



Top Ten Issues

Based on the Advisory Committee Interviews
and Chamber of Commerce Surveys
October 2020

These top ten issues were identified through the outreach that was conducted in the summer of 2020, during the start of the pandemic: 1) Inconsistent guidance 2) Broadband availability 3) Restaurants 4) Lodging and hospitality 5) Healthcare 6) Accessing funds 7) PPE reserves 8) Emergency plans 9) Remote education 10) Rural areas.

The list below provides a bulleted summary of these top ten issues that still need to be addressed. The bulleted summary is based on the interview responses and is supported by recent data (in bold). Click on the Issue headings to see detailed interview responses about the topic.

Issue 1: Inconsistent guidance

- **Arkansas is divided 8 television markets 5 of these markets receive broadcasts from out of state including 21 counties in the south, north-central, and eastern parts of the state. Leading to conflicting information in some counties in the state.** (Source: [Harvard, 2013 Large DMA Map](#))
- Different, sometimes conflicting, guidance from different levels of government and different jurisdictions
 - e.g. Residents in Arkansas getting Texas, Louisiana, or Missouri information;
 - Businesses having employees from other states with different rules
- In Northwest Arkansas, there were communication issues with the Marshallese populations due to existing distrust of government and their close-knit nature. They have been significantly impacted by the coronavirus

Issue 3: Restaurants

- **In June, Food Services and Drinking Places taxable sales were down 4% from June 2019; in April, taxable sales were down 22.8% from April 2019** (source: *Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration*)
- Restaurants were commonly the hardest hit in most communities; had to adapt to stay afloat

Issue 4: Lodging and hospitality

- **In June, Accommodation taxable sales were down 40.9% from June 2019; In April, taxable sales were down 66.8% from April 2019** (Source: *Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration*)
- Many lodging and tourism travel were not eligible for PPP loans, making closures even harder.
- In Northwest and West Central Arkansas, some communities' economies rely heavily on tourism, so COVID's impact shows that they need to diversify their economy.

Issue 5: Healthcare

- **Hospitals are estimated to face a net impact by the end of the State's fiscal year of \$779,040,000, subtracting relief funding that impact is estimated as a net loss of \$615,000,000. Incremental costs to hospitals through April were estimated at \$34,850,000. Outpatient and Emergency Department visitation by late March was reduced by 35% and 47% respectively compared to last year. The interruptions in services cost an estimated \$271,090,000 by the end of April.** (Source: AHA COVID-19 Interim Financial Impact Study, 2020)
- **Some hospitals report ED volume returning to normal as of mid-June** (Source: Interview conducted with Mercy Health by AEDI)
- Shutting down elective procedures has resulted in significant revenue losses
- Even after elective procedures could be taken again, people were scared to get healthcare needs, furthering the revenue losses and worsening people's health
- Worries that all hospital resources will be exhausted and they won't be able to care for the sick
- Many hospitals were already "in the hole" before COVID began
- Some clinics didn't have the IT capabilities to transition to telemedicine
- Difficulties with testing overload or not having fast and reliable rapid testing

Issue 6: Accessing funds

- Short and changing time frames, limited funding were barriers for small businesses
- Particular types of businesses (nonprofits, tourism, realtors) could not qualify for assistance

Issue 7: PPE reserves

- **Request for PPE from the state have trended down since mid-May. But cost and availability continue to be issues. Distribution to facilities of state provided PPE by the Arkansas Medical Society: 4/9 122, 4/21 202, 5/12 130, 5/22 452, 6/23 184, 6/29 130, and 7/28 243. The AMS currently still has about 200 pending request for PPE.** (Source: Interview with Arkansas Medical Society by AEDI)
- PPE is expensive to obtain

Issue 8: Emergency plans

- Most governments had emergency plans, but many businesses and organizations did not
- For those that did have emergency plans, the plans usually did not include a pandemic component. For those that did, they may have only included how to shut down but not how to resume operations/business continuity/recovery
- Some feel that the plans they do have are ineffective

