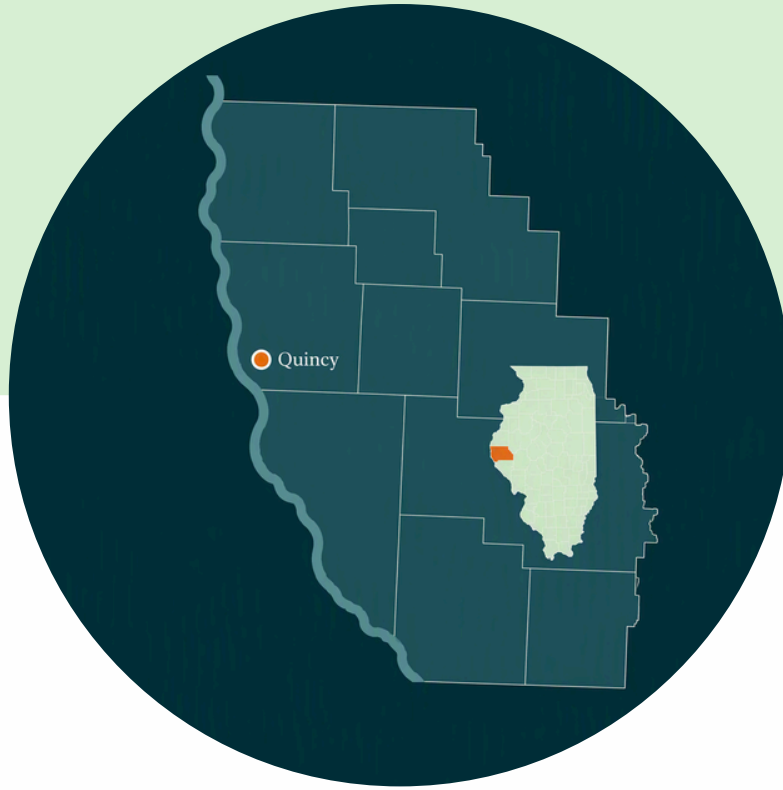




Quincy Area and Adams County Collaborative Infrastructure Feasibility Report

Commissioned by the Quincy Area Funders Collaborative

Conducted by Mission + Strategy

September 2026

mission+STRATEGY

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Executive Summary

This landscape analysis was commissioned by the Quincy Area Funders Collaborative (QAFC) and conducted by Mission + Strategy to examine the current state of nonprofit collaboration in Adams County, Illinois, and to assess the sector's readiness to pursue more coordinated, sustained approaches to community impact.

This summary is designed to stand on its own and presents the full report's findings and considerations in condensed form. Readers who want the underlying evidence, source by source, can find it in the complete report.

About This Study

- Commissioned by QAFC and conducted by Mission + Strategy between April and September 2026.
- Draws on five data sources: the 2024 Adams County Community Needs Assessment, an IRS Form 990 financial review of 76 QAFC-connected nonprofits, two facilitated working sessions, 21 confidential stakeholder interviews, and a sector-wide Collaboration Readiness Survey (49 respondents from a distribution of 138 Executive Directors and Board Chairs).
- Designed co-creatively with QAFC, which shaped participant selection, survey and interview design, and recruitment, to ensure the study reflected Adams County specifically rather than a generic template.
- Three Mission + Strategy team members led separate components of the analysis, a structure intended to guard against the findings of one section shaping another.

Key Findings by Source

Stakeholder Interviews (21 confidential interviews)

- The ALICE population emerged as the single most significant underserved group, largely invisible to services designed around traditional poverty thresholds.
- Critical service gaps: housing, food security, mental health and trauma support, childcare, and service navigation (Adams County has no centralized referral system).
- Sector health is mixed: established organizations are largely stable; smaller and newer organizations struggle with funding and sustainability.
- The volunteer workforce is in decline; one organization lost half its volunteers during COVID and never recovered.
- Where partnership already works: United Way as convener, food security organizations collaborating organically, and crisis response that consistently cuts through silos.

Working Sessions (June 24 nonprofit leaders, June 25 QAFC funders)

- Both groups independently converged on trust as the precondition for collaboration, and on capacity as something that must exist before collaboration can happen, not something collaboration will produce.
- Nonprofits emphasized informal relationship-building as how trust gets built; funders, once they heard this, were surprised by how much weight nonprofit leaders placed on it.
- Funders emphasized incremental pacing, starting with one visible win and building outward, a theme the nonprofit session did not raise.
- Together, the two sessions produced this report's draft Challenge and Vision Statements.

THE CHALLENGE STATEMENT

Adams County's nonprofits and funders share a deep commitment to the community's well-being, but act individually rather than as one coordinated system.

Needs are often met organization by organization, program by program. Closing that gap means funders shifting from individual programs to shared solutions, and nonprofits gaining the capacity collaboration requires.

THE VISION STATEMENT

Adams County is "One Quincy," where nonprofits, funders, and residents are one unified system, focused on improving community well-being and replacing a scarcity mindset with one of abundance.

Deep trust is the foundation, built through honesty about what is and isn't working and a willingness to let go of assumptions that hold the sector back. Funders are partners in solving problems, not just a source of funding. Organizations commit to the sector's shared challenges even when it doesn't directly serve their own mission.



Collaboration Readiness Survey

- 49 of 138 invited leaders responded (a 36% response rate).
- Staff capacity and burnout is the dominant organizational challenge, named first by 19 of 49 respondents, nearly double the next-ranked concern.
- Housing and homelessness was named as most urgently needing collaboration (13 of 49); youth development and education followed (10 of 49) but, unlike housing, has no matching CBC coordination structure.
- The leading internal barriers to collaboration are staff capacity (29%) and a lack of clarity about what sustained collaboration would look like (27%), an information gap as much as a resource one.
- Readiness is not concentrated among the largest or best-resourced organizations. Mid-range organizations (\$251K to \$2.99M) showed the most consistent engagement with collaboration as a concept.
- A named "scarcity mindset," a trust deficit from organizations competing for limited funding, is one of the sharpest differentiators between organizations with collaboration experience and those without.

IRS Form 990 Financial Review

- The QAFC-connected nonprofit sector is small: 66% of the 76 organizations reviewed operate under \$1M in annual revenue, and 47% operate under \$250K.
- Organizations under \$250K have a median revenue mix of 100% contributions and grants, with no earned income to fall back on.
- Health & Human Services is the largest mission group (39% of organizations) and the most contribution-dependent (94% median), and falls below standard liquidity benchmarks most often.
- 73% of organizations with available cash data clear the Nonprofit Finance Fund's 90-day liquidity floor; 27% do not, including 11% in outright cash crisis (under 30 days on hand).

2024 Community Needs Assessment Review

- Poverty holds at 12% (near the state average), but the fuller picture is ALICE data: 27% of households are Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed, meaning nearly 4 in 10 Adams County households cannot reliably cover basic costs.
- The burden falls hardest on single-female-headed households (74% below the ALICE threshold), adults 65 and older (53%), and residents under 25 (47%).
- Four needs stand out as most acute: behavioral health (operating beyond capacity), childcare (a 57% deficit in available slots, leaving 2,069 children of working parents without care), housing (1,590 new units projected needed by 2033), and food insecurity (12.8% of the population).
- Behavioral health, housing, and poverty are the three areas with formal CBC coordination infrastructure. Aging services, despite serving the population with the highest ALICE rate (53%), is not one of them.

Considerations for the Sector

Three core considerations emerged from this landscape analysis. They are organized from lower to higher commitment using the Tamarack Institute's Collaboration Spectrum and are offered for community discussion and consideration, not as predetermined commitments.

1. Funders Lead in Enhancing Trust (Communicate/Cooperate)

- Hosting information sessions on how decisions are made, how grant amounts are set, and who funders answer to
- Convening QAFC members' boards for ongoing discussions about sector needs
- Funding dedicated staff time to build capacity for collaborative work
- Targeted check-ins with the sector's most financially fragile organizations
- Multi-year grants so nonprofits can plan beyond a single budgeting cycle
- A shared grant portal to streamline application and reporting functions
- Agree on shared funding priorities creating a coordinated landscape
- QAFC's own process, funding this study and creating space for honest nonprofit feedback, is itself a proof point of this approach

2. A Shared Hub for Nonprofit Capacity (moving toward Coordination)

- Embedded, ongoing support to include bookkeeping, payroll processing, fractional CFO where nonprofits are matched with a dedicated provider
- Targeted project-based expertise to include HR, legal, marketing, program evaluation, board governance, volunteer recruitment, fundraising where nonprofits are given an annual bank of hours to access the services they need
- Potential to evolve the model into a nonprofit cooperative with member ownership

3. One Door for the Community (Collaborate/Integrate, longer-term)

- A single point of entry modeled on a Continuum of Care structure
- Allows residents to access services without needing to know which of dozens of organizations to call

Staff capacity is both the sector's top-ranked organizational challenge and its weakest readiness dimension. Continuing to cultivate trust and focusing on building staff capacity in order to do sustained collaborative work are a key first steps. Eight additional considerations surfaced that are important to note. These are informative to how the community may want to proceed with this collaborative work.

- Activating existing rural infrastructure (libraries, schools, veterans' posts) as service access points
- Applying the CBC's coordination model to youth development
- A shared approach to volunteer recruitment
- Formalizing collaborative grant-seeking
- Creating space for informal trust-building and peer learning
- Smaller-group conversations organized by budget tier or mission sector
- Conduct a simple efficiency audit to examine internal capacity and consider leveraging technology and AI tools for routine work
- Build a shared map of the nonprofit ecosystem to help the sector define a concrete future state and roadmap for achieving it

Immediate Next Steps

QAFC's own upcoming strategic planning process is a natural vehicle for carrying this work forward.

Several considerations are ready to move on now, at the Communicate and Cooperate level:

- Hold information sessions on how funders make decisions
- Convene QAFC members' boards on the report's findings
- Build a shared community grant calendar
- Identify hub or shared-service models already operating in or near Adams County to learn more about sustained collaborations

Considerations that require deeper collaboration such as shared infrastructure and aligned funding priorities across the community require more time and coordination among multiple organizations. QAFC's upcoming strategic planning process is a place to vet these more resource intensive sustained collaborations.

See the report for the full evidence behind these findings, including the complete Stakeholder Interview synthesis, Working Session detail, Collaboration Readiness Survey results, IRS Form 990 Review, and 2024 Community Needs Assessment review.

How to Read This Report

This report reflects candid feedback from stakeholders across Adams County's nonprofit and funding community. When reading feedback about your sector, it is natural to feel a pull toward defensiveness, to want to explain, qualify, or set aside a critique. Readers are encouraged to notice that impulse and look past it for the truth in what is being said.

This report's purpose is not to assign blame or grade performance. It is to identify concrete ways nonprofits and funders can strengthen their partnership and better serve the broader Adams County community. That goal is best served by readers who look for common ground rather than fault, and who extend the same generosity of interpretation to colleagues' and partners' feedback that they would want extended to their own. Understanding and empathy, not agreement on every point, is what this report asks of its readers.

How This Study Was Designed

This study was not designed in isolation. The Quincy Area Funders Collaborative was a partner in shaping it from the outset:

- Providing input on which stakeholders to include
- Helping design the survey and interview instruments
- Assisting directly with participant recruitment

This collaborative design was intentional. It ensured the study's methods were specific to Adams County, not a generic template applied to a new community.

The same care went into the language of the instruments themselves. Survey and interview questions were written to reflect the terminology and phrasing this sector actually uses, with definitions provided where a term might be read differently across organizations. These choices were not incidental. They were necessary to produce results that are reliable and valid for this community specifically.

How the Sections Build on One Another

The sections of this report were also designed to build on one another rather than stand alone:

- The 2024 Community Needs Assessment and the Form 990 financial review came first and directly informed the design of the Collaboration Readiness Survey.
- The Needs Assessment, the 990 review, and the survey results together then informed the design and facilitation of the working sessions and stakeholder interviews.

Each phase of this project rested on the foundation the phase before it had built. This report's sections, however, are presented in the reverse of that order. Findings and Considerations leads because it holds the conclusions most readers will want first. Readers interested in the evidence behind those conclusions, section by section, will find the working sessions, survey, 990 review, and Community Needs Assessment in the pages that follow, in the order each phase actually built on the last.

This is a dense report covering a lot of ground. It may make more sense to work through it in smaller pieces over time rather than in one sitting. Start by reading the Findings and Considerations section first, then move to whichever section interests you most. If you only have a few minutes, start with the Immediate Next Steps section within Findings and Considerations.

Findings and Considerations

The Findings and Considerations are presented first because it establishes a framework, moving from the general to the specific before readers encounter the underlying evidence. The sections that follow provide the detailed findings for readers who want to see how each conclusion was built.

Before turning to specific findings, one principle should guide how this report's recommendations are read. The technical and governance structure of any collaboration, whether that means a shared services hub, a coordinating body, or a more formal partnership, should follow from the vision and goals created by participants. Form follows function. Choosing a structure before the sector has agreed on what it is trying to accomplish risks building infrastructure that no one asked for and few will use.

Challenge and Vision Statements

The Challenge and Vision Statements exist to anchor whatever collaborative work follows. When the work gets difficult, and it will, these are the north star to return to, the reminder of why this work matters in the first place.

The draft challenge and vision statements below synthesize the recurring themes across both the nonprofit and funder working sessions. They are offered as the starting point for conversation, the "why" that any structural recommendation in this report is anchored to.

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Considerations

These considerations are not directives for how Adams County's nonprofit sector should operate. They reflect what we heard from this community, returned to the people who shared it. Across the survey, working sessions, and stakeholder interviews described elsewhere in this report, one thing was consistent: this is a sector with deep knowledge of its own industry, constraints, and community.

Our role was not to bring outside answers, but to create the space for this sector to collectively discuss what collaboration could look like in Adams County.

This community has strong collaborative character.

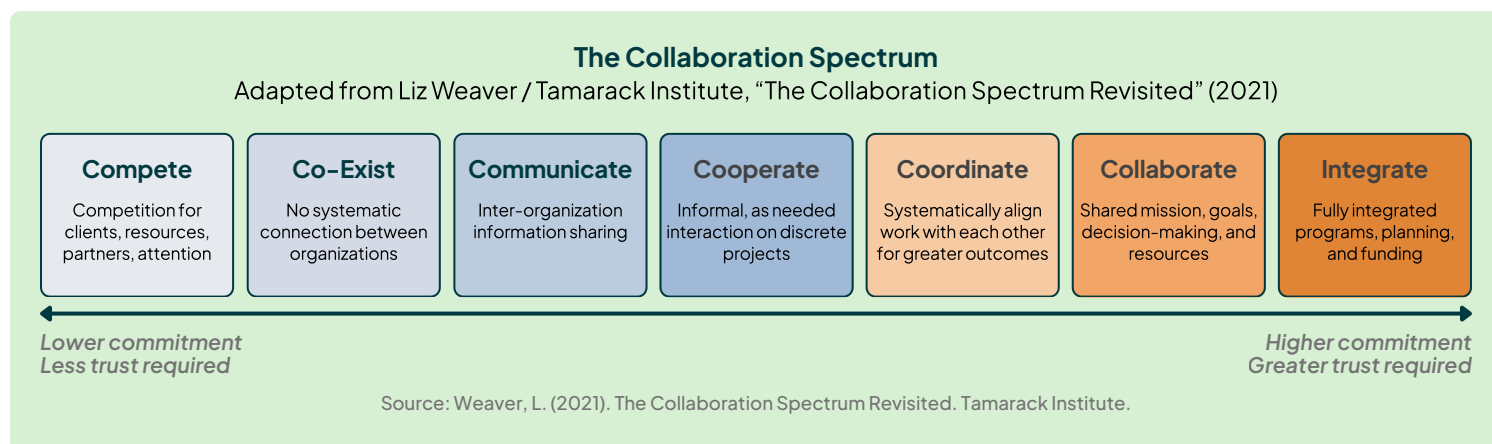
Meaningful collaboration is already happening, in some cases quietly, in others as established infrastructure. United Way of Adams County was named repeatedly, across interviews and working sessions, as the sector's long-standing convener. The Community Building Council, dating back more than two decades, gives the sector an existing structure, to either leverage or serve as a model.

Participants pointed to several other forms of collaboration already underway:

- Food security organizations collaborate organically: food need touches nearly every population served, and carries less stigma than other forms of assistance.
- Crisis response consistently pulls organizations across silos, as with a coordinated 72-hour wellness-check effort after a shelter closure, and a hospital system stepping in to keep a senior program from closing.
- Organizations have begun combining strengths to pursue state grants neither could win alone.
- Child welfare and foster care organizations coordinate to provide a broader spectrum of support for families, children, and youth.
- Relationships with local government have been rebuilt through sustained, sometimes difficult communication, turning early friction into working partnerships.

