their lives; does your office regularly receive inquiries regarding resources that could assist residents in these periods?

A: Most people are referred directly to Broward County. However, occasionally the Office of Neighborhood Support receives calls from residents. This often concerns resources for unhoused individuals. Other city departments receive calls more tailored to their departments. When they need to, those departments refer to the Office of Neighborhood Support.

Q: Does your office provide specific training for employees that would help them match stated needs to available resources in your area, either government sponsored or nonprofit?

A: There is no specific training for employees on how or where to refer people who need services. It's more of a skill that is learned as part of essential day to day job duties.

Q: How does your office share information with residents regarding resource availability?

A: Ft. Lauderdale has a Strategic communications division. The city also utilizes social media, Homeowners Associations (HOA) (there is one main one that passes out information), Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and the city website.

Q: Does your office maintain physical or digital copies of community resources at local gathering places, for example: libraries, schools, churches, community centers?

A: Not to my knowledge

Q: Does your office monitor, track, or otherwise analyze data that indicates how many residents you have assisted in finding resources?

Follow up: how does your office do this?

A: There are 2 people working for city manager (for the mayor and city manager) who answer calls for referrals. Both employees track calls to their departments. They utilize a system called "Lauderserve" wherein internal staff can take requests and route them around the city. This ensures that information gets to the right people. The Office of Neighborhood Support utilizes a spreadsheet to track every inquiry that calls in.

Q: Does your office contract or otherwise have relationships with nonprofits and/or community resource providers, either local or national, that you direct community members in need to?

A: Yes, primarily this applies to unhoused individuals. The city has their own outreach team that works closely with the county's outreach team. They refer people to the county one all the time. There are also traditional social service providers that help residents with getting an ID, or other services.

Q: Is there anything you want to add regarding the relationship between your municipality and other community resource providers in your area?

A: The city utilizes a community court system. It works closely with social services to help unhoused individuals specifically. Court is held once a week. It's an alternative for people who receive a citation instead of going to jail. When community court is held, a variety of social service providers attend to ensure the person has access to the resources they need. Once enrolled in community court or other services, they can follow up with the individual to ensure their needs are being met. Other inquiries and county referrals are not necessarily guaranteed follow up services (though some do – for example, there is a woman who calls the Office of Neighborhood Support regularly, who refuses services but calls to connect with an employee who ensures she is safe).

Other Contacts and Responses

County: Miami-Dade County

City: Miami

Population: 454,279

Contact: Shirley Pranton, Office of Community Outreach

Response: N/A – no call back

County: Lee County

City: Cape Coral

Population: 183,942

Contact: Conni Griglin

Response: Email - All calls are directed to 211

County: Columbia County

City: Lake City

Population: 12,063

Contact: Audrey Sikes

Response: Email – no response after asked to email questions to the contact

County: Bay County

City: Panama City

Population: 477,328

Contact: Mark McQueen, Town Manager

Response: N/A – no call back

County: Alachua County

City: Gainesville

Population: 132,127

Contact: Gainesville Housing Authority

Response: N/A – no call back

County: Marion County

City: Ocala

Population: 59,267

Contact: City Clerk

Response: N/A – no call back

County: Okaloosa County

City: Destin

Population: 13,702

Contact: Catherine Card, Public Information Officer

Response: N/A – no call back

APPENDIX 3: REVISED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

City:

County:

Contact Number:

Point of Contact:

Employment Position:

Email of Contact:

Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is _____. I am conducting research to determine how municipalities in Florida share information with residents regarding social services in their area. We are investigating the way information is shared as well as relationships between local municipalities and nonprofit aid organizations. Is this the correct point of contact to collect this information?

If yes -> Great! We are doing this to help make policy recommendations about this process for Florida Community Innovation, a nonprofit in Florida that works with the United Way of NW FL, the Central Florida Foundation, and the University of Florida (among other partners).

If no -> Do you know a particular employee or department that would be better suited to answer questions on this topic? If so, could you provide me with their contact information?

* Take down new contact information, thank them for their time, and establish contact with the alternate person/department.

If voicemail -> Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is _____. I am conducting research to determine how municipalities in Florida share information with residents regarding social services in their area. We are investigating the way information is shared as well as relationships between local municipalities and nonprofit aid organizations. I was reaching out today to ask you a couple of brief questions regarding your organization. Please reach out at your earliest convenience. A good call back number is _____. We look forward to hearing from you.

Do you have a few moments to answer a few brief questions?

If yes -> conduct interview in order

If no -> Is there a better time we could reach you?

If yes -> make plans to either conduct alternate interview

If no -> thank them for their time. Mark down "incomplete/unwilling"

After the interview is completed, thank them for their time. Complete interview log.

Interview Questions:

1. **Residents may need social service resources throughout the course of their lives; does your office regularly receive inquiries regarding resources that could assist residents in these periods?**

Answer:

2. **Give examples of jobs, housing, or healthcare if prompted for an example – might be good to keep it broad at first to see what they say.**

If yes, proceed to next question

Answer:

If no, ask for the information or POC we should be speaking to instead

Answer:

3. **Does your office provide specific training for employees that would help them match stated needs to available resources in your area, either government sponsored or nonprofit?**

Answer:

4. **How does your office share information with residents regarding resource availability?**

Answer:

5. **Does your office maintain physical or digital copies of community resources at local gathering places, for example: libraries, schools, churches, community centers?**

Answer:

6. **Does your office monitor, track, or otherwise analyze data that indicates how many residents you have assisted in finding resources? If so, how does your office do this?**

Answer:

7. **Does your office contract or otherwise have relationships with nonprofits and/or community resource providers, either local or national, that you direct community members in need to?**

Answer:

8. **Is there anything you would like to add regarding the relationship between your municipality and the social service providers in your community?**

Answer:

APPENDIX 4: REFERENCES

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