Issue 9: Remote education

- Revenue is down in programs that are fee-based
- Issues like food insecurity among students and at-risk populations is a concern

Issue 10: Rural areas

- Rural areas struggle in many aspects, such as resources, healthcare, and broadband
- However, one respondent noted that small communities in their region has had better than expected sales tax numbers

Anticipated Issues

The following issues have not come up as a major area of concern for communities or organizations yet, but, based on responses from our outreach and national trends, these issues may arise as the pandemic continues:

- Housing (rent, mortgage, and utility payments; home sales)
- Transportation (budgets; public transportation; walking and biking)
 - o **Ozark Regional Transit and Fort Smith Transit report that currently their ridership is down 52% and 57%, respectively** (Source: *Ozark Regional Transit August 2020 Operating Statistics; Fort Smith Transit August 2020 Passenger Data*)
 - o **Clinton National Airport, Northwest Arkansas National Airport, Fort Smith Regional Airport each reported 57% fewer passengers in July 2020 compared to July 2019** (Source: *Bill and Hillary Clinton National Airport, Air Service Activity Reports; Northwest Arkansas National Airport, Airport Traffic Reports; Fort Smith Regional Airport, Passenger Activity Reports*)
- Tax payments and delinquencies

The following pages contain some more detailed responses from committee members and chamber directors about the identified top ten issues. These statements are not exhaustive, but are meant to capture the range of different responses across all regions.

Issue 1: Inconsistent Guidance

“One problem has been the lack of congruity among local, state and federal expectations...The biggest challenge has been human behavior, compliance with masking, physical distancing. It is tough to keep 10,000 employees and untold number of patients and visitors compliant with these behaviors.” – *Statewide Committee Member, Healthcare category*

“Knowledge of facts going forward and not hearsay, rumors or scare tactics creating hysteria is what we need and operate on or continue to operate as normal an economy as possible within the realms of the facts. And those facts are different in each and every community and County. We must find a way to deal with this on a more localized level and not shut down a County, state, or country because of what “might” happen and is happening somewhere else.” – *NWAEDD Committee member, Local Government category*

“Paranoia that there is an alternative agenda and that COVID issue has been overstated and isn't real.” – *NWAEDD Committee member, Nonprofit category*

[‘What kind of problems have you encountered in complying with measures related to closures and social distancing?’] “Inconsistency in state Executive Orders and mandates from the Governor and Department of Health. Lack of support at municipal and county level. Confusion from federal to state level. Debacle with unemployment insurance and PPE. Lack of law enforcement is the biggest problem.” – *NWAEDD Committee member, Nonprofit category*

“The problem is all the uncertainty. Things change rapidly at the federal and state levels so you may be told something different tomorrow than you were told today.” – *NWAEDD Committee member, Local Government category*

“If there was a way to remove politics from leading and navigating through this pandemic.” – *NWAEDD Committee member, Local Government category*

“Minority communities were also hit hard especially the Marshallese and Hispanic communities. They culturally do things differently and are tight-knit and cluster oriented...There was a need for messaging that would target these communities and help them understand. The messaging was also problematic if it was coming from a government entity due to their fear and distrust of government.” – *NWAEDD Committee member, Local Government category*

“Inconsistencies regarding activities. Example: Schools can't have organized team practice but non-school travel teams can play/hold tournaments etc.” – *NWAEDD Committee member, Nonprofit category*

“They border Missouri and are getting more media from them but the people want more information from our state and can't seem to get it.” – *NWAEDD Committee member, Local Government category*

“Has felt there has been conflicting information from state and federal sources. Guidance from government has been pretty barren. Felt like they have made it up as they go along. Would be nice to have a clearinghouse of good ideas, assessments from ADEM, governor's office, etc. with recommendations for a resurgence. Everyone is not on the same page about things like mask requirements. Makes it difficult to lead constituents locally on what to do.” – *NWAEDD Committee member, Local Government category*