Framework

The Tamarack Institute's Collaboration Spectrum, developed by Liz Weaver, is a useful lens for thinking through what comes next because it treats collaboration as a range of possible commitments rather than a single destination. The spectrum runs from Compete and Co-Exist, where organizations have little or no systematic connection, through Communicate and Cooperate, informal and often project-specific exchanges, to Coordinate, where organizations begin to intentionally align their work for shared outcomes. At the far end sit Collaborate and Integrate, where partners share governance, resources, and in the most integrated cases, programs and funding.



No sector moves from one end of this spectrum to the other overnight, and not every relationship in Adams County needs to reach full integration to be impactful. What the spectrum offers is a way to intentionally sequence what follows: starting with lower-commitment, lower-risk actions that incrementally build trust and success, then advancing toward more structurally integrated models as that foundation strengthens. The considerations below are organized in that order.

Consideration #1

Funders Building Trust Through Their Own Practice

The clearest and lowest-risk starting point is the changes funders can make. Why does this matter? Trust builds fastest when those with more power move first.

This project is already a proof point of this idea. QAFC members chose to fund this feasibility study, participate in working session and co-design a process built to give nonprofits real space for honest feedback. That is collaboration in practice, and brings credibility to everything on this list.

This process has also provided space for deeper conversations among QAFC members, and as the report reaches their boards, board members will hear directly from nonprofits in their own words. These are early benefits of the report that starts before any of the actions below are formally adopted.

Building on that starting point, funders could consider:

- Hosting information sessions on how decisions are made, how grant amounts are set, and who funders answer to.
- Convening QAFC members' boards jointly to walk through the report's findings and build shared understanding of what the sector is asking for.
- Funding dedicated staff time or backfill costs so executive directors can participate in collaborative conversations and projects.
- Check in on organizations in the red and pink zones of the liquidity heat map, the sector's most financially fragile, so outreach and support are directed where needed most.
- Making multi-year grants that support organizational capacity, not just individual programs, so nonprofits can plan beyond a single budget cycle.
- Creating a shared grant portal so nonprofits aren't re-entering the same information across applications.
- Streamlining reporting into a single report that satisfies all funders.
- Agreeing among themselves on shared funding priorities, so nonprofits face one coordinated landscape rather than separate asks.

These actions fall on the Communicate and Cooperate segments of the collaborative spectrum, though not all to the same degree.

Hosting information sessions and convening a joint meeting of the funders' boards are the clearest starting points; they require logistical coordination. Funding dedicated staff time and checking in on the red and pink zone organizations on the liquidity heat map can be done by a single funder but would have a deeper impact when done collectively. Multi-year grants, creation of a shared grant portal, unified reporting, and shared funding priorities require group alignment. Generally, this list moves from lower to higher commitment with the information sessions as a potential first step.

Consideration #2

A Shared Hub for Nonprofit Capacity

A next step, moving toward Coordinate on the spectrum, is shared infrastructure. Interviewees, survey respondents, and participants in the nonprofit working session independently pointed to the same underlying gap; access to shared staffing or expertise that lets organizations increase internal capacity without directly bearing the expense or risk of a direct hire.

A hub could address both ongoing and targeted organizational needs:

- Embedded and ongoing support where the same person or firm handles recurring work for an organization on a fixed schedule:
 - Accounting, bookkeeping, monthly financial statements, payroll, etc.
 - Fractional or shared CFO
- Targeted, project driven expertise:
 - HR support
 - Legal support
 - Marketing, branding, and crisis communication support
 - Program evaluation, data management, and KPI development
 - Board governance support
 - Volunteer recruitment support
 - Fundraising consulting.

This targeted expertise could be accessed via time-limited, project-based engagements or through a retainer-based model where nonprofits have access to a monthly bank of expert hours. This model lets organizations retain their independence while sharing the cost of expertise that may otherwise be out of reach.

One possible structure, offered here as a starting point rather than a fixed model:

- **Physical space:** Adams County has excess space capacity that could house the hub without new construction. Housing it within a trusted structure, such as United Way or a community foundation, would give it credibility at the start.
- **Cost model:** Funders would fund the hub's setup and ongoing operations, as well as each nonprofit's initial bank of hours, with cost-sharing (membership fees, a sliding scale or similar) introduced later as the model matures.
- **Access model:** For episodic work, each nonprofit receives an annual bank of hours to draw against keeping access predictable and fair. Additional hours could be purchased at a discounted rate. For embedded support, nonprofits are matched with an appropriate provider and pays a negotiated contractual rate for services.
- **Governance:** A committee of nonprofits and funders prioritizes which services to launch and oversees operations of the hub
- **Provider model:** Firms and consultants apply to become a vetted member of the hub.
- **Staffing:** A single coordinator manages the hub and starts with a confidential intake conversation with each nonprofit to connect them to the right resource.

As the model matures, it could evolve into a nonprofit cooperative, where participating organizations become member-owners with a formal stake in how the hub is run, rather than clients of a funder-seeded program, the kind of.

Consideration #3

Longer-Term Project with a One Door for the Community

Both nonprofit leaders and funders independently raised the difficulty families face navigating a fragmented service landscape; a "one-stop shop" would let residents find and access services without needing to know which of dozens of organizations to call. This depends on the trust built through the earlier steps and is likely a multi-year undertaking rather than a near-term goal. It could be modeled after a Continuum of Care structure, with a separate oversight board to safeguard shared data, coordinate the intake system, and confirm resident needs are actually being met. Such a solution represents the deepest and most highly-integrated end of the Collaborative Spectrum.

Building the Capacity to Collaborate

Staff capacity was a top-ranked organizational challenge and the single weakest readiness dimension across every budget tier in the survey data.

No amount of funder trust or shared infrastructure will translate into sustained collaboration if the people expected to do it do not have the time to collaborate. Addressing this directly could take several forms:

- A funded collaboration coordinator, housed within the shared hub, who absorbs the scheduling and logistics of collaborative work so participating staff are not adding it to an already full plate;
- Readiness grants distinct from program funding, sized to let an organization backfill a role or bring on part-time help before taking on a new collaborative commitment; or
- A fractional-staffing model, already proposed for financial leadership through a shared CFO, extended to other functions like grant writing or communications where no single small organization can justify a full-time hire.

Having capacity to collaborate is itself one of the most direct investments funders and the sector can make.

Additional Considerations

While the three considerations above reflect the most consistent themes in the data, there are additional ideas that emerged from the analysis that are worthy of noting.

1. Rural Service Access Through Existing Infrastructure

Several stakeholder interviews pointed to physical infrastructure already in rural Adams County but unused for nonprofit service delivery: public libraries, schools (on weekends), American Legion and VFW posts, and churches. Activating these as access points would require agreements and light coordination, not new construction.

- Identify two or three willing rural sites (a library, a school, a post) for a pilot service day.

- Pair with organizations already doing mobile or outreach-based delivery.
- Treat this as a near-term Communicate/Cooperate step: lower-cost and faster to implement than the shared hub, and a direct answer to the rural service desert theme raised throughout the interviews.

2. Youth Development: Applying the Housing Sector's Coordination Model

Housing and homelessness has coordinated response infrastructure matching its urgency. Youth development does not, despite the Collaboration Readiness Survey ranking it the second most urgent sector for collaboration (10 of 49 respondents), behind only housing and homelessness. Building comparable coordination here extends a model this sector has already proven works.

Work is already forming: collaborative work on child welfare and foster care is underway, organized in a similar spirit to the Community Building Council's dedicated Housing, Poverty, and Behavioral Health solution teams. That standing-structure model, organizing around a specific population's needs rather than leaving coordination to chance, is a workable template for youth development.

- A youth development solution team, structured like the CBC's existing teams, would give the sector the coordination survey respondents said is missing.
- This doesn't require new invention, just applying a structure the community has already validated to a population the data shows is under-coordinated relative to its urgency.

3. A Shared Approach to Volunteer Recruitment

Volunteer decline surfaced repeatedly as a capacity issue distinct from paid staffing; one organization lost half its volunteer base during COVID and never recovered. A cross-organization strategy, shared recruitment campaigns, a common matching platform, or joint outreach to younger adults, would address a need no single organization has the marketing reach to solve alone.

- Start with a shared recruitment campaign timed to a single season or event, rather than building a permanent platform.
- Use it to test appetite for deeper coordination; volunteer-sharing is a low-risk way to build the muscle for higher-commitment collaboration later.
- As the shared hub matures, it could take on volunteer-matching itself, giving the sector's volunteer strategy a permanent home rather than requiring separate infrastructure.

4. Formalizing Collaborative Grant-Seeking

Interviewees described organizations informally combining strengths to meet state grant requirements neither could satisfy alone, collaboration already happening opportunistically.

Naming this as a practice worth building on deliberately would turn it into something repeatable, but the sequence matters: the goal isn't to chase available funding and assemble partners after the fact, it's to identify the projects this sector wants to pursue, then find or structure funding to support them.

- QAFC is a natural convener for this work. Members are already collaborating on shared projects, this feasibility study among them, and are positioned to help organizations identify shared priorities first, then find or structure funding that fits, rather than starting from what dollars happen to be available.
- This pairs well with the funder practices in Consideration 1, since it depends on funders being willing to fund the projects the sector defines, not just one that happens to fit an existing grant's requirements.

5. Space to Build Trust: Informal Connection and Peer Learning

Trust surfaced as the precondition for collaboration in both working sessions, though the two groups named different ways to build it. Nonprofit leaders were explicit that trust comes from unstructured time outside formal meetings, "one pitcher of margaritas at a time," as one participant put it. Funders didn't name it however, when it came up, they were reportedly surprised by how much weight nonprofit leaders placed on it. Structured programming alone won't build trust; it requires deliberately protected, unscheduled time together.

This isn't only a nonprofit-to-nonprofit need. Funders and nonprofits currently know each other mainly through formal channels, and both groups' vision statements point toward something more relational, directly echoing the funders' own theme of "regular, recurring space and time for cross-sector networking and connection."

Peer mentoring is a related but more structured. Newer executive directors described isolation and imposter syndrome in interviews, with no peer network to turn to; experienced leaders have knowledge with no formal channel to reach them.

- Create recurring, low-agenda gathering time for nonprofit leaders, not tied to a project or deliverable.
- Create a parallel cross-sector gathering, funders and nonprofit leaders together, informal and unstructured.
- Pair new executive directors with experienced peers in a structured mentoring relationship.
- A consultant could facilitate, giving it enough structure to be sustained and repeatable without becoming the kind of formal, agenda-driven meeting participants said gets in the way.

- Treat this as Communicate-to-Cooperate level work: low-cost, low-risk, and it builds the trust later, higher-commitment steps depend on.

6. Smaller-Group Conversations by Budget Size or Mission Sector

The two working sessions convened broad, mixed groups by role, nonprofit leaders in one, funders in the other, rather than by size or mission. A logical next step is smaller, more targeted conversations where organizations with similar constraints can talk specifically about what collaboration could look like for organizations like them.

- Group by budget tier first. The Collaboration Readiness Survey found real differences in readiness by scale: the \$250K to \$2.99M tier engaged most consistently, while the smallest and largest organizations face distinct barriers. This lets each tier name what collaboration requires given its own capacity, rather than deferring to the loudest voices in a mixed room.
- Group by mission sector as a second lens, particularly Health & Human Services, the largest and most contribution-dependent mission group in the 990 Review cohort, where the case for shared services is likely strongest.
- Funders can convene and lightly facilitate directly, a smaller, more specific version of the working sessions already piloted here, not a new initiative.

7. Internal Capacity Audit

Staff capacity and bandwidth was the most frequently cited internal barrier to collaboration among survey respondents. Collaboration requires organizations to invest time they often do not have. Consider implementing a simple efficiency audit. Determine if it makes sense to leverage technology tools such as AI for routine work.

- Examine where time goes. A simple internal efficiency audit can help staff identify tasks to keep, expand, reduce, or stop, and whether reduced tasks could be dropped, handed off, or simplified. A one-page self-audit worksheet is a good starting point.
- Explore technology, including AI. Routine administrative work such as reporting, scheduling, drafting, and data entry may be candidates for automation or AI-assisted tools, freeing staff time for mission work.
- Consider capacity options beyond hiring. Before adding staff, organizations may benefit from asking whether capacity could come from simplifying processes, not doing certain tasks, or implementing a technology solution. Hiring may still be the right answer. The question is whether it is the only one.

- Access support to do this work. Organizations may need facilitation, templates, or technical assistance to conduct an internal review. Funders could consider supporting this as a capacity-building investment.

8. Build a Nonprofit Ecosystem Map and Road Map

Develop a visual map of the mission areas and scale of nonprofits along with how the funding flows. Together, these layers would show where resources and effort are concentrated, where gaps exist, and where organizations are working near each other in ways that could support collaboration. The map is of the current state.

- The next step is translating the One Quincy vision into a concrete picture of the future: what the ecosystem would look like, how organizations and funders would work together differently, and what would change for residents.
- With both pictures in place, the sector could develop a roadmap with milestones and shared responsibilities for moving from one to the other.

Immediate Next Steps

QAFC's own upcoming strategic planning process is a natural vehicle for carrying this work forward, giving the group a structured place to decide how it wants to act on these considerations.

Several of the considerations above are ready to move on now, without waiting for full group alignment.

Framed along the collaboration spectrum, these sit at the Communicate and Cooperate sections:

- Hold information sessions so nonprofits and other stakeholders understand how funders make decisions and what constraints they operate under.
- Convene QAFC members' boards to walk through the report's findings and build shared understanding of what the sector is asking for.
- Build a shared community grant calendar so nonprofits can plan applications across multiple funders' cycles rather than tracking each on their own.
- Identify hub or shared-service models already operating in or near Adams County that QAFC and nonprofit leaders could visit or study, rather than designing a model from scratch.

The considerations that move toward Coordinate and beyond, such as shared infrastructure and aligned funding priorities, carry more investment and depend on more than internal alignment within each funder. They also depend on genuine interest from nonprofits and a funder commitment to invest in nonprofit capacity, so staff have the time to participate in these collaborations.

QAFC's strategic planning process is a natural place to work through which of these considerations it's prepared to invest in. The survey data already points to real readiness across the sector; what remains is confirming that readiness holds for these specific considerations, which is worth surfacing directly with nonprofit leaders before committing further.

Project Research: Stakeholder Interviews

This section synthesizes findings from 21 confidential stakeholder interviews conducted between June and July 2026 as part of the Quincy Area Funders Collaborative feasibility study. Findings are organized around five themes:

1. **Sector Health and Capacity** examines the current state of the nonprofit sector, its leadership, and the constraints it faces.
2. **Unmet Community Needs** identifies who is being underserved and why certain populations remain invisible to existing services.
3. **Collaboration Opportunities and Barriers** explores what partnership looks like today, where it succeeds, and what prevents it from going further.
4. **Conditions for Success** captures what stakeholders said it would take for sustained, effective collaboration.
5. **Recommended Priorities** distills the most consistent action areas identified across all interviews.

All participants were assured of confidentiality. This report does not attribute specific statements to individuals. Findings are presented as synthesized themes and insights drawn across all interviews. The complete interview guide is found in Appendix 1.

Sector Health & Capacity

The nonprofit sector in Quincy and Adams County is characterized by engaged, mission-driven leadership but faces significant capacity and sustainability constraints.

Sector Health is Mixed

Some organizations are thriving; others are struggling. The needs of organizations vary greatly based on size and brand reputation. For instance, long-term community anchor organizations are largely doing okay and are able to weather storms, but smaller, emerging organizations, even if mission commitment is strong, are perceived as struggling with funding and sustainability. Asset building (real estate ownership, endowed positions, diversified revenue streams) distinguishes healthier organizations from those in survival mode. Over the past five years, the number of nonprofits and the volume of funding requests have grown significantly, particularly in human services. One funder reported that grant applications have doubled in a decade, with dollar requests quadrupling, while available funding has remained fairly flat. Newer organizations are doing exciting work but raise concerns about whether growth is outpacing organizational substance and staff capacity.

Leadership Quality is the Sector's Greatest Strength

Multiple leaders have long family histories in the community, strong civic values, and entrepreneurial approaches to solving problems. However, succession planning is not yet intentional. Significant executive turnover has occurred in recent years, with new leaders thrust into CEO and executive director roles before they feel fully prepared. Multiple stakeholders described imposter syndrome and isolation in early leadership, and the lack of peer networks for new nonprofit leaders.

Capacity is the Limiting Factor

Across interviews, people capacity emerged as a primary constraint. Specific challenges include: difficulty recruiting and retaining quality staff, professional services (HR, finance, legal, technology) that are cost-prohibitive, limited training and development resources, and outdated technology systems. The salary and benefits gap between nonprofit and private-sector work is significant enough that multiple stakeholders described nonprofit employment as a sacrifice. Organizations are competing for human capital, including volunteers and board members.

