<u>Notes/Themes from Community Partner Workshop at The University of Scranton 6/14/2022</u>

These notes provide a summary of comments made by Scranton community agencies at the annual university-community partner workshop including perspectives on community-wide challenges and needs, organizational needs and ways to improve university-community partnerships.

Scranton Community Challenges/Needs:
- **Building a Sense of Community**
  - Projects to bring us together as a community; people need people; getting to know your neighbors.
  - Developing leadership within the community (on the neighborhood level).
  - Addressing community-wide trauma after the events of the past 2 years.
  - Need to build resilience, social connection, and develop a sense of belonging; "Healthy villages to raise healthy children."
- **Working with Youth**
  - Social media [and pandemic] has affected the ability to communicate/collaborate in younger populations (afraid to make phone calls/speak in public/connect with new people). At the same time, youth tired of Zoom and feel isolated
  - Bridge to youth/mentorship programs.
  - Students need mental/emotional health support and services to deal with trauma/PTSD. Youth are sad and feel hopeless; Family stability needed.
  - Foster care kids need connection; need advocates to do things with; assistance connecting to mental health services.
  - Issues/need for resources within schools.
- **Engagement on Issues of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**
  - How to engage with people who do not want to be a part of this conversation.
  - How can orgs best communication and engage with diverse populations.
- **Agency Connections/Collaboration**
  - Build a consortium of directors/operations managers so group can get to know each other and better connect services/coordinate organizational efforts.
  - Share contact list. Have this group meet more often.
  - Active sessions (not just lectures).
- **Navigating Community Service Sector is Confusing and Challenging.**
  - How to be holistic and connect people with wrap-around services
- **Support for Immigrant and Refugee Communities.**
  - Education for the immigrant populations.
  - Refugee resettlement services and ongoing support after resettlement period ends.
  - Happiness is having people around you – individual communities need connection/access to larger community.
  - Language and technology services to help with schoolwork; other educational needs.
  - Women feel left behind – had businesses before and don't know where to start now.
  - Spaces for worship and community connection.
  - Understanding the U.S. financial system and taking on debt.
- **Support for Aging Population**
  - Mental health, behavioral health therapy across the age spectrum, lack of 60+ services, dealing with grief.
  - Aging population needs ad hoc services/assistance.
  - Isolation: Young people can help address this.

- **Economic Issues**
    - Clean, affordable, accessible housing needed (sense of ownership/belonging).
    - Poverty rate is higher: Economic impact- number of people in need has tripled.
    - Transportation: Busses are unreliable and gas prices exceed pay.
    - Workforce development: Connecting people to their jobs.

Example of success: Bhutanese Cultural Foundation Association partnered with the University, Kick COVID, and other service agencies to address community health and wellness needs, offer PPE and vaccinations, and to distribute food/other needed supplies. Foundation space in South Scranton serves as a hub for the community.

Organizational Challenges/Needs:
- **Social Media Support**
    - Need support for general outreach.
    - Addressing staff skills gap in utilizing technology, social media/online platforms, apps, and fundraising.
    - Developing marketing and communications plan.
- **Intergenerational Programming** (youth need mentors, aging population facing isolation). Mentoring programs needed.
- **Workforce Needs**
    - Space for workforce needs/space for meeting/space for worship and community gatherings.
    - Shared office equipment.
    - Short staffed/understaffed/working with reduced staff at same capacity – need someone to manage volunteers.
    - Interns and more permanent volunteers.
    - Recruiting and retaining BIPOC employees at community agencies.
- **Data/Strategic Planning Needs**
    - Data to support grant applications and grant writing support.
    - County-wide data needed to address local concerns: Correlate/access to identified needs and need to assess communities/ where to start/ what are the needs.
    - Strategic planning and organizational support (where to focus services, how to increase org capacity, how to meet community needs/resources.
    - Growth/sustainable model, research and development, assessment survey creation and implementation.

Challenges/Needs/Opportunities Working with the University:
- Social media [and pandemic] has affected the ability to communicate/collaborate in younger populations (afraid to make phone calls/speak in public/connect with new people).
- Student schedules are inflexible at times and difficult to work around. Students want structure but needs are fluid.
- Transportation issues.
- Setting expectations for agency and for students/faculty/staff for partnerships.
- Volunteers: Faculty coordination to help organize volunteers, more sustainable volunteers.
- How can organizations connect with/access faculty/staff at the University?
- Can University offer more courses/classes focused on service needs & advocacy?