“Due to Domtar's location, we have employees in 6 counties and 4 states. Each governor and each county or parish had different rules. That meant there wasn't a single standard.” – *SWAPDD Committee member, Industry category*

[‘What would have helped your community deal more effectively with the COVID-19 pandemic?’] “Uniformity in messaging and a reliance on health experts. Everyone needs to be on the same page as much as possible. A unified response from all institutions involved in the crisis is desperately needed. Politicization of the pandemic must be avoided.” – *WCAPDD Committee member, Local Government category*

Issue 2: Broadband availability

['What would have helped your facility deal more effectively with the COVID-19 pandemic?'] "Rural broadband is a major barrier to communicating in the COVID-19 environment." – *Statewide Committee Member, Healthcare category*

"Broadband access and cell signal has been the most difficult. They would be able to adapt to almost everything else if they had reliable internet access. Mountainburg school district, 47% of students do not have internet." – *WAPDD Committee member, Nonprofit category*

Issue 3: Restaurants

“Restaurants were hardest hit, followed by lodging and retail.” – *Statewide Committee member, Local Government category*

“Restaurants have taken a hard hit, especially those who were not designed for take-out or otherwise unable to open under ADH guidelines due to lack of space or the ability to make a profit under capacity restrictions continue to struggle.” – *Statewide Committee member, State Government category*

“We have also felt the financial impact on our community in that when the eating establishments closed, it caused a shortage on what was available in the market place as well as cut back on our tax revenue.” – *CAPDD Committee member, Local Government category*

“As in most places the hardest hit businesses were dine-in restaurants. Small retail did better. We have no restaurant closures, everyone has cut expenses and are hanging on.” – *WCAPDD Committee member, Local Government category*

[‘What has been the most difficult aspect of coping with the COVID-19 pandemic?’]

“Mandatory closing of businesses and trying to open them back up, restaurants specifically, small ones can hardly open their dining rooms. Tourism, lodging.” – *WAPDD Committee member, Local Government category*

“Restaurants having difficulties procuring the needed meats and produce for their menu. Restaurants still continue having difficulties getting the needed PPE and cleaning supplies. Cleaning companies having a huge increase in demand.” – *WAPDD Committee member, Local Government category*

“Searcy has many restaurants, so felt most impact on them.” – *WRAPDD Committee member, Local Government category*

Issue 4: Lodging / Hospitality

“All industries have been hit pretty hard – certainly educational institutions and medical service providers. However, from what I've seen, the hospitality industry has suffered the greatest. Most hotels, airlines, and other travel and tourism-related sectors were not eligible for PPP loans or small business grants provided by the state, and continue to suffer due to lack of demand.” – *Statewide Committee member, State Government category*

“They need to know where resources are to handle this because businesses don't have reserves for this length of time. The economy needs to be more diversified. The goal is to be 70/30 tourism to non-tourism. When something like this happens and you only have on industry putting money into the economy then it is really hard. The area is prime for a gig economy because people are moving in and could work remotely from there but there is a lack of broadband access that make this challenging.” – *NWAEDD Committee, Nonprofit Category*

“Another prominently impacted industry was the hotel/motel industry...When you don't have festivals, events, sporting events, and less airport traffic you see no business at the hotels/motels.” – *NWAEDD Committee member, Local Government category*

Issue 5: Healthcare

“To create anticipated capacity needs, we shut down non-time sensitive care. This resulted in large revenue losses. In retrospect, this was not needed. A more point of need approach would have been better.” – *Statewide Committee Member, Healthcare category*

“All non-time sensitive care was stopped for 10 weeks. PPE shortages impacted our procedural areas. Quarantined employees affected staffing. Screening at entry to our campus has created added expense and workflow problems. Our severe restriction on visitors created unhappiness among families, patients and clinicians. Medical decision making was impacted by this.” – *Statewide Committee Member, Healthcare category*