Volunteer Workforce in Decline

Multiple stakeholders identified volunteer recruitment as a critical and worsening challenge. Several interviewees referred to fewer economic opportunities (few big businesses, executives, corporate HQs) as a contributing factor. One organization reported losing 50% of its volunteer workforce during COVID and has never recovered. There was a desire for more conversation around civic engagement and reigniting the spirit of volunteerism that has been important in the community.

Funding Sustainability Remains Fragile

State contracts dominate revenue but are unpredictable (delayed reimbursements of 3+ months, rate caps, pressure on margins). Foundation grants are time-limited. The same four or five philanthropic families are approached by nearly every organization. Capital campaigns have surged post-COVID, creating additional pressure on a finite donor base. There are questions about more sustainable planning for major capital needs.

A significant generational wealth transfer is underway, and if the next generation does not live locally, philanthropic dollars could leave the community. Nonprofits focused on day-to-day survival are not having conversations about legacy giving or building “rainy-day” funds.

Board Governance Quality Varies

Strong boards are characterized by clear strategy, engaged members with relevant expertise, and succession planning. Board member recruitment is itself a scarce resource: the same professionals are asked repeatedly, and many are already oversubscribed. Younger board members require more education on what it means to be effective.

Unmet Community Needs

While a small number of interviewees reported that they could not identify “invisible” or “underserved populations,” most were able to quickly and clearly identify unmet needs.

- **The ALICE Population:** The Largest Underserved Group: The ALICE (Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed) population emerged as the single most significant underserved group. Multiple stakeholders across all categories (funders, nonprofit leaders, civic leaders) identified ALICE as underserved by the current nonprofit system. Multiple leaders expressed surprise at how many of the people they serve are employed. Services are not designed for this population, and ALICE families do not seek help because of stigma and policy penalties. Many of those interviewed were engaged with the United Way of Adams County, which has recently identified the ALICE population as a target service population.
- **Rural residents:** Geographically isolated, culturally resistant to outside help, with limited nonprofit access. Mobile services (food pantries, libraries, museum programs) are promising but not yet at scale. Note: the majority of interviewees do not live in rural communities. Only one cited living outside Quincy, in rural Adams County. While some leaders had experience providing service delivery in the rural counties, additional input from rural residents and leaders would provide a deeper understanding of the communities.
- **People experiencing homelessness and comorbid mental illness and drug use:** Homelessness is critical and growing, with a strong comorbidity with mental illness and drug use. While everyone is aware of the growing populations, several interviewees described a need for a more coordinated, systematic approach to an issue not just impacting those unhoused, but the quality of life and safety of the community.
- **Children and youth in unstable environments:** The most vulnerable to poverty, housing instability, and family trauma. Mental health services for children and families are a persistent gap.

Several other groups were cited by only one or two interviewees. While they did not rise to a “theme” in the interviews, given that the questions are in part designed to unearth those who may be marginalized we are noting them below:

- **LGBTQ+ community:** An interviewee reported a lack of safety and consistent exposure to hate speech in the community, and cited people leaving the community as a result.

- **Black and brown communities:** Interviewees reported a lack of diversity in their staff and/or hiring pool, a distrust of the systems designed to meet basic needs, and a lack of awareness in the community about how to navigate racial difference.
- **Families in the foster care system:** reported as an area largely unseen unless there is a personal connection to the work.
- **Men:** One interviewee questioned whether services designed specifically for men might be offered under the umbrella of current organizations to increase engagement; currently not addressed in community offerings.
- **Veterans:** mentioned in connection to housing services.
- **People with substance use disorders:** Substance abuse came up throughout interviews in response to other questions, most often in connection to housing; however, those with substance abuse disorders were only named twice as an underserved population.
- **Immigrant, undocumented, and limited-English populations:** interviewees named inherent challenges related to language barriers, along with an obligation to follow the law while still providing a compassionate response.
- **People with disabilities:** not enough service capacity for existing needs

Critical service gaps included:

- **Housing:** The most urgent structural gap. Housing stock is aged and shrinking. Developer interest in low-income housing is minimal because there is no revenue model to sustain it. Tiny home efforts for veterans exist but serve fewer than 20 people. The loss of a single large facility (The Welcome Inn) created a displacement crisis the sector has not recovered from. Community resistance (NIMBY or not in my back yard) to affordable housing development is significant.
- **Food security:** A never-ending, growing need that consistently outpaces available funder resources. Food intersects with virtually every other service area and is a natural sector connector

- **Mental health and trauma support:** Significant gap for families experiencing crisis, poverty, foster involvement, or homelessness. Growing competition in this space as hospital systems enter territory traditionally held by smaller nonprofits
- **Childcare:** Emergency and temporary childcare is unavailable or inaccessible. A childcare task force is underway but the need far exceeds capacity
- **Service navigation:** No central referral or coordination system. No 311 or similar service. After-hours calls go to recordings. Nonprofits and the public don't know where to refer. Navigation barriers are as significant as direct service gaps.

The following are reasons cited as to why underserved populations remain.

- **Stigma and shame:** Working families are particularly reluctant to seek services because of stereotypes about who deserves help. Some nonprofit leaders grew up on food stamps themselves but would never discuss it publicly. The shame is deep and multigenerational.
- **Policy exclusions:** ALICE families are penalized for being responsible. Having savings or earning slightly above income thresholds disqualifies them from services. Multiple stakeholders observed that the system creates more incentives to stay in poverty than to climb out of it.
- **Geographic isolation/transportation:** Quincy functions as a micropolitan hub concentrating nearly all social services. Rural Adams County is a 'service desert' and 'arts and culture desert' with almost no local nonprofit presence.

Collaboration Opportunities & Barriers

Since the Quincy Area Funders Collaborative is fundamentally about finding new ways for the sector to work together, this section draws together everything stakeholders shared about partnership: what has worked, what has failed, and what gets in the way.

Where Partnership is Working Today

- **United Way as Convener and Connector:** United Way of Adams County was identified by multiple stakeholders as the strongest convening force in the sector. It is described as invested, responsive, warm, and committed to inspiring organizations to work together. Their community needs assessment provides critical shared data. When emergencies arise, United Way is often first to mobilize.

- **Food Security as Natural Hub:** Food organizations collaborate organically because food intersects with nearly every population in need. Food is less stigmatized than other assistance, making it an easier entry point. Food security leaders describe their organizations as natural intersection points across the entire service landscape.
- **Crisis Response:** When an immediate crisis occurs such as a shelter closure displacing resident organizations collaborate quickly and effectively. Emergency response cuts through silos. In one example, a crisis team conducted wellness checks for everyone being rehoused within 72 hours. However, this collaboration often dissolves once the crisis passes. Another crisis example offered was when Blessing Hospital took over a senior program that would have otherwise closed down.
- **Relationship–Built Trust:** The strongest partnerships are built through showing up, taking difficult feedback, and maintaining open communication. One stakeholder described initial meetings with city officials as adversarial, but persistence transformed the relationship into a model of two-way communication. The lesson: effective partnership requires the willingness to receive critical feedback and maintain open lines of communication even when the conversations are difficult.
- **Collaborative Grant Seeking:** One stakeholder described finding a state grant program that had never been tapped locally, reflecting a broader tendency to rely on familiar funding sources rather than exploring new ones. Organizations that combine strengths to meet complex application requirements that neither could satisfy alone are starting to emerge as a model.
- **Organic Networking and Co–Location:** Annual funder convenings where nonprofits present their work create organic networking; leaders take notes, tap each other on the shoulder, and discover unexpected alignment. One newer organization leveraged a collaborative hub by co-locating complementary services in its building.
- **Underutilized Community Infrastructure:** Multiple stakeholders identified community spaces that could serve as rural access points for nonprofit services: public libraries, schools (particularly on weekends), American Legion and VFW posts, and potentially churches.

What Prevents Partnership

- **Capacity Constraints on Both Sides:** Both nonprofits and funders report being stretched so thin that relationship-building gets crowded out by daily operations. Funders acknowledge its importance but cannot prioritize it alongside growing operational demands. For nonprofits, collaboration feels like extra work, not an efficiency gain.
- **Fear of Consolidation:** Nonprofits hearing about collaboration worry it implies consolidation or loss of autonomy. The underlying concern is that sharing services and working closely together could lead to questions about whether separate organizations are justified. Competition over collaboration was a repeated phrase in interviews.
- **Funding Competition and Donor Fatigue:** Nearly every organization approaches the same four or five philanthropic families. Capital campaign fatigue compounds the issue. Funders report that nonprofits sometimes overestimate available philanthropic capacity, while funders wish nonprofits better understood the constraints they face. On the nonprofit side, competition for scarce resources is visceral: organizations that would normally collaborate describe feeling forced into adversarial dynamics when pursuing the same funding. Post-COVID ARPA funding temporarily relieved this pressure, but those wells are now dry.
- **Redundant Assessments and Meeting Fatigue:** Multiple organizations conduct simultaneous needs assessments. Nonprofits experience this as assessment fatigue. Multiple leaders described collaborative processes that consume significant staff time without producing tangible outcomes.
- **Political and Cultural Climate:** Political tensions create divisiveness where unity is needed to move forward. Examples included community resistance to affordable housing and social services and donors whose philanthropy was tied to politics. Also cited was the challenge for nonprofit leaders working to advance missions and raise funds without isolating donors with political differences.
- **Unclear Roles and Communication Gaps:** Multiple organizations serve similar populations without clear differentiation. Partners don't know how to complement each other. Organizations newer to the community or serving multiple counties are consistently behind on local knowledge. United Way was cited as a helpful convener in helping clarify initiatives, gaps in services to be filled, etc. and this was an important component of organizing collaboration for agency leaders. Leaders were looking for structures into which they could insert themselves rather than organic partnership building which requires a lot of relationship building, time and capacity.

Conditions for Success

Stakeholders articulated a remarkably consistent vision of what effective, sustained collaboration would require. These conditions directly address both the underserved populations identified earlier and the partnership barriers described above.

Shared Back-End Services

The most frequently cited aspiration across all interviews. A nonprofit hub offering shared finance support, legal help desk or office hours, HR consulting, technology infrastructure, and professional development. Finance and legal emerged as the two most urgent needs. This doesn't require a large capital investment as existing space could be repurposed.

Funder Strategy

Annual grants create planning instability. Multi-year commitments (3-5 years) enable sustainability planning. Helping organizations think beyond the immediate by starting with a rainy-day fund, progressing toward planned giving and diversified revenue would reduce the scarcity-driven behavior that undermines collaboration. Preparing for the generational wealth transfer underway is essential: if philanthropic capital leaves the community, the sector's foundation shifts. Common grant applications, unified reporting, coordinated timelines were also suggested.

'One Door' Service Navigation

A centralized entry point for individuals and families. Several interviewees talked about the need to visit multiple locations for services. With transportation, work, kids and other competing factors, this isn't feasible for a lot of families. Hubs, coordinated services, entry points were all buzz words for interviewees.

Peer Learning and Relationship Building

More opportunities for leaders to talk to each other. Peer cohorts, informal convenings, and sector-specific networking create organic collaboration and reduce isolation. Leaders with access to peer networks report dramatically less isolation and better decision-making.

Creative Funding and Reduced Government Dependence

Multiple stakeholders emphasized the need to pursue unconventional funding sources. Untapped state and federal grant programs exist but require research capacity most nonprofits lack. Corporate engagement remains underdeveloped.

Leadership Pipeline, Succession, and Volunteer Strategy

Current leadership is strong but aging. New leaders need mentorship, peer networks, and development. The volunteer workforce requires rebuilt engagement strategies that meet younger adults where they are. Both pipelines are essential to sustaining any collaborative infrastructure.

Recommended Priorities

Across interviews, stakeholders identified consistent priorities for the Quincy Area Funders Collaborative. Note, priority 1 & 2 carried equal weight in interviews.

- **ALICE:** Commission research on working poor populations. Develop targeted initiatives: job training and wage advancement, childcare access, emergency support designed to be less stigmatized, rural transportation, and mobile service delivery. Redesign service eligibility to reach people falling through policy cracks.
- **Housing, Food Security & Basic Needs:** Housing is the most urgent structural gap. Food security is a never-ending need that intersects with every other service area. A five-year concentrated focus was recommended by multiple stakeholders.
- **Children & Youth Development:** Priority areas: early intervention, birth-to-5 services, after-school programs, social-emotional development, mentorship, arts/culture access. Mental health services for children and families remain a persistent gap.
- **Nonprofit Capacity & Shared Services:** Shared back-end services (finance, legal, HR, technology) would unlock significantly more service delivery. Start with office hours and a help desk model. Invest in peer learning, leadership development, and sustainability planning.
- **Service Navigation & Coordination:** Create 'one door' entry systems. Centralize knowledge of what services exist. Reduce navigation burden on clients and providers. Invest in communication so organizations are not operating with incomplete information.

Twenty-one stakeholder interviews reveal a community with exceptional nonprofit leadership, significant unmet needs, and untapped collaboration potential. The sector is healthy in commitment and values but strained by capacity, funding fragility, volunteer decline, and coordination barriers.

Two findings run through this report. First, the ALICE population is the single largest underserved group held back by stigma, policy design, and for those in the rural communities, geographic isolation. Second, partnership is desired across the sector but requires intentional, facilitated design: shared services, low-friction models, relationship investment, and funder alignment.

A successful Quincy Area Collaborative would:

- Make invisible populations visible and build on services that reach them
- Invest in shared back-end services that free leaders for mission work
- Coordinate funder strategy
- Build 'one door' navigation and coordination systems
- Focus intently on housing, food security, and children
- Create low-friction participation that reduces nonprofit burden
- Sustain leadership and volunteer pipelines through awareness and training

The opportunity before Quincy is to enable what already exists to work more effectively together with greater clarity about roles, coordinated resources, reduced friction, and a shared commitment to reaching the people who need help most.

Project Research: Working Sessions

Two facilitated working sessions were held in late June 2026 using the findings from the 2024 United Way Community Need Assessment, 990 review, and the Collaboration Readiness Survey as a foundation for a conversation with nonprofit leaders and funders.

- **June 24 Session for Nonprofit Leaders:** A four-hour session brought together nonprofit leaders from organizations with annual budgets between \$250,000 and \$2.99 million. Of the 28 nonprofit leaders invited, 26 attended. Individual attendance was not tracked by name during the session, a deliberate choice to protect confidentiality in reporting.
- **June 25 Session for the Quincy Area Funders Collaborative:** A three-hour session was attended by all seven QAFC members.

The nonprofit working session audience was not a random or convenience sample. It was drawn from the Collaboration Readiness Survey findings, which showed that organizations in the \$250,000 to \$2.99 million budget range were the most likely to report active board and staff level conversations about sustained collaboration strategies, and the most likely to have pursued or be currently engaged in one. Our approach to selecting working session participants is grounded in Derek Sivers' widely cited account of how movements start with "first-followers," the group already primed to join an emerging effort once given structure and momentum (Sivers, "How to Start a Movement," TED, 2010). This group was convened because its organizations brought direct experience with sustained collaboration in Quincy, along with firsthand knowledge of the nonprofit sector's dynamics and history. That background positioned them to develop grounded challenge and vision statements rather than starting from a more theoretical discussion. They were also the group most likely to build early momentum and help bring more skeptical organizations along, consistent with a first follower approach to change.

The two sessions were held separately and on consecutive days by design. Keeping nonprofit leaders and funders in separate sessions served several purposes. First, it allowed nonprofit leaders to share candid perspectives without shaping or being shaped by what funders said. Second, it allowed nonprofit leaders an opportunity to speak candidly about capacity, trust, and constraints without moderating their comments in front of the people who fund them. And finally, it allowed for funders to honestly share their perspectives about the nonprofit landscape. Both sessions used a similar four block structure and the same core prompts on challenge and vision statements, which allows the analysis to directly compare where the two groups converge and where they diverge. That comparison, together with the challenge statement and vision each group produced is a primary finding of this phase.

The agendas for both working sessions are found in Appendix 2.

Nonprofit Working Session Summary

Force Field Analysis

Individually, participants named forces working toward and against deeper collaboration.

Forces working toward collaboration:

- A shift toward strategic funding aligned with community needs, rather than smaller awards spread across more organizations
- Precedent for issue-specific collective action, participants cited the Tracy Family Foundation's work in Mt. Sterling as a model
- Alternative approaches to fundraising asks that reduce the burden of annual large-dollar requests

Forces working against collaboration:

- Distrust between larger and smaller organizations and a broader scarcity mindset across the sector
- Structural complexity introduced by pass-through funding arrangements
- Limited time, space, and opportunity for nonprofit leaders to convene with one another
- A perception that newer or younger organizations are competing with, rather than complementing, established ones
- Declining employer expectations that executives serve on nonprofit boards
- Liability and insurance constraints
- Strategic plans at the individual organization level that do not account for collaboration, and a lack of capacity (time, staff, financial margin) to pursue it
- Grant amounts that have not kept pace with cost of living
- Pressure to chase new grant-funded programs that are difficult to sustain long-term
- Difficulty reaching the right funding decision-makers
- Funder overload and a generational gap in major giving, with current philanthropists not yet being replaced

SWOT-Style World Café Themes

Four small groups rotated through four stations, each addressing a different lens on the sector.

