



Neighborfest Program Performance Report 2020 COVID19 Pandemic



NEN Neighborfest Program Performance Report: 2020 COVID19 Pandemic

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Executive Summary

The mission of the Neighborhood Empowerment Network's Neighborfest program is to establish at the block level a robust network of connected neighbors who have the capacity to come together and provide each other, especially the vulnerable, with the support they need to protect their health and well-being during times of stress.

The recent global pandemic, and resulting health orders to shelter in place, forced thousands of high risk San Franciscans to rely on the support of their family and/or their immediate neighbors to secure access to essential services, such as groceries, and emotional support.

This scenario provided the Neighborfest program management team with an important opportunity to assess the efficacy of the initiative's ability to achieve its primary objectives. The following report highlights the resulting data secured via an assessment conducted by a team at University of San Francisco.

Program Background

Like many urban and suburban centers, San Francisco's population is aging in place at a rapid rate. Currently, out of a population of approximately 850,000, there are roughly 134,000 senior and people with access and functional needs. It is projected that in the next two decades, that number will reach 250,000. The City is well positioned to support the health and well being of these residents due to its density and robust service networks.

The challenge is that during times of citywide shocks, such as heatwaves and pandemics, these residents are often forced to shelter in place and therefore exceed the capacity of the City's response network to provide adequate well-ness support on a sustained basis. Deeper analysis also reveals that many of these impacted residents live in neighborhoods that have experienced a consistent decline in social cohesion due to relatively high residences turnover rate caused by an ever growing cost of living.

Building on the research of Prof. Daniel Aldrich, and FEMA's Neighbor to Neighbor program, the NEN sought out to create a highly scalable and sustainable capacity building initiative that only stimulated the level of social cohesion at the block level, but also embedded the essential skills necessary to active and manage a team of volunteers to meet the needs of their neighbors almost instantly after a minor or major shock. After a great deal of analysis and discovery, it was determined that leveraging the existing, and very popular, block party model would prove to be the best vehicle to ensure success not only for the residents but for the agencies committed to their survival under any condition.

Since 2015, over 124 Neighborfest have been hosted across the City of San Francisco.

Report Background

The City and County of San Francisco's Neighborhood Empowerment Network (NEN) and the University of San Francisco (USF) teamed up to assess the impact that the Neighborfest program had in preparing residents to support their vulnerable neighbors who sheltered in place during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the course of 5 months, a team of researchers interviewed 21 past Neighborfest hosts, and their teams, with a survey that collected data pointed at determining if the program achieved its social cohesion and capacity building development goals.

The assessment survey was organized into three sections:

- Social Cohesion Development
- Capacity to Aid Neighbors During a Crisis
- Benefit of Pre-event Asset Mapping and Neighborfest Disaster Supplies Provided to Hosts

Key Findings:

Discovery 1: Social Cohesion Development

A growing body of evidence developed by resilience thoughts leaders such as Prof. Daniel Alrich has proven quantitatively and qualitatively that the level of social cohesion between residents and their surrounding neighbors has a significant impact on their ability to survive and recover from a disaster. The Neighborfest program advances the level of social cohesion by leveraging the hyperlocal convening nature of the traditional block party. Building on the positive nature of a “party” environment and the activation of the public realm in front of people’s residences, the Neighborfest offers a two pronged approach for hosts to engage their neighbors.

Findings:

- 81% of hosts believed that Neighborfest significantly elevated the level of social cohesion within their communities.
- 100% of hosts believed that the relationship building component of Neighborfest made it easier to identify neighbors that either needed help or could help those around them while they sheltered in place during COVID-19

Discovery 2: Capacity to Aid Neighbors During a Crisis

Living in a well connected neighborhood can offer a wide variety of benefits. On a daily basis, these benefits can include skipping a last minute dash to the store for a single egg to a phone call late at night letting one know their garage door is still open. During times of stress, neighbors have the potential to be effective first responders as well as care and shelter providers. Their efficacy to perform well as a team can benefit from previous collaborative non-emergency activities. In the case of Neighborfest, the program is designed to both establish a team of neighbors unified around a common mission, but also advance their collective capacity to provide common support services post disaster, such as group feeding and comfort. The following data captures host team performance during the COVID19 pandemic.

Findings:

- 86% of hosts reported that they initiated responses in their neighborhoods.
- 80% of hosts felt that Neighborfest was effective in preparing hosts to assemble teams for COVID-19.
- Approximately 50% of hosts reported that at least one neighbor needed support and the reported number of neighbors in need ranges from 1 - 60 individuals.
- 48% of hosts provided support on a weekly basis.
- 27% of hosts provided support as needed.
- In addressing the needs of their neighbors, 76% of hosts reported that they felt prepared for every situation that they encountered.
- 71% of hosts knew of others in their community who initiated a response
- Out of these hosts, 87% reported connecting and collaborating with those community members to respond to needs during COVID-19 SIP.
- 86% of hosts felt that Neighborfest did enhance their community’s preparedness for the COVID-19 SIP orders.

Discovery 3: Benefit of Pre-event Asset Mapping

A key component to advancing the readiness of the Neighborfest host team's readiness to respond to a disaster is to collectively identify what essential resources are in their community and where. This outcome is generated by the conducting of the Neighborfest "Map Your Resilientville" exercise at each event by a member of the Neighborfest in-house production team. The exercise offers participants the opportunity to collectively identify where their neighbors live and where they can find mission critical resources in their block, and surrounding neighborhood, after a disaster to meet their care and shelter needs. The resulting map is left behind with the hosts for future activations. The capacity to leverage asset mapping post disaster can greatly accelerate the host committee's ability to meet their neighbors health and well-being needs.

Findings:

- 62% of hosts reported identifying new local resources while the COVID-19 shelter-in-place orders were in effect.

Summary:

City, and the communities they support, are in a constant struggle to establish and maintain local volunteer networks that can activate during times of stress while professional response networks are overwhelmed and provide a service bridge for at risk residents until service levels are restored. The Neighborfest has proven to be not only quantitatively and qualitatively capable of addressing this gap, but has offered community readiness advocates, both professional and volunteer, an exciting new approach that focuses on positivity of community and not fear based motivation messaging.