[‘What impact has COVID-19 had on the delivery of medical services in your area?’]
“Slowed it down completely. People were dying at home because they were scared to go to the hospital.” – *CAPDD Committee member, Local Government category*

“We need the assurance that we will be able to receive the needed supplies and testing to adequately meet any possible recurrence. For example, in Saline County there have been 9,711 tests given in a county with a population of about 122,000 people. So only 8% of the county population has been tested. How many positive cases are we missing?” – *CAPDD Committee member, Local Government category*

“Did not impact the ER type services it appears but normal medical office visits & elective services took a big hit even on the patients that needed those services. Financially it was devastating to many clinics but especially the hospital who all have had to draw down considerably any reserve funds to endure the inability to utilize all the services available some to the point of radically reducing any reserves available.” – *NWAEDD Committee member, Local Government category*

[‘What has been the most difficult aspect of coping with the COVID-19 pandemic?’]
“Following the directive of the federal and state officials while keeping the business financially viable. 50% of hospitals are already operating in the red.” – *NWAEDD Committee member, Healthcare category*

“They have to scramble all the time to get gowns and masks that are the right quality. In fact, they are still scrambling. People aren't paying attention or behaving as if we are in a pandemic. It's going to get a lot worse before it gets better. One day we are going to wake up and all hospital resources will be exhausted and we won't be able to care for those who are sick.” – *NWAEDD Committee member, Healthcare category*

“Those [employees] who don't have direct contact with patients are working remotely. They have had some problems with not having enough staff. There are a fair amount furloughed. Some bonuses have been given for those working directly with infected patients...The assistance is never going to make up for losses. Advance payments are payment now for what you will do later so that doesn't offset costs. Grants have been received but haven't offset losses. The industry has been taking a beating for reducing costs for the past 20 years so they are already in the hole then elective procedures were cut out which is where the profit is made.” – *NWAEDD Committee member, Healthcare category*

“The hospital had a testing demand overload while having to release people due to lack of patients in preparation for the COVID-19 influx.” – *NWAEDD Committee member, Local Government category*

“...some clinics lacked the IT capabilities to make a quick transition to telemedicine. We're now back to 80% of pre-COVID capacity. The greatest impact was on the general public, particularly low-wage Tyson workers who were afraid to come in because of COVID and the chance they might miss work. Consequently people with non-COVID conditions often delayed seeking care until their conditions became serious.” – *WCAPDD Committee member, Healthcare category*

“Hospital only used doctor referred tests resulting in a loss of customers, exacerbated by the period that elective surgeries were put on hold and people avoided hospitals for any non-COVID treatments. Small medical clinics dependent on patient visits also suffered. Small specialty clinics had to temporarily close.” – *WCAPDD Committee member, Local Government category*

“...on-going difficulties with acquiring fast and reliable rapid testing. Trying to fulfill promises made by government, particularly about testing, that the current over-stressed testing infrastructure cannot support.” – *WCAPDD Committee member, Healthcare category*

“When the virus first hit we were unable to adequately treat area non-COVID patients due to public fear and the perceived need to prepare the hospital for a potential influx of COVID patients. Initially patients in our area did not receive the level of care required but that has improved. The new challenge will be dealing with the rising level of COVID infections.” – *WCAPDD Committee member, Healthcare category*

Issue 6: Accessing funds

['Have you sought assistance from state or federal sources? What difficulties have you encountered?'] "Yes, especially on federal level. Constant changing dynamics, confusing, almost a paralysis in trying to spend funds. State not as difficult." – *Statewide Committee member, Education category*

"We have received no financial help from the CARES Act. Counties have thus far not been in the mix for that money in Arkansas." – *Statewide Committee member, Local Government category*

"As we currently understand the rules, it is more challenging to spend the CARES Act funds on more general funds associated with the pandemic (i.e. sanitation supplies). Furthermore, even though students enrolled in fully online programs have expenses associated with COVID-19 (i.e. job loss, childcare, etc.), the university is prohibited from awarding CARES Act funds to students enrolled in fully online programs." – *Statewide Committee member, Education category*