Table 1: Funding and External Environment: *What is shifting in the landscape outside organizations' control?* This table looked outward at the forces shaping the sector that no single organization controls but every organization feels.

Groups identified themes centered on:

- Rising technology costs
- Employee retention and talent loss to other cities
- Aging funder base with limited youth engagement in philanthropy
- Flat funding against rising costs of doing business
- Declining volunteerism.

Participants proposed a shared pool of professional expertise (HR, legal, technology, social media, grant writing) accessible across organizations as a potential solution.

Table 2: Organizational Capacity and Relationships: What does it actually take to collaborate, and what gets in the way? This table went beneath the surface of readiness into what collaboration actually requires in practice and what the real obstacles are when organizations try to work together.

Groups identified themes centered on:

- Need for aligned missions
- The distinction between cooperation (which they described as already happening) and collaboration (which they described as harder to achieve)
- A need to build trust as a precondition for deeper collaboration.

Participants also raised the idea of collaboration extending beyond the nonprofit sector to for-profit partners.

Table 3: Community Needs and Gaps: What does the community actually need, and where is the sector falling short? This table asked why gaps in service persist, who is being left out, and what it would take to close them.

Participants named the following gaps:

- Transportation, housing, and childcare as persistent needs.
- Employee insurance and retirement benefits.

An identified theme was that the populations most in need of support are often unheard and unrepresented in the rooms where decisions are made, and that current efforts are not addressing the larger structural barriers to access.

Table 4: What We're Not Saying: The honest conversation the sector needs to have. This table created space for the things that don't fit in formal settings the dynamics, tensions, and observations that shape how the sector actually works but rarely surface out loud.

This table surfaced more candid, less structured input. Groups identified themes included:

- Funding restrictions that limit flexibility
- The time and reporting burden associated with small grants
- A lack of funding for staff and overhead, operations, and transformational change (as opposed to programmatic)
- Duplication of services across organizations
- Competition for staff.

One participant posed a provocative question that resonated with the group, "What would Adams County look like without its nonprofit sector?"

This is an interesting question not only because of the services nonprofits provide that governmental agencies cannot, but also because of nonprofits' economic impact on the community both through their own purchasing power and through the spending of those the nonprofits employ.

Crafting Challenge Statements

Four small groups drafted challenge statements. Rather than converging on a single shared statement, the groups' outputs point to a few recurring threads:

- Funding and sustainability, including calls for predictable, sustainable funding and central leadership or coordination
- Organizational capacity, including board training, board engagement, and stakeholder buy-in
- A shift from program-level thinking to sector-level thinking, with one group naming the tension between services remaining tied to individual programs versus addressing overall community needs
- Shared ownership, with one group framing the challenge as ensuring every community member and organization sees a role for themselves in solving sector-wide problems

Crafting Vision Statements

Following a guided imagery exercise, the large group surfaced a set of shared vision themes:

- A community that comes together and makes sacrifices for the collective good, including for issues that don't directly affect one's own organization or sector
- A willingness to name the sector's core problem honestly, even where it requires setting aside individual organizational interests, described by working session participants as becoming "One Quincy"
- A recognition that difficult internal decisions may be necessary to achieve greater external impact
- Funders shifting from a funding role to a "change agent" role, actively contributing to collaborative efforts rather than only resourcing them
- A shared or central grant repository
- A sector-wide focus on one challenge that all organizations can contribute to and benefit from
- A rejection of siloed, segregated work in favor of interconnectedness, which participants acknowledged requires vulnerability and honesty

Trust is a precondition for collaboration. Nonprofit participants pointed to a specific mechanism for building it: informal, unstructured time together outside of formal meetings and structured programming. One participant captured this directly, describing the pace and nature of relationship-building as "one pitcher of margaritas at a time."

The comment reflects a broader sentiment in the room that shared meals, social time, and other informal gatherings do the relationship-building work that structured meetings cannot, and that the sector currently has limited time, space, and opportunity to convene this way. This connects directly to the force working against collaboration named earlier in this session ("limited time, space, and opportunity for nonprofit leaders to convene with one another") and suggests that any future collaborative infrastructure should account for informal relationship-building, not only formal governance or shared programming, as a necessary investment.

Funders Working Session: Summary of Findings

Unlike the nonprofit session, this session did not begin with an individual Force Field Analysis. With only seven participants, all familiar with one another through the Collaborative, the individual priming activity used to surface private reflection before group discussion in a larger room was not necessary. The funders session moved directly into the SWOT-style World Café rotation.

SWOT-Style World Café Themes

Funders rotated through the same four stations used in the nonprofit session.

Table 1: Funding and External Environment: *What is shifting in the landscape outside organizations' control?* This table looked outward at the forces shaping the sector that no single organization controls but every organization feels.

- Participants raised concerns about generational wealth transfer, heirs who may not share their predecessors' philanthropic priorities, and donor fatigue.
- They also flagged cybersecurity as an emerging risk, noting that bad actors have so far focused on large corporations rather than nonprofits, and raised the rising cost of doing business.

Table 2: Organizational Capacity and Relationships: *What does it actually take to collaborate, and what gets in the way?* This table went beneath the surface of readiness into what collaboration actually requires in practice and what the real obstacles are when organizations try to work together.

- Participants described collaboration as requiring vision, bravery, and buy-in from leaders and donors, along with stronger staff and boards on the nonprofit side.
- Several responses emphasized a posture of selflessness, willingness, and the need for a clear "owner" and "cheerleader" for any collaborative effort, as well as formal structures like MOUs.
- Funders also noted their own accountability constraints, framing trust-based philanthropy as something they want to practice while still needing to demonstrate impact and compliance to their own stakeholders.
- The group's identified themes were a question about what collaboration actually means in practice (distinguishing cooperation from deeper collaboration) and a call to streamline reporting requirements and develop shared effectiveness measures across funders.

Table 3: Community Needs and Gaps: *What does the community actually need, and where is the sector falling short?* This table asked why gaps in service persist, who is being left out, and what it would take to close them.

- Participants pointed to the need for a general information hub for nonprofits, more staff time and capacity, a clearer shared understanding of community needs, and a shift toward funding community-level solutions rather than individual programs and services.
- "Begin with the end in mind," suggests an emphasis on outcome-first planning.

Table 4: What We're Not Saying: The honest conversation the sector needs to have. This table created space for the things that don't fit in formal settings the dynamics, tensions, and observations that shape how the sector actually works but rarely surface out loud.

- This table surfaced the most candid input. Participants raised concerns about new or "pop-up" organizations formed without a genuine mission focus, questions about integrity and oversight of fund use, and the number of agencies operating with a stated purpose but no real mission behind it.
- They also named the vulnerability required to let go of the belief that no other organization can do the work as well as one's own.
- The group's identified themes were largely structural and self-directed questions: what would collaboration cost, how would it be structured, what would funders themselves need to give up, and a concern about loss of identity and control if the sector collaborates more deeply. Funder board involvement and common reporting were also named.

Crafting Challenge Statements

Rather than four separate group statements, the funders produced a more continuous set of reflections that converge on a few themes:

- A shared vision of prosperity for the community, built by aligning resources across sectors rather than within any one organization
- A clear view of role: nonprofits are described as the strategy and delivery vehicle for a healthy county, with funders explicitly stating it is not their role to provide services directly
- A starting point focused on risk and internal capacity, building nonprofits' internal controls, standards, and capacity as a foundation for succession, sustainability, and collaboration, without requiring any one organization to lead or take credit
- A need for third-party-created space to collaborate, and a recurring emphasis on selflessness as a precondition

Crafting Vision Statements

- Regular, recurring space and time for cross-sector networking and connection
- Improved, more neighborly communication focused on common ground and building solutions
- Incremental alignment, tackling one shared issue at a time rather than attempting to solve everything at once
- Community well-being as the single highest shared priority, with trust identified as the mechanism to get there
- A recognition that the philanthropic sector cannot solve this alone and needs commitment from across Quincy
- Honesty in owning the sector's own challenges
- A shared, singular commitment greater than any one organization's individual needs
- An executive-forum style structure for collaboration and resource sharing, focused at the leadership level to build trust

Points of Alignment: Nonprofit and Funder Sessions

The following points of convergence are drawn independently from each session's raw output, not from any joint discussion, since the two groups never met together.

Challenge Statement Alignment

- Nonprofits named "sustainable funding" and "limited pool of funders" as core to their challenge statement. Funders independently named a shift from "funding individual programs" to "funding shared community solutions. Both framed it as needing money structured differently.
- Both groups treat capacity as the thing that has to exist before collaboration can, rather than something collaboration will produce.
- Both name the same underlying condition, that sector-wide problems require organizations to contribute without needing to own the outcome, from two different vantage points (the nonprofit doing the work, the funder deciding who to trust with it).

Vision Statement Alignment

- Nonprofits identified "commit to trust" as a specific condition that needs to exist. The funders directly stated that community well-being is the single and highest priority. The key to this is building trust. This is one concept that surfaced directly in both rooms.
- Nonprofits closed their vision themes with "embrace interconnectedness and reject segregation. Requires vulnerability and honesty." Funders closed theirs with "honesty in owning our challenges," and separately named the "vulnerability and willingness to let go of perceptions about other organizations."
- Nonprofits described committing "to the common problem even if it doesn't affect you" and as sacrifice for the collective good. Funders described it as a "shared goal greater than any single organization's needs" and as needing "commitment from all aspects of Quincy," not just the philanthropic sector. Different language, same underlying idea: the vision requires organizations to act on behalf of something larger than their own mission or self-interest.
- Funders proposed a general information hub and a space to collaborate and create. Nonprofits raised the idea of resource pooling, naming "central or coordinated funding" and a "central grant repository." The two groups converged on the need for some coordinating infrastructure beyond individual organizations, but it is unclear whether that structure should be an external third party or something the sector itself owns and leads.

Finally, two distinct ideas emerged from the sessions, each pointing to how trust and momentum get built, and each surfaced by only one group.

Nonprofits emphasized informal relationship-building (socializing, shared time outside formal meetings) as a trust-building mechanism. When this theme was shared with funders during their session, funders were reportedly surprised by how much weight nonprofit leaders placed on it, not because they saw it as unproductive, but because they had not previously understood it as a meaningful trust-building mechanism in its own right.

Funders, separately, emphasized incremental pacing: starting with a single successful project and building outward from that early win to create momentum for broader collaboration. The nonprofit session did not surface pacing as a theme; its absence reflects that the topic did not come up, not that nonprofits viewed it differently.

Neither idea was named by both groups, but together they point to what sustained collaboration requires: relational trust built through informal connection, and structural momentum built through early, visible wins. Each group named complementary and foundation conditions needed for sustained collaborations.

Project Research: Nonprofit Collaboration Survey

The Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey was designed specifically for this engagement. The instrument was developed in close partnership with the Quincy Area Funders Collaborative and refined through a pilot process involving nine nonprofit leaders from Adams County. Their feedback shaped the final survey to ensure the questions were relevant, clearly worded, and appropriate for this community.

The revised survey was distributed to 138 Executive Directors, CEOs, and Board Chairs representing 69 nonprofits who have been funded by at least one member of the Quincy Area Funders Collaborative. Distribution was conducted through Microsoft Forms using personalized invitations with a link to the survey. Reminder emails were sent by Mission + Strategy and members of the Quincy Area Funders Collaborative to encourage participation. The survey was open from May 1 through May 20, 2026; two and a half weeks.

Forty-nine individuals completed the survey, representing a response rate of 36%. Respondents included Executive Directors and CEOs (72%) and Board Chairs (22%) with 6% not identifying their role. Because the survey was designed to capture the perspectives of organizational leadership rather than a random sample of the broader nonprofit sector, findings should be interpreted in that context. The data reflects a segment of leaders and may not represent the full range of perspectives across the entire Adams County's nonprofit sector.

The survey consisted of 29 questions organized into six sections: respondents' perception of current organizational challenges; broader community coordination and collaboration; prior experience with sustained collaboration; familiarity with sustained collaboration as a strategy; readiness for sustained collaboration; and demographics.

The instrument used a combination of closed-ended, Likert scale, and open-ended questions.

Demographic questions were placed at the end of the survey and captured information including mission area, budget size, staff size, years in operation, and respondent role.

The survey took an average of 18 minutes to complete. The median completion time was approximately 15 minutes, reflecting that most respondents completed the survey efficiently while a small number took longer.

See Appendix 3 for results of closed survey questions.

Survey Results

Organizational Challenges

Survey respondents were asked to rank a list of organizational challenges limiting their ability to serve more people or serve them better, setting aside financial sustainability, which is addressed separately in the survey. The chart below reflects each respondent's top-ranked challenge. Staff capacity and burnout was the dominant concern, named first by 19 of 49 respondents, nearly double the second-ranked challenge. The number shown is the average ranking, with lower numbers indicating the challenge was more often ranked as the top issue. The responses point to a sector that is stretched thin, with human capital pressures far outpacing concerns about facilities, communications, or governance.

Average Rank by Organizational Challenges



Question two asked respondents to describe what strategies their organizations have tried in response to its top-ranked challenge, and what has and has not worked. Forty-four of 49 respondents provided a typed answer to this open-ended question. Five broad themes emerged from those responses.

- **Theme 1 Compensation and Benefits:** Raising wages and benefits was the most common strategy, with mixed results. Many organizations still can't match for-profit or larger nonprofit competitors, especially for credentialed roles, and funding sources that require specific credentials often don't reimburse at the salary level those credentials command. Several respondents cited the nonprofit funding model itself as the root cause, pushing organizations toward part-time hiring when full-time roles are needed and accelerating burnout.
- **Theme 2 Volunteer Engagement:** Several organizations leaned more heavily on volunteers, with short-term success and growing strain. Volunteer pools are aging, and recruiting younger volunteers at the same commitment level has proven difficult. The consensus: volunteer engagement is stretched about as far as it can go and can't substitute for trained staff in critical roles.

- **Theme 3 Board Governance:** Investments in board training, role descriptions, and governance consultants have produced limited lasting results; engagement tends not to sustain once structured support ends. One respondent described a board that repeatedly expressed support without following through; another described multiple executive director transitions in five years alongside persistent board/staff authority confusion. Training alone hasn't produced the behavioral change needed.
- **Theme 4 Communications and Visibility:** Shaped in part by the decline of print and broadcast coverage. One arts organization shifted to a multi-channel presence, social media, print, direct mail, radio PSAs, consuming nearly half a staff position; direct mail worked but was too expensive to cover every neighborhood.

A second arts organization cited declining print media in audience turnout remaining below pre-COVID levels despite using every channel available. A third singled out social media as most effective because it's free and its impact is quickly assessable. These are a handful of open-text mentions, not a dedicated communications question, so read this as a signal worth watching rather than a sector-wide finding.

- **Theme 5 Facilities and Infrastructure:** Responses in this category were brief and largely described work underway: capital campaigns, grants, renovations, and recent acquisitions. These organizations have identified the problem and are pursuing solutions, but outcomes are not yet known.

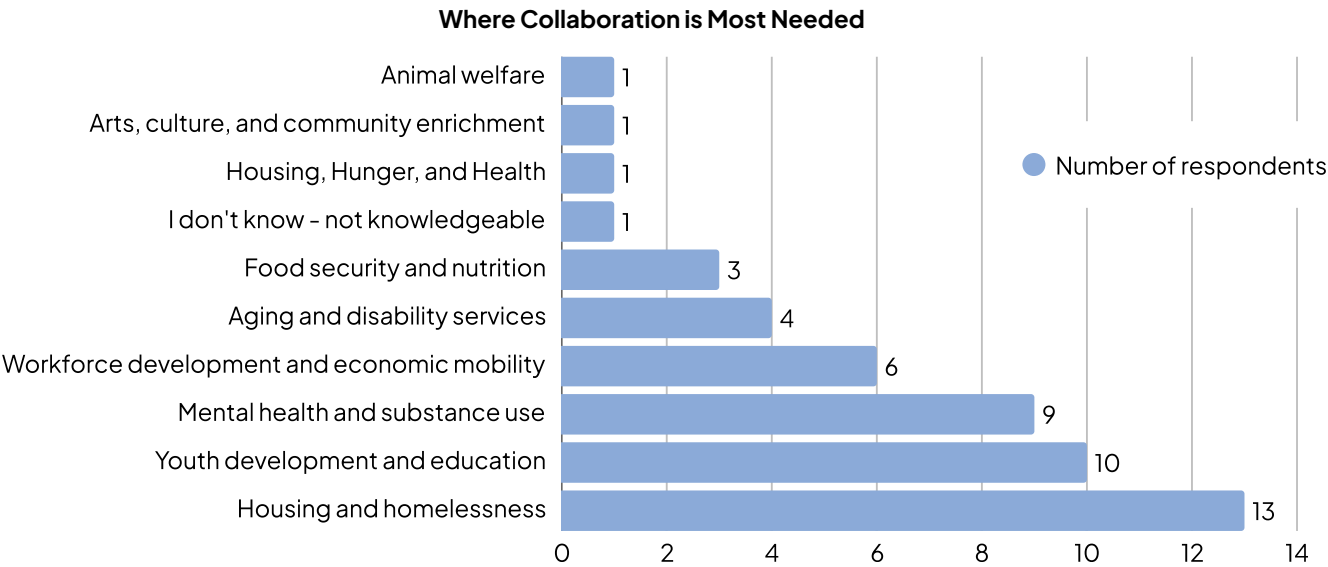
Areas Where Collaborations is Needed Most

Respondents identified the sector where collaboration is most urgently needed in Adams County and named the primary driver making it urgent, moving beyond general openness to collaboration to surface where nonprofit leaders see the greatest unmet need, and why.

Housing and homelessness was identified most frequently (13 of 49 respondents); the Community Building Council's dedicated housing team suggests some coordinated infrastructure already exists here. Youth development and education drew the second-highest response (10), but unlike housing, it has no corresponding CBC team, pointing to a potential gap between perceived need and existing infrastructure.

Notably, the 2024 Community Needs Assessment identifies child care and aging as top pressing needs, yet aging and disability services drew only four responses here, the fourth lowest of any sector (childcare wasn't a standalone option but may be captured within youth development's 10). This raises a question: are the organizations serving those populations represented in this conversation, and do they see collaboration as relevant to their challenges?

In Question 5, 33% of respondents identified organizations working independently and the resulting gaps in the service continuum as the primary driver making collaboration most urgent in the sector they selected in Question 4.



Internal Barriers to Sustained Collaboration

Forty-eight of 49 respondents identified their greatest internal barrier to sustained collaboration (Question 13). The responses cluster around three primary barriers.

- 1. **Staff capacity and bandwidth** the most frequently cited barrier (14, 29%), reflects a broader pattern: organizations that want to collaborate often lack the people or time to pursue it, and collaboration requires upfront investment before it produces returns.
- 2. **Lack of clarity** on what sustained collaboration would look like, nearly as common as capacity (13, 27%), is a distinct, informational barrier rather than a resource or cultural one; these organizations aren't opposed to collaboration, they just lack a clear picture of what it means in practice. This matches the cross-tabulations: organizations with no collaboration experience most often cite clarity, while those with active experience cite resources instead.
- 3. **Funding** meant the absence of dedicated resources for collaboration work specifically (11, 22%), separate from general financial stress.

The barrier profile suggests that the Adams County nonprofit sector is not resistant to collaboration so much as it is under-resourced and under-informed about it.

The two leading barriers, capacity and clarity, can both be addressed. Providing organizations with concrete models, realistic time and cost expectations, and some form of dedicated support for early collaboration work could meaningfully lower the threshold for engagement.

Cross-Tabulations

By Budget Size

The survey divides the organizations into four tiers. Forty-eight out of 49 respondents identified their organization's budget size. Respondents by budget size:

Budget Size	Count	Percentage
Under \$250K	12	25%
\$251K-\$999K	18	38%
\$1M-\$2.99M	12	25%
\$3M+	6	13%

Long-Term Sustainability

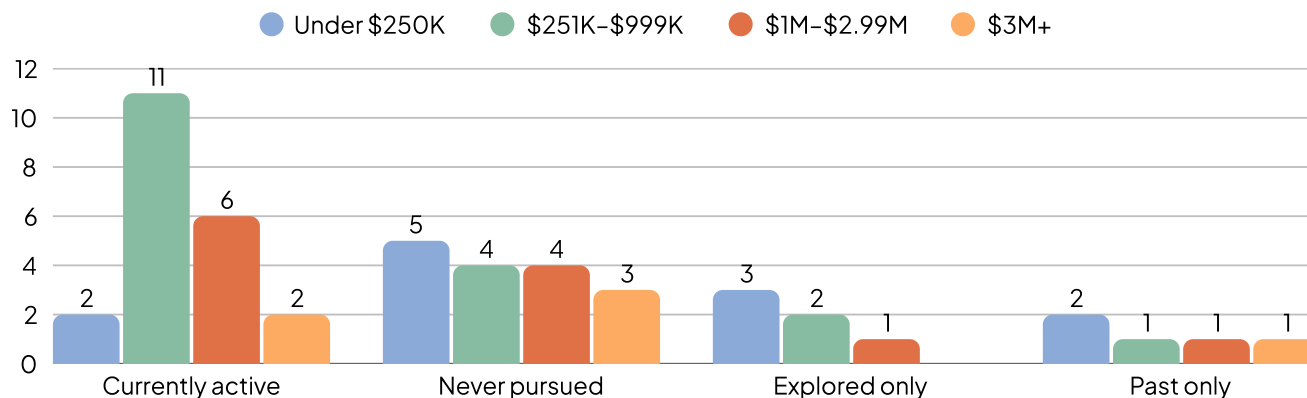
All 49 respondents answered Question 14. The responses reveal a sector that is actively grappling with its financial future, with most organizations falling into one of two orientations: those actively seeking new approaches and those focused on sustaining what they already have.

- Actively exploring new approaches, earned revenue, shared services, or strategic partnerships, was the most common response (18, 37%), a meaningful signal of openness to change that aligns with this group's higher collaboration engagement throughout the survey.
- Focused on growing current funding streams within the existing model (17, 35%) is a reasonable strategy for organizations in a stable position, but raises a question about vulnerability in a funding environment that's rarely static.
- Questioning whether the current model will sustain long-term (9, 18%) is the group warranting the most attention: past confidence in the status quo but not yet exploring alternatives, a state of recognized uncertainty that may make them both the most receptive audience for collaboration conversations and the most in need of support.
- No serious strategic conversation about sustainability means these organizations haven't yet engaged with the strategic question (4, 7%).

Taken together, roughly half the sector is either actively exploring new approaches or questioning its current model. That is a meaningful opening for a broader community conversation about what sustainability could look like and what role collaboration might play in getting there.

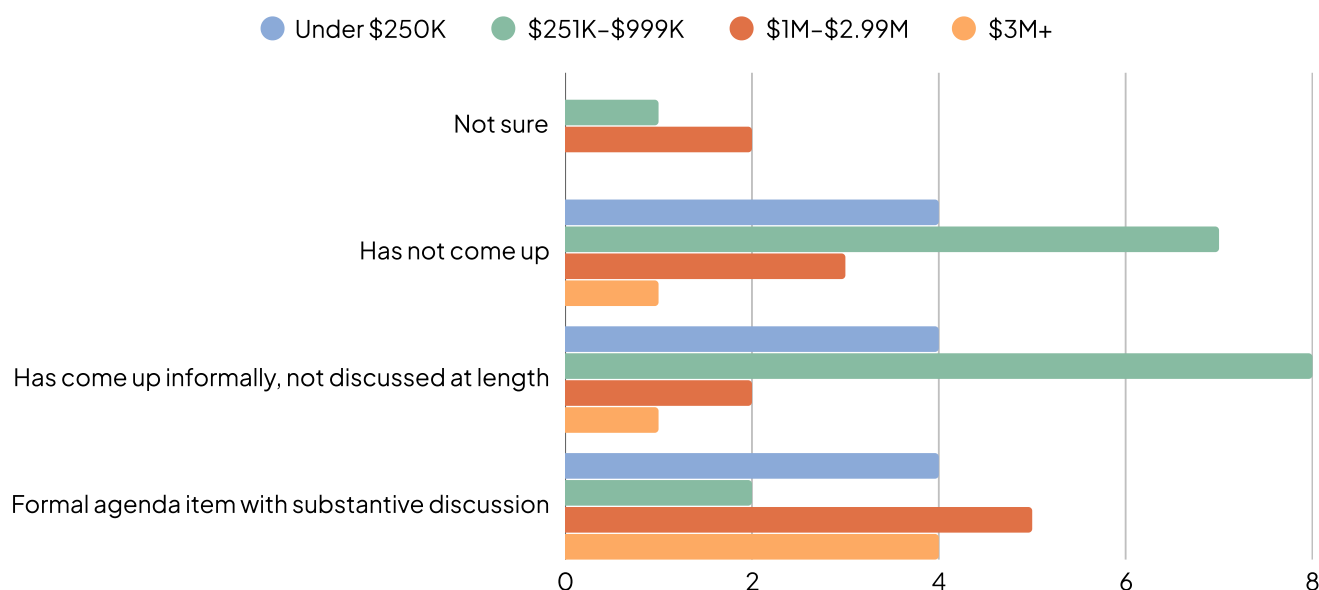
Budget Size and Collaboration Experience

Mid-range organizations (\$251K–\$999K) had the highest rate of active collaboration with 11 of 18 in that budget band are currently active. Smaller organizations (under \$250K) were split between never having pursued it (5) and exploring or past experience (5), with only 2 currently active. Larger organizations (\$3M+) showed the lowest active rate relative to their size, with half (3 of 6) having never pursued collaboration.



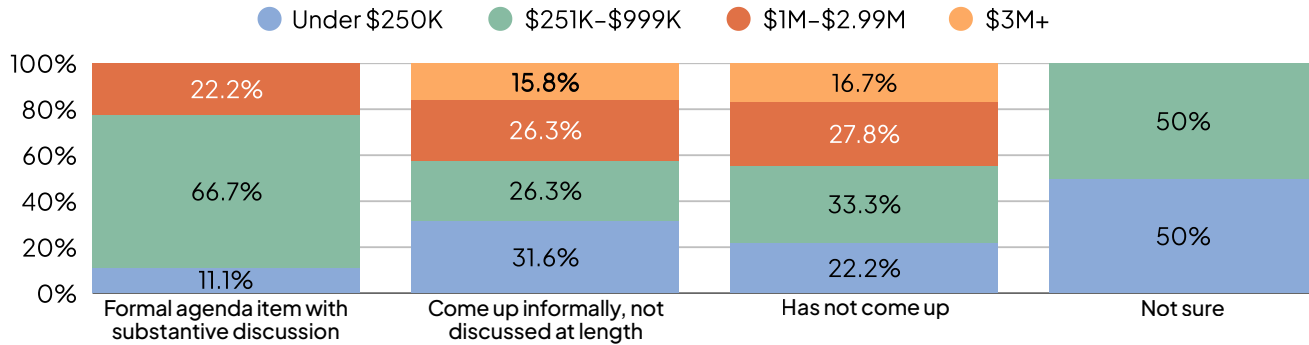
Budget Size and Leadership Learning

This is one of the more striking findings. Both the smallest (under \$250K) and largest (\$3M+) budget tiers showed the most limited formal learning with 4 of 12 and 4 of 6, respectively, described sustained collaboration as "largely new territory." The middle tiers had more moderate and substantive engagement with the topic. The \$3M+ result may reflect that large, long-established organizations feel less urgency to study new models; the under \$250K result likely reflects resource and bandwidth constraints.



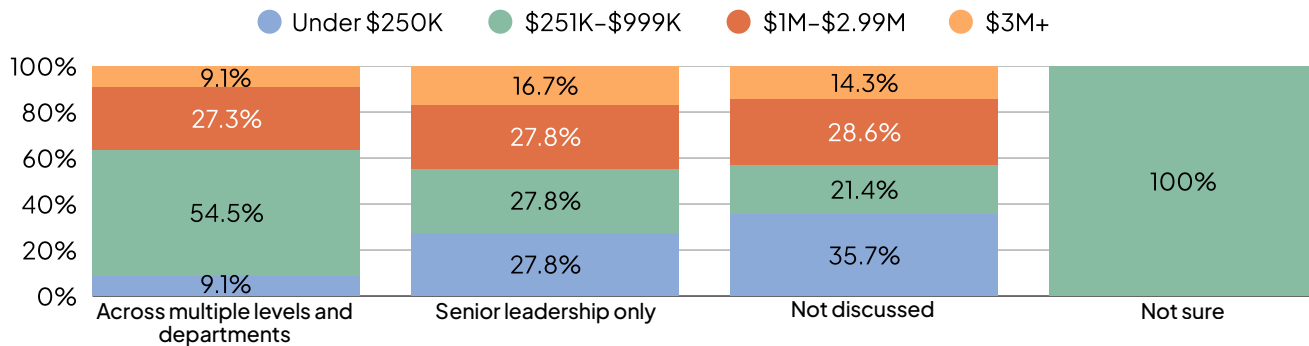
Budget Size and Board Discussion

No organization in the \$3M+ tier had made collaboration as a formal board agenda item. The \$251K–\$999K tier had the most substantive board engagement (6 reported formal discussions), reinforcing the pattern of this tier being most actively engaged overall. Notably, 10 of 12 mid-large organizations (\$1M–\$2.99M) had not discussed collaboration or had very limited discussion at the board level despite their resources and size.



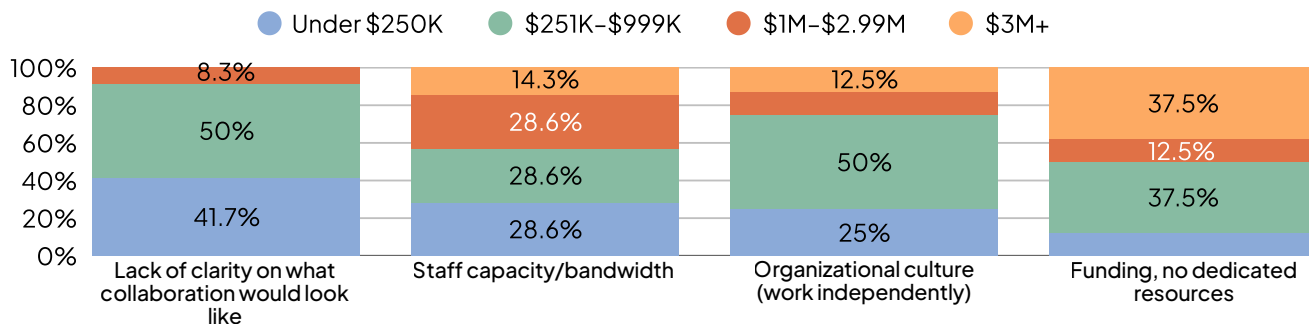
Budget Size and Staff Discussion

Staff discussion patterns roughly mirror board discussion. Smaller organizations more often had not discussed it at all (5 of 11). Four of the "not sure" responses came from the \$251K–\$999K tier potentially reflecting organizations where different staff have had different levels of exposure to the topic. In alignment with the other questions regarding internal discussion, a majority (61%) of the organizations at the \$251K–\$999K tier have had discussions across multiple levels or senior leadership level.



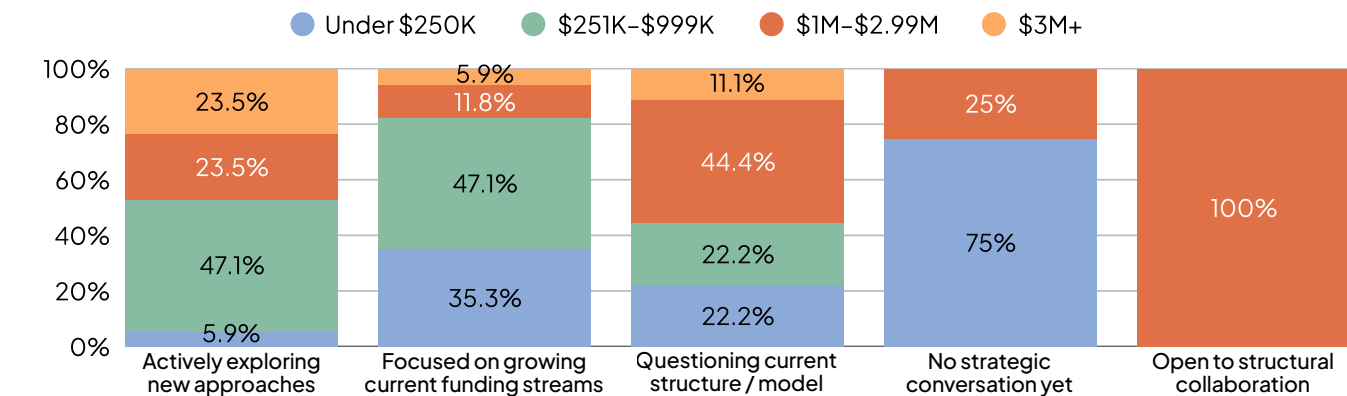
Budget Size and Internal Barrier

The barrier profile shifts clearly by size. Organizations in the \$251K to \$999K most often named lack of clarity while no \$3M+ organization named this as their primary barrier at all. Instead, the largest organizations cited funding as their top barrier (3 of 6) not a lack of understanding, but a lack of dedicated resources to pursue collaboration. Capacity was cited across all tiers.