"We have received federal CARES Act Funds from the federal government. The biggest difficulty has been lack of consistent guidance on how these funds may be used." – *EAPDD Committee member, Education category*

"Participated in the Small Business Administration's Economic Injury Disaster Loan and AEDC's COVID-19 grant program. They had no difficulties; both were fairly seamless. AEDC money took less than two weeks while the SBA's took a couple of months." – *NWAEDD Committee member, Nonprofit category*

"Federal money helped, though it was offset by state cutbacks by governor related to COVID shortfall." – *SWAPDD Committee member, Education category*

"Several of her clients (small businesses) had trouble getting federal assistance – small time openings, limited funding, the State's SBA program had a short time frame during the first round." – *SWAPDD Committee member, Small Business category*

"Money came, but without instructions." – *SWAPDD Committee member, Local Government category*

"Even though the hospitality industry and cities were particularly hard hit, aid was not forthcoming in any meaningful way. No assistance to hotels, convention centers, or destination-based industries. Hot Springs got only \$250,000 to help with COVID." – *WCAPDD Committee member, Local Government category*

“Our greatest difficulties centered around getting the bonuses to health care employees promised by the state. State paperwork was overly complicated and time consuming. Delays in payment was not appreciated by employees.” – WCAPDD Committee member, Healthcare category

“FEMA, CARES Act, Pre-Paying Medicare have been helpful but nowhere near to making up for the losses incurred.” – WCAPDD Committee member, Healthcare category

“Started well locally. County Judge convened weekly meetings of stakeholders which helped coordinate responses, needs, and concerns. Group was essential to securing supplies and PPE because supplies from FEMA/Feds were less than dependable.” – WCAPDD Committee member, Local Government category

“The expense of acquiring the necessary PPE, making the adjustments to ensure social distancing and student protection, hiring additional personnel and teachers is mind blowing and unthinkable without massive financial assistance.” - WCAPDD Committee member, Local Government category

“The Bank did not apply but helped many businesses acquire loans and financial assistance. For some reason it was particularly hard for realtors and hair salons to get assistance.” – WCAPDD Committee member, Large Business and Manufacturing category

“Senator Cotton’s office has been helpful and reached out to him proactively. SBA not so much, communication is an issue. Had to use credit cards to buy materials which messed with his credit rating so he no longer qualified for loan. Lag was the main reason this happened, but he feels that this probably could not have been helped.” – WAPDD Committee member, Small Businesses category

“Don’t qualify for government loans because we’re a nonprofit. No big fundraiser event this year, so having to come up with new approaches to raise money.” – WAPDD Committee member, Nonprofit category

“State direct and non direct care givers funding- problem with not knowing to check website for new forms and then having to reduce things a couple of times; some issues with certain employees getting mad because they didn’t receive funds - however they don’t qualify b/c of pay grade; some federal funding through Medicare but it didn’t go through her, so she does not have knowledge of that one.” – WRAPDD Committee member, Healthcare category

“...partnered with Shared Work (through the State, meant to help dealing with reduced hours) but it did not work out well – many people have not yet received funds. It's to the point where people are calling their legislators. Shared Work uses the unemployment forms but system keeps kicking people out if they answer correctly in order to apply for Shared Work.” – *WRAPDD Committee member, Healthcare category*

Issue 7: PPE Reserves

“A better supply of PPE and ventilators and confidence in supply chain would have helped avoid some costly mistakes and being taken advantage of by the price gauging behavior we all saw.” – *Statewide Committee Member, Healthcare category*

“The PPE shortage was what affected us the most in the supply chain.” – *EAPDD Committee member, Local Government category*