Budget Size and Financial Sustainability Orientation

The smallest organizations were most likely to be either focused on their current model (6) or to have had no sustainability conversation at all (3 of 4 "no strategic conversation" responses). The \$251K–\$999K tier was split nearly evenly between actively exploring and focused on current model (8 each). Both \$1M+ tiers skewed toward actively exploring, consistent with their greater organizational capacity to pursue new strategies. Organizations questioning their long-term model (9 total) clustered in the \$1M–\$2.99M tier (4), which may reflect organizations large enough to sense structural pressure but without the scale to absorb it easily.



Budget Size and Organizational Readiness (Likert Items)

Four Likert scale items in the survey speak most directly to an organization's practical readiness to pursue sustained collaboration: confidence in potential partners, board resource readiness, staff capacity, and the ability to collaborate internally across departments.

Readiness Dimension	Under \$250K	\$251K–\$999K	\$1M–\$2.99M	\$3M+
Partner trust	67% (8/12)	72% (13/18)	58% (7/12)	20% (1/5)
Board resource readiness	25% (3/12)	33% (6/18)	67% (8/12)	40% (2/5)
Staff capacity	33% (4/12)	44% (8/18)	25% (3/12)	20% (1/5)
Cross-unit collaboration	83% (10/12)	78% (14/18)	75% (9/12)	83% (5/6)

Internal cross-collaboration is a shared strength across the sector. Between 75% and 83% of respondents in every budget tier expressed confidence in their organization's ability to collaborate effectively across board, staff, and departments to solve problems together. This is the most consistent finding in the readiness data and an important one.

It suggests that the habits and culture of collaborative problem-solving are present in most organizations regardless of size. The challenge is not that these organizations do not know how to work collaboratively it is whether they can extend that capacity beyond their own walls.

Partner trust is strong across three tiers and sharply lower in the largest. Among organizations under \$250K, in the \$251K–\$999K range, and in the \$1M–\$2.99M range, between 58% and 72% expressed confidence that potential partner organizations would uphold shared commitments. That confidence drops to 20% among \$3M+ organizations, where only 1 of 5 respondents agreed. This is a striking divergence in the data. It may reflect that larger organizations have more direct experience with collaboration falling short, operate in more regulated environments where partner accountability is harder to enforce, or simply have more to lose when a partnership underperforms.

Whatever the cause, low partner trust at this scale is a meaningful obstacle and one that structured agreements, clear governance, and relationship-building would need to address directly.

Board resource readiness rises with size but does not hold at the top. Smaller organizations expressed the least confidence that their boards could allocate the time, funding, and resources needed for sustained collaboration 25% for under \$250K and 33% for the \$251K–\$999K tier. Confidence rises significantly in the \$1M–\$2.99M tier, where 67% responded positively, suggesting that boards at this scale have more capacity and organizational infrastructure to support new strategic work. The \$3M+ tier dips back to 40%, which may reflect a different dynamic. Boards at this size may be focused on stewarding complex existing operations rather than investing in new structural arrangements.

The pattern suggests that board readiness is not simply a function of organizational resources but of how boards at different scales understand their strategic role.

Staff capacity is the most universal constraint and worsens at both ends of the size spectrum. No budget tier exceeded 44% positive on this dimension, making it the weakest readiness indicator across the board. The \$251K–\$999K tier, which outperforms on most other dimensions, reaches only 44% here. The \$1M–\$2.99M and \$3M+ tiers return the lowest scores at 25% and 20% respectively; a counterintuitive finding given their greater organizational resources. It suggests that larger organizations are not necessarily better positioned to absorb the added demands of collaboration work, and may in fact be more acutely aware of how stretched their teams already are. Staff capacity is not a problem that resolves with organizational growth. Any collaboration model designed for this community will need to account for it explicitly, whether through dedicated coordination roles, phased engagement timelines, or shared staffing arrangements that distribute the load.

By Mission Area Representation

Respondents represented a broad range of mission areas, reflecting the diversity of the Adams County nonprofit sector. Arts, culture, and historic preservation was the largest single group with 8 respondents, followed by children and youth development (5), housing and basic needs (5), education and scholarships (4), and early childhood education and care (4). Family and child welfare services, recreation and community programming, and comprehensive community services each contributed 2 to 3 respondents. The remaining mission areas including mental and behavioral health, senior services, economic development, faith-based services, health and emergency services, disability services, animal welfare, and pregnancy and maternal support each had 1 to 2 respondents.

While this distribution reflects meaningful breadth, the sample size within any individual mission area is too small to support reliable cross-tabulation for sector-specific conclusions.

Thematic Analysis of Final Open-Ended Question

Question 41 asked: "Is there anything else you would like to share that we did not ask about?" Fifteen of 49 respondents offered a substantive written response. Four themes emerged clearly:

- **Theme 1– Genuine Interest in Collaboration, With Real Cautions About What Makes It Work:** Multiple respondents expressed authentic enthusiasm for collaboration while being clear-eyed about the conditions it requires. One leader explicitly framed their vision of what good collaboration looks like: defined goals, shared accountability, and a clear path to implementation. Another noted that their community has benefited from partnerships through the United Way CBC committees volunteering that as a specific example of what has worked. At the same time, respondents were candid about friction. One respondent in the arts sector offered a particularly detailed account: goodwill and strong relationships exist, but the sector's annual production cycle makes it genuinely hard to find windows when organizational calendars align. The structural reality of "starting over each season" creates a legitimate obstacle to sustained engagement that is distinct from unwillingness. This kind of nuance, collaboration is hard for specific operational reasons, not just cultural ones, is important.

- **Theme 2 – The Scarcity Mindset as a Named Problem:** One respondent named the community's trust deficit directly and pointedly: "There appears to be a long history of distrust/suspicion in the community, in general. And it is also felt amongst organizations and between organizations and community members." They identified the "scarcity mindset," the belief that resources gained by one organization must come at the expense of another, as a root cause and explicitly expressed a desire to move past it. This is a significant qualitative finding. The Likert data showed that partner trust was one of the largest differentiators between organizations with and without collaboration experience, and this open-ended response provides a named explanation for why: it is not simply organizational hesitancy, but a broader relational ecosystem in which competition has historically been more visible than cooperation.
- **Theme 3 – Shared Infrastructure and Facilities as an Underexplored Collaboration Entry Point:** Three respondents independently raised the potential of shared physical or administrative infrastructure as a concrete collaboration pathway. One described a downtown building that could house multiple nonprofits under one roof, enabling shared services while preserving distinct missions. Another in the arts sector pointed to back-office sharing (accounting was the specific example cited) as a natural fit practical, low-risk, and cost-reducing. A third referenced existing relationships built around shared facilities with educational institutions. These responses are notable because they describe collaborations that can begin without requiring mission alignment or governance restructuring. Shared space and shared services are lower-stakes entry points that could build trust and relational infrastructure over time.
- **Theme 4 – External Regulation and Funding as Structural Constraints:** Several respondents identified barriers rooted in external regulation and funding requirements rather than organizational will. One raised a specific and often-overlooked issue: organizations that receive government funding may be required to maintain separate structures that make formal collaboration, particularly merged or integrated models, either complicated or impossible. Two additional responses, one from an early childhood organization and one from a family and child welfare organization operating under DCFS, pointed to licensing requirements, client confidentiality obligations, and jurisdictional boundaries as genuine legal and structural barriers. Taken together, these responses make an important point: for some organizations, the obstacles to sustained collaboration are not internal and cannot be resolved through readiness-building alone. They are externally imposed constraints.

The picture that emerges from this landscape analysis is one of a nonprofit sector at a genuine inflection point. The foundations for collaboration are present. More than a third of respondents described their organizations as actively exploring new approaches to sustainability, including shared services and strategic partnerships. Housing and homelessness emerged as the sector where collaboration is most urgently needed, followed closely by youth development and education a sector that, unlike housing, does not yet have a coordinated community infrastructure to match the level of perceived need.

Yet real tensions persist. An undercurrent of competition and scarcity runs through the responses, reflecting a dynamic familiar to nonprofit sectors everywhere: when funding is finite and organizations depend on it for survival, collaboration can feel threatening even when it is intellectually appealing. This tension is not unique to Adams County, but it is present here and will need to be named and addressed directly in any effort to move the sector toward more sustained coordination. External regulatory and funding constraints add another layer of complexity, particularly for organizations in child welfare, early childhood, and healthcare settings where licensing requirements and government contracts can limit what structural collaboration is even possible.

Perhaps the most important finding for how this work moves forward is where readiness is actually concentrated. The organizations most engaged with collaboration in their internal discussions, their board conversations, and their practice are not necessarily the largest or best-resourced.

Mid-range organizations in the \$251K to \$2.99M budget range showed the most consistent and broad-based engagement with collaboration as a concept, and that engagement appears to translate into action.

Both the smallest organizations, which often lack the bandwidth to explore new models, and the largest, which may feel less urgency to partner, face distinct but real barriers. Any strategy that focuses only on the most prominent or well-funded organizations in the sector may miss the segment where momentum is actually occurring.

The question facing Adams County's nonprofit community is not whether collaboration is valued; the data makes clear that it is. **The question is whether the conditions, relational, structural, and financial, can be created to make it durable.**

Background Analysis: IRS Form 990 Review

This review draws on IRS Form 990, 990-EZ, and 990-N filings retrieved via ProPublica's Nonprofit Explorer, supplemented by the IRS Business Master File (Illinois extract, March 2026) and public budget records for organizations that do not file. Most figures reflect tax years 2023 to 2025, since public 990 data runs 18 to 24 months behind the present.

The organization directory includes 103 vetted organizations: Cohort A (70 organizations funded by QAFC members), Cohort B (9 organizations identified by QAFC as adjacent to its funding network), and Cohort C (24 additional Adams County organizations drawn from the IRS Business Master File). Findings in this section describe the 76 organizations in Cohorts A and B, after excluding Blessing Hospital and two organizations whose 990 filings reflect national parent income rather than local operations. Blessing Hospital is genuinely local, but at \$625M in annual income it represents 83% of all local revenue; including it would turn every average into a description of one hospital rather than the sector.

Mission categories were assigned from each organization's IRS NTEE code, mapped to National Center for Charitable Statistics categories, with QAFC's own mission designation taking precedence where provided and residual cases reviewed manually. Categories describe an organization's primary purpose; many organizations' work spans more than one.

What the 990 Can and Cannot Show

- 18 of the 103 organizations file no separate 990, including government entities, churches, and group-return members such as Salvation Army, Young Life, and Red Cross chapters. Their figures rest on public budgets or labeled estimates.
- Organizations under \$50K in receipts file the 990-N postcard, which contains no financial data; those under \$200K file the abbreviated 990-EZ, which combines cash, savings, and investments into a single line and omits depreciation.
- The 990 provides one number per organization. Program-level economics, funder concentration, staffing levels, and lease terms are not visible in the filing.
- Balance-sheet cash reflects a single year-end date and may not capture a lower point earlier in the year, particularly for reimbursement-funded organizations.
- Total revenue includes donor-restricted gifts for future periods, so a capital campaign or multi-year grant can inflate a single year's reported margin.

Three measures anchor the findings that follow. Funding Mix is contributions and grants as a share of total revenue (Form 990 Part VIII, line 1h divided by line 12).

Liquidity is days of cash on hand, using strict cash and short-term investments only, following AICPA/CPA Journal methodology. Operating Margin is reported for context only and is not a basis for conclusions in this cohort: only 56 of the 76 organizations have three years of usable data, and restricted gifts can swing a small organization's margin by tens of points in a single year.

A Small-Organization Sector, Built Almost Entirely on Contributions and Grants

- 50 of 76 organizations (66%) operate under \$1M in annual revenue; 36 (47%) operate under \$250K; 24 operate under \$100K.
- Beyond the QAFC funder network, the pattern intensifies: 23 of the 24 Cohort C organizations (Adams County filers not directly connected to a QAFC funder) operate under \$1M.
- Among organizations under \$250K, the median share of revenue from contributions and grants is 100%. With no earned income to fall back on, these organizations' income is effectively re-decided every year by donor and funding trends outside their control.

Mission	<\$100K	\$100K–\$250K	\$250K–\$1M	\$1M–\$3M	\$3M–\$5M	\$5M–\$10M	\$10M+	Unknown	Total
Health & Human Services	6	5	5	6	2	2	3	1	30
Education	5	1	2	8	—	—	1	—	17
Arts, Culture & Humanities	3	2	5	—	—	—	—	—	10
Youth & Recreation	4	2	—	1	—	1	—	—	8
Community & Economic Development	2	2	—	1	—	—	—	—	5
Faith-Based	3	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	4
Environment & Animal Welfare	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
Other / Unclassified	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Total	24	12	14	16	2	3	4	1	76

Mission by Revenue Scale: Organization Count, QAFC-Connected Cohorts A+B (n=76). Cell counts reflect number of organizations; shading intensity reflects count. Latest-year IRS Form 990 revenue; documented estimates used for non-filers.

Health & Human Services Carries the Most Organizations, and the Most Risk

- Health & Human Services is the largest mission group in the 76-organization cohort, with 30 organizations (39%), and the only mission area represented at every revenue scale.
- It is also the most contribution-dependent mission area, with a median of 94% of revenue coming from contributions and grants.
- It falls below the 90-day liquidity benchmark most often: 8 of 22 Health & Human Services filers with available cash data (36%), compared with 1 of 8 in Arts and 1 of 6 in Youth & Recreation.

The \$3M Scale Threshold

- 16 organizations operate between \$1M and \$3M; only 9 of the 76 have crossed \$3M in annual revenue. This is roughly the point where an organization can sustain dedicated finance, HR, and compliance staff functions.
- Measured against the Nonprofit Finance Fund's 90-day liquidity floor: below \$1M, 6 of 35 organizations with cash data fall short; at \$1M to \$3M, 4 of 14 fall short; at \$3M to \$5M, both organizations in that tier fall short.
- Organizations that grow past \$1M often take on payroll and lease obligations before earned revenue or reserves catch up, and frequently struggle to build the back-office capacity needed to keep pace with that growth.

Three organizations were excluded from this analysis because their reported 990 income reflects a national parent organization rather than local Adams County operations: Blessing Hospital (\$625M in annual income, an extreme scale outlier), American Red Cross (\$3.2B in annual income, reflecting the national parent organization), and the Alzheimer's Association (\$412M in annual income, also reflecting the national parent organization).

Liquidity Against Published Benchmarks

Liquidity is measured in days of cash on hand and benchmarked against the Nonprofit Finance Fund's widely used thresholds: crisis (under 30 days), tight (30 to 89 days), floor met (90 to 179 days), target met (180 to 364 days), and above target (365 days or more).

By scale	1. Crisis <30 days	2. Tight 30–89	3. Floor met 90–179	4. Target met 180–364	5. Above target 365+	n
<\$100K	1	—	1	2	6	10
\$100K–\$250K	—	4	1	3	3	11
\$250K–\$1M	1	—	2	5	6	14
\$1M–\$3M	1	3	7	—	3	14
\$3M–\$5M	—	2	—	—	—	2
\$5M–\$10M	—	—	—	1	—	1
\$10M+	3	—	1	—	—	4
Total	6	9	12	11	18	56

Liquidity by Revenue Scale, Measured in Days Cash On-Hand (n=56 organizations with available cash data)

By mission	1. Crisis <30 days	2. Tight 30–89	3. Floor met 90–179	4. Target met 180–364	5. Above target 365+	n
Health & Human Services	3	5	7	4	3	22
Education	2	1	1	2	6	12
Arts, Culture & Humanities	—	1	1	2	4	8
Youth & Recreation	—	1	1	1	3	6
Community & Economic Development	—	1	1	2	1	5
Faith-Based	1	—	1	—	—	2
Environment & Animal Welfare	—	—	—	—	1	1
Total	6	9	12	11	18	56

Liquidity by Mission Area, Measured in Days Cash On-Hand (n=56 organizations with available cash data)

- Against these benchmarks, 41 of 56 organizations with available cash data (73%) clear the 90-day floor; 15 (27%) do not, including 6 (11%) that fall under 30 days, the Nonprofit Finance Fund's cash-crisis threshold.
- Context: the Nonprofit Finance Fund's 2025 State of the Nonprofit Sector Survey found 52% of nonprofits nationally hold three months of cash or less, and 18% hold one month or less. This cohort compares favorably to that national picture.
- 29 organizations sit at or above the NORI six-month reserve target, but 10 of those exceed two years of cash on hand and are endowment-style entities whose balances reflect investment holdings rather than true operating reserves.

Two distinct fragility profiles, with opposite remedies

- Grant-dependent small and mid-size organizations are typically contribution-funded, often with a recent deficit year, and their income is subject to shifts in donor behavior and other external trends. Strategic collaboration could help these organizations diversify revenue and build more sustainable growth.

- Fee-for-service institutions at \$10M and above hold limited days of cash on hand but carry reserves in investments. Their core sustainability risk lies in reimbursement mechanics and the cash-flow effects that follow, not in a lack of underlying assets.

Smaller-organization liquidity is slow to build and easy to erase:

- 36 of 76 organizations (47%) operate under \$250K, where even a best-practice 3 to 5% annual surplus yields only \$3,000 to \$12,000 a year. Meaningful reserves are difficult to build and slow to accumulate at this scale.
- Median cash cushion by scale: \$29K for organizations under \$100K; \$115K for organizations between \$100K and \$250K; \$238K for organizations between \$250K and \$1M.
- These figures produce strong liquidity ratios on paper, but at these organizational scales, the median cash cushion could be erased by a single significant payment delay, capital expense, or legal claim.

Data Sources and Notes

- IRS Form 990 and 990-EZ data via ProPublica's Nonprofit Explorer (latest available year, generally 2023 to 2025, reflecting an 18 to 24 month reporting lag)
- IRS Business Master File (March 2026)
- Public budgets and documented estimates for organizations that do not file a 990
- Benchmarks drawn from the Nonprofit Finance Fund (Top Indicators; 2025 State of the Nonprofit Sector Survey), the NORI Operating Reserve Policy Toolkit, AICPA/CPA Journal (2019), and BBB Wise Giving Alliance Standards. Full detail is available in the companion workbook (v6.6) and its accompanying Reader's Guide.

Background Analysis: 2024 Adams County United Way Needs Assessment Review

The United Way of Adams County Community Needs Assessment serves as the foundation for this landscape analysis because it is the most comprehensive, current, and locally validated synthesis of community need available for Adams County. Produced collaboratively by United Way, Blessing Health, and the Adams County Health Department with input from community organizations, it carries broad institutional support and reflects a multi-sector perspective no single source could replicate. A landscape analysis of nonprofit capacity is only meaningful when viewed against the needs the sector exists to address. The Needs Assessment establishes the demand side of the equation.

Using an independently produced, community-validated assessment also ensures that need data was not selected or framed to support predetermined conclusions, grounding the analysis in what the community already knows about itself. Finally, building on existing work rather than duplicating it reflects a commitment to efficiency, directing resources toward the analytical work that does not yet exist.

Areas of Greatest Need

Like most communities, the need picture in Adams County is complex. On the surface, several indicators suggest stability:

- Poverty rate holds at 12% (near the state average)
- Health outcomes track close to the state average
- Insurance coverage is high

The fuller picture emerges when looking at ALICE data. ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed and captures households that earn above the federal poverty line but still cannot meet basic living costs. In Adams County, 27% of households fall into the ALICE category and another 12% live below the poverty line, meaning nearly 4 in 10 households cannot reliably cover basic needs.

The burden is not evenly distributed:

- Single-female-headed households are the hardest hit, with 74% falling below the ALICE threshold
- Adults 65 and older follow at 53%
- People under 25 at 47%
- In Quincy Township specifically, 46% of households fall below the threshold

This is the economic reality that nonprofit organizations are working within every day. Against that backdrop, four areas of unmet need stand out as particularly acute:

- **Behavioral health** services are operating beyond capacity, a finding confirmed by Transitions of Western Illinois in its own community needs assessment
- **Childcare** represents the sharpest gap in the data, with a 57% deficit in available slots meaning 2,069 children of working parents have no childcare option
- **Housing** is under significant strain, with 1,590 new units projected as needed by 2033 and 83% of local stakeholders reporting that affordable inventory is already inadequate
- **Food insecurity** affects 12.8% of the population, with more than 1 in 4 residents reporting they could not afford enough food or nutritionally balanced meals

Mission Area Concentration

The Needs Assessment reveals where organized community attention is already focused. Behavioral health, housing, and poverty are the three formal Community Building Council (CBC) priority areas, each with dedicated solution teams and named organizational leads. This means those three areas already have cross-sector coordination infrastructure in place. This raises two questions:

- Does the nonprofit sector's organizational activity mirror that three-priority structure?
- Are organizations working outside those three areas (i.e.: youth development, education support, and older adult services) less networked as a result?

One population in particular warrants closer attention. Adults 65 and older now represent 21% of Adams County residents, and this group carries the highest rate of financial hardship in the county at 53%. Yet aging services do not appear among the CBC's three formal priority areas, raising the question of whether organizations serving older adults are proportionally represented in the sector and adequately connected to broader community coordination efforts.

Gaps and Overlaps

Childcare presents the clearest capacity gap in the data. Of the 3,615 children of working parents who need care, 2,069 have no available slot, a 57% deficit. Notably, the shortage is not the result of reduced demand but of provider attrition, with 334 licensed slots lost since 2020. This is a systemic failure that no single organization can solve on its own and a strong candidate for collaborative intervention.

Behavioral health tells a different story. Multiple organizations are active in this space:

- Transitions of Western Illinois
- Clarity Healthcare
- Bella Ease
- SIU Medicine
- Blessing Health

Yet demand exceeds the combined capacity of all of them. Transitions' own application to become a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic explicitly flagged insufficient capacity and service gaps. This is a space where both overlap and coordination questions apply, not because organizations are duplicating effort unnecessarily, but because the need is large enough that even a crowded field is not enough.

Three additional populations are served by existing organizations in the sector, but the current level of capacity and coverage falls short of the scale of need:

- **Older adults** are served by Good Samaritan Home, Sunset Senior Living, West Central Illinois Aging and Disability Resource Center, and others, but this is the fastest growing age cohort in the county, it carries the highest ALICE rate at 53%, and the two largest organizations serving it are running operating deficits.
- **Rural township residents** can access some services through organizations like Community for Christ Assistance Center and Action Brown County, but several townships with ALICE rates between 37% and 45% have limited local infrastructure, and transportation barriers documented in the Needs Assessment make Quincy-based services harder to reach.
- **Middle years youth** are served by schools, youth development organizations, and faith-based programs, but Illinois Youth Survey data on bullying, persistent sadness and hopelessness, and time spent alone points to unmet need that the current organizational landscape is not fully absorbing

In each case the question is not whether the sector cares about these populations, but whether it has sufficient capacity and geographic reach to meet the need.

Representation and Reach

The Needs Assessment names who is at the table quite specifically through its CBC membership lists. Blessing Health, the Adams County Health Department, and United Way are the co-producers of the assessment and the structural anchors of the CBC. The following organizations have representation on the full CBC:

- Advocacy Network for Children
- American Red Cross
- Bella Ease
- Blessing Health
- Cheerful Home

- Clarity Healthcare
- Community Foundation
- Cornerstone Foundations for Families
- Early Childhood and Family Center
- Great River Economic Development Foundation
- Horizons
- Horizons Addicts Victorious
- John Wood Community College
- Moorman Foundation
- Quincy Family YMCA
- Quincy Housing Authority
- Quincy Medical Group
- Quincy Public Schools
- Quincy University
- Regional Office of Education
- Retired Senior Volunteer Program
- Salvation Army
- Scouting America
- SIU Medicine
- Transitions of Western Illinois
- Trinity Church
- Two Rivers Regional Council of Public Officials
- United Way of Adams County
- Veterans Assistance Commission
- West Central Child Care Connection
- Workforce Development
- Young Life
- YWCA

Organizations absent from the CBC membership lists are worth exploring further, though absence alone does not tell us much. It may reflect a different organizational focus, capacity constraints, or simply that an invitation has not been extended.

What the data does support is an intentional next step, one that begins with a simple but important question: whose voice is missing at the table? As the sector considers how collaboration might be structured going forward, it will be important to reach beyond the organizations already embedded in the CBC structure. Building a broader, more inclusive community table takes time and energy, but it produces stronger trust and a more accurate picture of what the sector can collectively do.

Because smaller organizations are typically stretched thin, outreach should be strategic, respectful of their time, and clear about why their participation matters, not just to this project, but to the future of nonprofit collaboration in Adams County.

Collaboration History

The Needs Assessment itself is a collaboration artifact: United Way, Blessing Health, and the Adams County Health Department have been co-producing this assessment since 2001. The CBC structure, now in its third iteration with three active solution teams, represents the most visible existing collaboration infrastructure in the county.

What the Needs Assessment ultimately reveals is a community that already knows a great deal about its needs and has built meaningful infrastructure to address them. The CBC represents more than two decades of sustained cross-sector commitment, and that is no small thing.

What it also reveals is that the edges of that infrastructure matter as much as its center. Sustained collaboration rarely grows from broad consensus alone. It builds from early movers who take on a visible project, demonstrate what is possible, and in doing so give others a reason to join. A few well-chosen, well-supported collaborative efforts in Adams County could do exactly that, making it easier for organizations currently on the margins of the conversation to see themselves at the table and to understand why their presence there matters. In many ways, the movement has already begun. The CBC is a key part of that collaborative foundation. The question now is how to build on that foundation, widen the circle, and channel the energy that already exists into something the broader sector can see, join, and sustain.

Acknowledgments

This work would not have been possible without the organizations and individuals who welcomed us into the Adams County nonprofit community. Sharing time, insight, and honest reflection on the challenges and opportunities facing this sector is not a small thing, and we are deeply grateful for the trust extended to us throughout this process.

We wish to thank:

- The nonprofit leaders who participated in the June 24 working session, and the members of the Quincy Area Funders Collaborative who participated in the June 25 working session, for their candor and willingness to engage critically with difficult questions.
- The nonprofit sector leaders who gave their time for confidential stakeholder interviews, providing perspective that shaped this report's core findings.
- The executive directors and board chairs who completed the Collaboration Readiness Survey, laying the data foundation for this study.
- **Jean Buckley and Sharon Tweedell**, for their leadership in coordinating stakeholder communications and participant outreach on behalf of QAFC, and for the wisdom and insight they brought to guiding this project throughout
- Catherine Meckes and the Community Foundation of West Central Illinois & Northeast Missouri, for serving as fiscal sponsor and steady partner throughout.

Adams County's nonprofit sector does demanding work with limited resources, and this community opened its doors to a process that asked for honesty about what isn't working, not just what is. That is a meaningful act of trust, and we hope this report honors it.

Invited and Participating Organizations

- #belikeGrace
- Advocacy Network for Children
- Alzheimers Association - Illinois chapter
- American Red Cross - Adams County Chapter
- Arts Quincy
- Bella Ease
- Blessing Foundation
- Camp Point Public Library District
- Care Net Pregnancy Services of Quincy
- Chaddock
- Cheerful Home Association
- City of Quincy
- Clayton Public Library District
- Community for Christ Assistance Center
- Community Foundation of the Quincy Area
- Connect Child and Family Solutions
- Cornerstone: Foundations for Families
- Covered Bottoms Diaper Bank, Inc.

- Dancer Love Foundation
- Fishing for Freedom
- Four Star Public Library District
- Friends of Justice, Quincy, IL
- Friends of the Lorenzo Bull House
- Friends of the Washington Theater
- Girl Scouts of Central Illinois Inc
- Good Samaritan Home of Quincy
- Great Commission Broadcasting
- Great River Development Foundation
- Great River Econ Development Corp
- Great River Teens Encounter Christ
- Hetzler & Associates
- Historical Society of Quincy and Adams County
- Hope House of Quincy
- Horizons Social Services
- Jackson-Lincoln Swimming Complex, Inc.
- John Wood Community College Foundation
- Klingner & Associates
- Mississippi Valley Council No. 141, Scouting America
- Parent & Child Together (PACT) for West Central Illinois
- Parochial Music Organization
- Quanada
- Quincy Area Habitat for Humanity
- Quincy Area Project
- Quincy Art Center
- Quincy Catholic Charities
- Quincy Catholic Elementary Schools (QCES) Foundation
- Quincy Children's Museum
- Quincy Civic Music Association
- Quincy Community Theatre
- Quincy Hope Center
- Quincy Housing Authority
- Quincy Humane Society
- Quincy Notre Dame Foundation
- Quincy Parks Foundation
- Quincy Public Library
- Quincy Public Schools Foundation
- Quincy Society of Fine Arts
- Quincy Symphony Orchestra Association
- Strong Consulting
- Sunset Senior Living
- The Knowledge Center at Chaddock
- The Moorman Foundation
- The PHAST Foundation
- The Quincy Museum, Inc.
- The Quincy Serenity Club, Inc.
- The Salvation Army of Quincy
- The Well House
- Tracy Family Foundation
- Transitions of Western Illinois
- Tri-State Area Center for Women's Ministries
- Two Rivers Council Foundation
- United Way of Adams County
- University of Illinois Extension
- WGCA - Christian radio station
- WGEM TV
- West Central Child Care Connection
- West Central Illinois Aging and Disability Resource Center
- YMCA of West Central Illinois
- Young Life Quincy
- YWCA of Quincy



Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Interview Agenda: Estimated Time: 60 Minutes

Introduction

- Thank for their time
- Purpose of the feasibility study.
 - 6-month feasibility study commissioned by the Quincy Area Funders Collaborative
 - Conducted by Mission + Strategy
 - Four data sources: community needs assessment, nonprofit financial analysis, stakeholder interviews, and a sector-wide survey
 - Focus on Adams County, Illinois nonprofit sector
 - Goal: identify conditions for collaboration, greatest opportunities, and what it would take to build something sustainable
 - Not prescriptive — exploring what is possible, not recommending a predetermined model
- Responses confidential and will be used in aggregate and that no individual organization will be identified by name in the report.
- No right or wrong answers honest perspective is exactly what is needed
- Permission to record only for note taking purposes and qualitative analysis

Questions

- Setting the stage
 - Tell me a little about your role and how it connects to the broader community in Adams County. What brings you into contact with the nonprofit sector and the people it serves? From your vantage point, how well is Adams County's nonprofit sector meeting the needs of the community right now?
 - Nearly 4 in 10 households in Adams County cannot reliably meet basic needs. How does that reality show up in what you see or hear in your work?
 - Are there needs or populations you observe that you feel are not adequately reflected in the community conversation?
- Perspectives on the sector
 - How well does the nonprofit sector reach residents outside of Quincy? What do you observe about the gaps in rural parts of the county?
 - Are there communities or populations you believe are largely invisible to the organizations that exist to serve them? What would it take to change that?
 - What resources, relationships, or conditions do you think the sector most needs to strengthen its long-term sustainability beyond funding?
 - Are there things happening at the city, county, state, or federal level that you think the nonprofit sector is not paying enough attention to?
 - Where do you see genuine coordination happening in Adams County that is producing results? What is making it work?
 - From your perspective, what does it take for organizations in this community to work together effectively? What conditions make that possible?
 - If you could change one thing about how the nonprofit sector in Adams County is structured or how it works together, what would it be?
 - What is the one thing the nonprofit sector could do differently that would most change outcomes for residents in Adams County?
 - If funders and nonprofits and community institutions could agree on one shared priority for the next five years, what do you think it should be — and is that conversation happening?

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

- Closing Questions
 - Is there anything else you would like to share that we have not covered today?
 - Is there anyone else in the sector whose perspective you think would be especially important for us to hear?
- Interview Conclusion
 - Thank them for their time
 - Encourage to reach out if they have any additional thoughts and insights to share.
 - Next Steps
 - Assemble 990 review, survey, working sessions, interviews and review of 2024 United Way Community Needs Assessment into a report to share with the Quincy Area Funders Collaborative.
 - In the fall we will also hold a town hall share the report with the broader nonprofit sector and those that participated in the project.
 - Not telling this community what to do but reflect back to what we are hearing.

Appendix 2: Working Session Agendas

Quincy Area Funders Collaborative

Nonprofit Working Session

June 24, 2026 / 12:30 to 5:00 PM

Quincy Country Club | 24th and State Streets, Quincy

Meeting Goals:

- Ground participants in a shared understanding of key findings from the landscape data and surface what the numbers missed.
- Identify the external opportunities and threats that nonprofit leaders see most clearly from inside their organizations, particularly those that do not show up in data.
- Produce one or more focused challenge statements naming the sector-wide problems that no single organization can solve alone and that greater or more deliberate collaboration could realistically address.
- Generate a concrete, ambitious vision for what becomes possible for Adams County residents when organizations work together more deliberately and at greater scale, whether by deepening existing partnerships or building new ones.