“Wish federal and state officials would have intervened earlier. We would be better off if they had been more decisive earlier. Having a pipeline to be able to obtain PPE for staff and the right equipment for treating patients instead of having to scramble to buy things. Having a strong and decisive supply chain and strong and decisive regulatory measures.” – *NWAEDD Committee member, Healthcare category*

“They had some issues on how to budget and code COVID versus non-COVID expenses. How much PPE to have on hand at all times? Where to get it? Have a bank of vendors? Does the county need to have a stockpile/pay for it? ... Having a budget for PPE/sanitizer/etc.” – *NWAEDD Committee member, Local Government category*

[‘What kind of problems have you encountered?’] “Some requirements for PPE, social distancing, and hand sanitizers couldn’t be met, which caused some closures among smaller stores, barber stores, etc.” – *SWAPDD Committee member, Nonprofit category*

“The hospital experienced initial shortages of masks and gowns (which has now been rectified).” – *WCAPDD Committee member, Healthcare category*

“Small libraries have issues with social distancing. Some of her libraries are larger and compliance to social distancing hasn’t been an issue. Finding PPE and the cost of PPE and barriers has been expensive.” – *WAPDD Committee member, Nonprofit category*

“Financial assistance for PPE would help because not just for office but would be shared with community business who are struggling to get PPE because of finances.” – *WAPDD Committee member, Nonprofit category*

Issue 8: Emergency Plans

['Does the state have a disaster preparedness/recovery plan? If so, did it help with the state's/district response to the COVID-19 pandemic?'] "Yes, but nowhere near the level of detail that is needed for a pandemic such as COVID-19." – *Statewide Committee member, State Government category*

"The university has a pandemic policy that is part of its emergency response plan. However, the policy focuses more on shutting down and less on how to maintain or resume operations. In hindsight, it would have been ideal to address business continuity within the pandemic policy so that fewer items would have to be decided upon during a pandemic. There are other obvious items: more continuity planning, a stockpile of PPE and sanitation supplies, better technology to support virtual business processes, etc." – *Statewide Committee member, Education category*

['Does your community have a disaster preparedness/recovery plan?'] "No...We officially need both a hazard mitigation plan and emergency action plan." – *CAPDD Committee member, Local Government category*

"We did not have one that addressed this type of emergency. However, we were able to adapt the plan to fit the situation." – *CAPDD Committee member, Local Government category*

"Yes, we have a County wide EOP. I think the recovery/re-opening has become a slow and gradual process since we have not been severely impacted with the virus that much of our EOP has not needed to be put into action. Another reason it has not been a big part of the activity and/or recovery is this is something beyond what is normally planned for in an EOP. We for the most part are speaking of natural disasters, (i.e. floods, fires, tornado's, etc.) so it did not really address what has been happening. That coupled with the fact we never really had a disaster here outside of closings trying to slow the spread and it has been a gradual re-opening. It is not something that we need huge teams to address issues but did a fly by the pants shutdowns and opening a little at a time. The only time we really utilized the EOP was for a large testing event where we had marshalled the forces and contacts of all departments needed, including volunteers to pull it off without a hitch and with good success." – *NWAEDD Committee member, Local Government category*

"Yes [we have a crisis management team], but they are for handling a different kind of crisis that has an immediate need like a tornado or fire. This crisis is a day to day crisis that extends for a long period of time and is more uneventful since people are in isolation." – *NWAEDD Committee member, Education category*

“[Our disaster recovery plan] helped in part because [COVID] is considered a chemical and biological attack that caused folks to stay home. Thus, we just used that as our template...Planning on extending the plan beyond its current base to be more inclusive.” – *SWAPDD Committee member, Education category*

“Most small businesses don't and probably won't have [an emergency management plan]. Main lessons: more cash reserves and increased savings would really assist small businesses in future disasters. Large businesses have emergency plans and I'm sure they were helpful.” – *WCAPDD Committee member, Large Business & Manufacturing category*

[‘What has been the most difficult aspect?’] “We don't know. Messaging was changing at the beginning, not sure how to plan going forward. Unprecedented loss in [tourism]...They have an emergency plan but he doesn't feel they could have kept any level of activity even if they had been able to plan for this specific event.” – *WAPDD Committee member, Nonprofit category*

Issue 9: Remote Education

['How has COVID-19 impacted your workplace and employees?'] "This remains to be seen. We have experienced miscommunications, zoom fatigue, and I am unsure how much work is really being completed. Mistakes have been made that show up later." – *Statewide Committee member, Education category*

['How has the availability of broadband service in your area affected the ability of your university to deliver educational services?'] "We know that lack of connectivity and lack of user proficiency has hampered efforts of some of our clientele to participate in educational programs...Lack of reliable broadband has also created challenges for some of our faculty and staff who are now forced to work from their homes. While most (although not all) of our offices have decent service, the same can't be said for places where people live... we have had to cease some programs that don't lend themselves to virtual settings or small social distanced events. Like everyone else, some employees are struggling emotionally with the continued physical separation from co-workers and lack of in-person interaction with clientele. Although state cutbacks have eased somewhat, revenue is down in programs that are fee-based, creating issues where those fees are used to support salaries and operating costs." – *Statewide Committee member, Education category*

"We established parking lot WiFi throughout campus...Unfortunately, the lack of broadband service in our service district makes it impossible to ensure our students can take advantage of an online learning experience. We have the capability to produce it, but few of our students have the technology to access it." – *EAPDD Committee member, Education category*

"...we are operating on a razor thin margin, so any major disruption to enrollment will cause that to change. In addition, professional development funds have been slashed at a time when those funds could be very beneficial to ensuring a quality online learning environment." – *EAPDD Committee member, Education category*

"Made it difficult for students to participate in online courses because they have to drive to find wifi. A few of the faculty have this issue also. They have installed more wifi locations on campus but students still have to drive and park to use it which is an inconvenience." – *NWAEDD Committee member, Education category*

['What has been the most difficult aspect?'] "Reaching kids in rural areas without internet, as well as teaching technical skills when they can't touch the material." – *SWAPDD Committee member, Education category*

“Broadband is very limited in the 5-county area...Choice is between online learning and paper packets. The latter is poor for engaging students and hard to handle...We needed much more broadband assistance. Condition was 'Haves versus Have-Nots.' CARES helped provide funding for some aspect of online teaching (e.g. teachers could get some money teaching 'Lincoln Learning' online.” – *SWAPDD Committee members, Local Government category*

“Every function of the school has been affected...Feels that typical undergrads are unequipped to handle online only class delivery.” – *WAPDD Committee member, Education category*

['What has been the most difficult aspect?'] “Broadband and connectivity for all their students. One-third that said they had internet still had dialup. Food insecurity has been their second issue. Population has a 65% below poverty level.” – *WRAPDD Committee member, Education category*

Issue 10: Rural Areas

['How responsive were local businesses and industry to local, state, and federal measures related to closures and social distancing?'] "In Benton County, very responsive, especially in the urban areas. Many rural areas don't seem to be as compliant, but it is coming back to bite them now." – NWAEDD Committee member, *Local Government category*

['What has been the most difficult aspect?'] "Spreading awareness is key. Don't want people to get a false sense of security because it's a small town." – WAPDD Committee member, *Local Government category*

['What has been the most difficult aspect?'] "Ruralness adds complexity to fighting in every aspect. Everything is harder because you are rural." – WAPDD Committee member, *Education category*

"PPP loans were done remotely – a challenge because bad internet connectivity in rural areas is not helpful." – WRAPDD Committee member, *Large Business and Manufacturing category*

['What has been the most difficult aspect?'] "Keeping people focused in order to stay safe since numbers are low in most rural communities." – WRAPDD Committee member, *Local Government category*

"...March and April sales tax numbers are better than expected for small communities – bracing for inevitable downtown." – WRAPDD Committee member, *Local Government category*

Brought to you in partnership with