Agenda:

Time	Item	Who
12:30 PM	Lunch and Welcome • Welcome and Why We Are Here • Brief Introductions • Activity: One Thing I Wish You Knew - o In pairs, share thoughts to the following prompts: ▪ The thing that has most surprised me about working with other organizations is . . . ▪ If I could hand one operational challenge to a trusted partner tomorrow, it would be . . . ▪ The person or community I worry we are leaving behind is . . .	Jean & Sharon Greg & Judie
1:15 PM	Context for the Day	Greg & Judie
1:20 PM	Framing the Conversation: What the Community Needs Assessment and the Quincy Area Collaboration Survey Reveals.	Greg & Judie
1:35 PM	Force Field Analysis: Using the worksheet provided, individually complete response to the following prompt • What would it take for organizations in Adams County to work together in ways that produce outcomes none could achieve alone? - o On the left side, write down the forces you see working toward that possibility. - o On the right side, write down the forces working against it.	Greg & Judie

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Appendix 2: Working Session Agendas

Time	Item	Who
1:45PM	World Café: A Twist on the SWOT Analysis: Participants will be divided into 4 groups and rotate as a group through 4 stations building on what the previous groups have shared. Table 1: Funding and External Environment <i>What is shifting in the landscape outside organizations' control?</i> This table looks outward at the forces shaping the sector that no single organization controls but every organization feels. - The funding environment is shifting at the federal, state, and philanthropic levels. What does that mean for this sector, and which community needs are most at risk if resources contract? - What is coming that this sector is not yet paying enough attention to, and what becomes harder to address the longer it waits? Table 2: Organizational Capacity and Relationships <i>What does it actually take to collaborate, and what gets in the way?</i> This table goes beneath the surface of readiness into what collaboration actually requires in practice and what the real obstacles are when organizations try to work together. - If you were designing the conditions for a successful collaboration in Adams County from scratch, what would you make sure was in place before anyone signed on? - What would a sector that trusted itself enough to collaborate deeply look like, and how far is Adams County from that? Table 3: Community Need and Gaps <i>What does the community actually need, and where is the sector falling short?</i> This table asks why gaps in service persist, who is being left out, and what it would take to close them. - Adams County has the ingredients that many communities are still trying to assemble including experienced organizations and funders who are genuinely engaged. What would it take to leverage all of this in a way that moves the most persistent challenges from managed to solved? - What is the one thing about how this sector is structured, resourced, or supported that if changed would most strengthen the long-term health and sustainability of the organizations doing this work? Table 4: What We're Not Saying <i>The honest conversation the sector needs to have.</i> This table creates space for the things that don't fit in formal settings the dynamics, tensions, and observations that shape how the sector actually works but rarely surface out loud. - Organizations of different sizes, ages, and resources bring different things to a collaboration and face different risks. What would it take to build partnerships in this sector that are genuinely equitable and sustainable for everyone involved?	Greg&Judie

Appendix 2: Working Session Agendas

Time	Item	Who
	If this sector were to come together around a shared challenge in a meaningful way, what conditions would need to be in place for every organization, regardless of size or influence, to have a seat at the table?	
2:45PM	Break	
3:00PM	Drafting Challenge Statements - In same small groups, draft a brief challenge statement that answers: - What is the most important problem this sector needs to solve together and why does it matter? - When you look at the challenges your organization keeps running into year after year, which ones feel like they might actually be sector-wide problems in disguise?	Greg & Judie
3:45PM	Developing a Vision - Guided Imagery Activity - Participants share responses in pairs - Then find another dyad to identify themes and create a draft vision statement for the community	Greg & Judie
4:45PM	Closing - What is one takeaway from today? - Next Steps	Greg & Judie

Appendix 2: Working Session Agendas

Quincy Area Funders Collaborative

Funders Working Session

June 25, 2026 | 8:30 to 11:30AM

Community Foundation Main Conference Room | 621 Vermont St., Quincy, IL

Meeting Goals:

- Ground participants in key themes and insights from the nonprofit working session held the previous day.
- Identify the external opportunities and threats that funders see from their vantage point, including any warning signs of sector stress that organizations may not be naming publicly.
- Produce one or more focused challenge statements naming the sector-wide problems that collaboration could realistically address.
- Generate a funder-informed vision for what the sector could achieve through deeper collaboration, and identify what funders could do differently to create more room for it.

Agenda:

Time	Item	Who
8:30AM	Welcome	Judie & Greg
8:35AM	Context for the Day	Judie & Greg
8:40AM	Reflections for the Nonprofit Session • What resonates? • What is surprising? • What confirms or challenges your assumptions?	Judie & Greg
9:00AM	Framing the Conversation: What the Community Needs Assessment and the Quincy Area Collaboration Survey Reveals.	Judie & Greg
9:15AM	Force Field Analysis: Using the worksheet provided, individually complete response to the following prompt • What would it take for organizations in Adams County to work together in ways that produce outcomes none could achieve alone? • Activity Sheet ○ Left side, write down the forces you see working toward that possibility; the conditions, relationships, resources, or momentum that already exist and could be built on. ○ Right side, write down the forces working against it; the obstacles, constraints, or dynamics that would need to be addressed for deeper collaboration to take root. ○ There are no right answers. This is your thinking, so whatever you right is true.	Judie & Greg

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Appendix 2: Working Session Agendas

Time	Item	Who
9:25AM	Gallery Walk: A Twist on the SWOT Analysis Four large sheets of paper, one for each topic are posted around the room. Participants move through the room at own pace, reading what is posted and adding thoughts to the flip chart paper. Table 1: Funding and External Environment <i>What is shifting in the landscape outside organizations' control?</i> This table looks outward at the forces shaping the sector that no single organization controls but every organization feels. • The funding environment is shifting at the federal, state, and philanthropic levels. What does that mean for this sector, and which community needs are most at risk if resources contract? • What is coming that this sector is not yet paying enough attention to, and what becomes harder to address the longer it waits? Table 2: Organizational Capacity and Relationships <i>What does it actually take to collaborate, and what gets in the way?</i> This table goes beneath the surface of readiness into what collaboration actually requires in practice and what the real obstacles are when organizations try to work together. • If you were designing the conditions for a successful collaboration in Adams County from scratch, what would you make sure was in place before anyone signed on? • What would a sector that trusted itself enough to collaborate deeply look like, and how far is Adams County from that? Table 3: Community Need and Gaps <i>What does the community actually need, and where is the sector falling short?</i> This table asks why gaps in service persist, who is being left out, and what it would take to close them. • Adams County has the ingredients that many communities are still trying to assemble including experienced organizations and funders who are genuinely engaged. What would it take to leverage all of this in a way that moves the most persistent challenges from managed to solved? • What is the one thing about how this sector is structured, resourced, or supported that if changed would most strengthen the long-term health and sustainability of the organizations doing this work? Table 4: What We're Not Saying <i>The honest conversation the sector needs to have.</i> This table creates space for the things that don't fit in formal settings the dynamics, tensions, and observations that shape how the sector actually works but rarely surface out loud. • Organizations of different sizes, ages, and resources bring different things to a collaboration and face different risks. What would it take to build partnerships in this sector that are genuinely equitable and sustainable for everyone involved?	Judie&Greg

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Appendix 2: Working Session Agendas

Time	Item	Who
	If this sector were to come together around a shared challenge in a meaningful way, what conditions would need to be in place for every organization, regardless of size or influence, to have a seat at the table?	
10:00AM	Break	
10:10AM	Drafting Challenge Statements - In two small groups, draft a brief challenge statement that answers: - What is the most important problem this sector needs to solve together and why does it matter? - When you look at the challenges organizations keeps running into year after year, which ones feel like they might actually be sector-wide problems in disguise?	Judie & Greg
10:40AM	Developing a Vision - Guided Imagery Activity - Participants share responses in pairs - Then find another dyad with which to share out	Judie & Greg
11:20AM	Closing - One takeaway or insight from today? - Next Steps	Judie & Greg

Appendix 3: Survey Results

Full Survey Results

Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Forty-nine individuals completed the survey (36% response rate). Response counts and percentages below reflect the number of respondents who answered each individual question; not every respondent answered every question, so totals vary by table. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may not sum exactly to 100%.

Organizational Challenges

Q1: Greatest Challenge Limiting Organizational Capacity (Top-Ranked Response)

49 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Challenge	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Staff capacity and burnout	19	39%
Facilities or physical infrastructure	9	18%
Staff recruitment and retention	5	10%
Board recruitment and governance	4	8%
Volunteer recruitment and retention	4	8%
Communications and marketing visibility	4	8%
Leadership transitions / succession planning	2	4%
Government/agency compliance requirements	1	2%
Technology and data systems	1	2%
Total	49	100%

Community Coordination and Collaboration

Q3: Current Level of Coordination Among Nonprofits

48 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Some coordination, pockets of collaboration but not consistent	22	46%
Strong coordination, communicating regularly and aligning work	14	29%
Limited coordination, organizations working independently	8	17%
Not sure / limited visibility into peer organizations	4	8%
Total	48	100%

Appendix 3: Survey Results

Q4: Sector Where Collaboration Is Most Urgently Needed

49 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Housing and homelessness	13	27%
Youth development and education	10	20%
Mental health and substance use	9	18%
Workforce development and economic mobility	6	12%
Aging and disability services	4	8%
Food security and nutrition	3	6%
Housing, Hunger, and Health	1	2%
I don't know / not knowledgeable	1	2%
Animal welfare	1	2%
Arts, culture, and community enrichment	1	2%
Total	49	100%

Q5: Primary Driver Making Collaboration Most Urgent

49 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Organizations working independently; gaps in service continuum	16	33%
Workforce would benefit from greater stability and coordination	8	16%
Organizations competing for same clients and funding	7	14%
Partnership could strengthen ability to attract philanthropic investment	6	12%
Shared space or facilities could reduce overhead	2	4%
Shared administrative infrastructure could free resources for direct service	2	4%
Other / unique write-in response	8	16%
Total	49	100%

Appendix 3: Survey Results

Prior Experience with Sustained Collaboration

Q6: Has Your Organization Ever Participated in a Sustained Collaboration?

49 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Yes, currently active	21	43%
No, we have not pursued this strategy	16	33%
No, but we have explored the idea	7	14%
Yes, in the past but not currently	5	10%
Total	49	100%

Q7: How Long Has/Did the Collaboration Last?

26 respondents with collaboration experience | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
More than 5 years	9	35%
3 to 5 years	8	31%
1 to 2 years	8	31%
Less than 1 year	1	4%
Total	26	100%

Q8: Overall Outcome of Most Significant Sustained Collaboration

28 respondents with collaboration experience | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Very successful. Exceeded our goals.	11	39%
Mostly successful. Met our goals.	9	32%
Mixed results. Met some goals but not others.	8	29%
Total	28	100%

Appendix 3: Survey Results

Q9: Primary Reason a Past Sustained Collaboration Concluded

13 respondents whose collaboration has ended | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Lack of formal structure, agreements, or accountability	4	31%
Funding ended or resources no longer available	3	23%
Power imbalances or inequities in the relationship	2	15%
Leadership or staff changes at one or both organizations	1	8%
Breakdown in communication or trust	1	8%
Mission drift / priorities diverged over time	1	8%
Achieved shared goals; work was completed	1	8%
Total	13	100%

Familiarity with Sustained Collaboration as a Strategy

Q10: How Much Has Leadership Learned About Sustained Collaboration?

49 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Moderately. Read articles, attended relevant workshops.	16	33%
Some. Conversations but limited formal learning.	15	31%
Very little. Largely new territory for us.	15	31%
Extensively. Studied models, frameworks, and case studies.	3	6%
Total	49	100%

Appendix 3: Survey Results

Q11: Has Sustained Collaboration Been Discussed with the Board?

49 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Come up informally, not discussed at length	19	39%
Has not come up in board meetings	18	37%
Formal agenda item with substantive discussion	10	20%
Not sure	2	4%
Total	49	100%

Q12: Has Sustained Collaboration Been Discussed with Staff?

48 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
With senior leadership only	19	40%
Has not been discussed	14	29%
Across multiple levels and departments	11	23%
Not sure	4	8%
Total	48	100%

Q13: Greatest Internal Barrier to Sustained Collaboration

48 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Staff capacity and bandwidth	14	29%
Lack of clarity on what collaboration would look like	13	27%
Funding, no dedicated resources for collaboration work	8	17%
Organizational culture, tend to work independently	8	17%
Other	5	10%
Total	48	100%

Appendix 3: Survey Results

Readiness for Sustained Collaboration

L1: Sustained collaborations align with our organization's mission and values.

48 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Strongly Agree	19	40%
Agree	19	40%
Neutral	7	15%
I don't know / Haven't considered	2	4%
Disagree	1	2%
Total	48	100%

L2: Our leadership trusts that potential partners would uphold shared commitments.

48 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Strongly Agree	13	27%
Agree	17	35%
Neutral	12	25%
Disagree	4	8%
I don't know / Haven't considered	2	4%
Total	48	100%

L3: We have a clear governance structure that would not be a source of confusion in shared work.

48 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Strongly Agree	11	23%
Agree	20	42%
Neutral	8	17%
Disagree	5	10%
Strongly Disagree	2	4%
I don't know / Haven't considered	2	4%
Total	48	100%

Appendix 3: Survey Results

L4: Our board has, or could be prepared to allocate, the time, funding, and resources needed.
48 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Strongly Agree	8	17%
Agree	12	25%
Neutral	12	25%
Disagree	9	19%
Strongly Disagree	2	4%
I don't know / Haven't considered	5	10%
Total	48	100%

L5: Our staff team has sufficient capacity and the right systems to participate meaningfully.
48 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Strongly Agree	4	8%
Agree	13	27%
Neutral	14	29%
Disagree	10	21%
Strongly Disagree	4	8%
I don't know / Haven't considered	3	6%
Total	48	100%

L6: We have an organizational culture where people can raise concerns or challenge ideas.
49 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Strongly Agree	21	43%
Agree	24	49%
Neutral	2	4%
Strongly Disagree	1	2%
I don't know / Haven't considered	1	2%
Total	49	100%

Appendix 3: Survey Results

L7: Our organization consistently holds itself accountable and follows through on decisions.
49 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Strongly Agree	27	55%
Agree	13	27%
Neutral	6	12%
Disagree	3	6%
Total	49	100%

L8: We collaborate effectively across board, staff, and departments to solve problems together.
49 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Strongly Agree	16	33%
Agree	23	47%
Neutral	6	12%
Disagree	3	6%
I don't know / Haven't considered	1	2%
Total	49	100%

L9: Our organization has a genuine culture of self-reflection and views change as an opportunity.
49 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Strongly Agree	15	31%
Agree	21	43%
Neutral	9	18%
Disagree	3	6%
I don't know / Haven't considered	1	2%
Total	49	100%

Appendix 3: Survey Results

L10: Our organization has strong, trusting relationships with peer nonprofits in our community.
49 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Strongly Agree	17	35%
Agree	24	49%
Neutral	7	14%
I don't know / Haven't considered	1	2%
Total	49	100%

L11: We are seen by others in the sector as a reliable, accountable, and collaborative partner.
49 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Strongly Agree	18	37%
Agree	20	41%
Neutral	6	12%
Disagree	2	4%
I don't know / Haven't considered	3	6%
Total	49	100%

Long-Term Sustainability

Q25: Long-Term Financial Sustainability Orientation
49 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Sustainability Orientation	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Actively exploring new approaches	18	37%
Focused on growing current funding streams	17	35%
Questioning current structure or business model	9	18%
No serious strategic conversation yet	4	8%
Open to structural collaboration as part of our future	1	2%
Total	49	100%

Appendix 3: Survey Results

Demographics

Budget Size

48 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
\$251,000 to \$999,999	18	38%
Under \$250,000	12	25%
\$1,000,000 to \$2,999,999	12	25%
\$3,000,000 and above	6	12%
Total	48	100%

Staff Size

49 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Medium; 3.5 to 10 FTEs	16	33%
Small; 1 to 3 FTEs	14	29%
Large; 10.5+ FTEs	13	27%
Volunteer run; No paid staff	6	12%
Total	49	100%

Years in Operation

47 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
More than 50 years	23	49%
21 to 50 years	12	26%
6 to 10 years	5	11%
11 to 20 years	5	11%
3 to 5 years	2	4%
Total	47	100%

Appendix 3: Survey Results

Survey Respondent Role

46 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Executive Director / CEO	35	76%
Board Chair	11	24%
Total	46	100%

Years in Current Role

47 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
3 to 5 years	16	34%
More than 10 years	11	23%
6 to 10 years	8	17%
1 to 2 years	8	17%
Less than 1 year	4	9%
Total	47	100%

Organization Location

47 respondents | Quincy Area Funders Collaborative Collaboration Readiness Survey, 2026

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Quincy	38	81%
Adams County (outside of Quincy)	7	15%
Other	2	4%
Total	47	100%