

# How to Engage The Media

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ORGANIZING  ACADEMY

# Welcome!

- Remove Distractions
- Get a beverage
- Get note-taking stuff
- Center yourself
- Use the chat!
  - **Introductions -- Name, pronouns, organization, and one thing you are hoping to get out of today's training!**

# Organizing Academy

- **What is it?**

- New training program designed to build key skills and knowledge to engage in HSC's advocacy efforts

- **Why now?**

- Shifting political landscape at City and State
- New pro-active, more intentional approach to advocacy

- **What is that goal?**

- Build capacity of staff to engage in advocacy efforts
- Build collective power and influence of the human service sector
- Maximize impact of human services advocacy campaigns

# Community Agreements

- **Share** your questions.
- **Speak** from your own experience.
- **Respect** confidentiality.
  - The breakout rooms & open discussion portions of this workshop will NOT be recorded.
- **Spell** it out and avoid acronyms.
- **Add** anything else you would like to include in the chat.

# Agenda

- 1) Data-driven framing & messaging around human services
- 2) Identifying your audience
- 3) Impactful Storytelling
- 4) Media advocacy & building relationships with reporters

# New York's Human Services Landscape

The human service sector in New York is in a state of crisis due to 4 core issues:

- Lack of living wages for the workforce
- Underfunded government contracts
- Late payments + disproportional budget withholdings during times of crisis
- Damaging procurement model based on race-to-the-bottom cost cutting rather than meaningful outcomes.

# Data-driven framing & messaging around human services

# Framing

vs.

# Messaging

***What you say matters as much as **how** you say it***

- Framing is putting perspective on facts and making an issue relevant to a particular audience

***What you say (word choice, style choice, etc.) you use to **effectively convey your framing*****

- Messaging is deeply informed by what you know about how your target audience talks about and understands the issue



# Framing

How you tell your story

# Framing is about Choices

- Frames are a set of choices about how information is presented.
- Think about in terms of these three questions -
  - **What should I emphasize?**
  - **How should I explain it?**
  - **What should I leave unsaid?**

# Telling the Story of Our Sector with Data-Driven Framing

Utilize the term “human service organizations,” which has the most defined positive attributes compared to other terms.

## Social Service Organizations



Some terms have more negative associations.

## Human Service Organizations



"Homeless" rises to the top; positive views are more defined around assistance, care, and health.

### Community-based Service Organizations



Views are less defined and less likely to relate to the programs human services organizations provide.

# Framing Pitfalls to avoid:

- Using words like “vulnerable,” “at-risk,” or anything that connotes that services are only for marginalized people living in poverty
- Limiting the discussion of the impact of services to one individual
- “Rags-to-riches” success stories
- Speaking in dense/wonky terms not understood by the general public
- Calling human services nonprofits “charitable organizations”
- Playing into the scarcity model that pits services against each other for resources.

Instead of this....	Try this...
Our programs offer critical support for the <b>most vulnerable</b> in our society.	Our programs offer critical support for the <b>wellbeing</b> of all individuals and families <b>throughout life</b> .
We call on NYC to invest in human services and patch the holes in our crumbling <b>social safety-net</b> .	We call on NYC to commit to supporting <b>New Yorkers from all backgrounds</b> by addressing the chronically underfunded human services sector that provides a stable foundation for our thriving city.
Human services nonprofits are <b>charitable organizations</b> .	The human services sector is comprised of <b>a highly skilled workforce</b> with deep knowledge of how to address challenges in our communities.

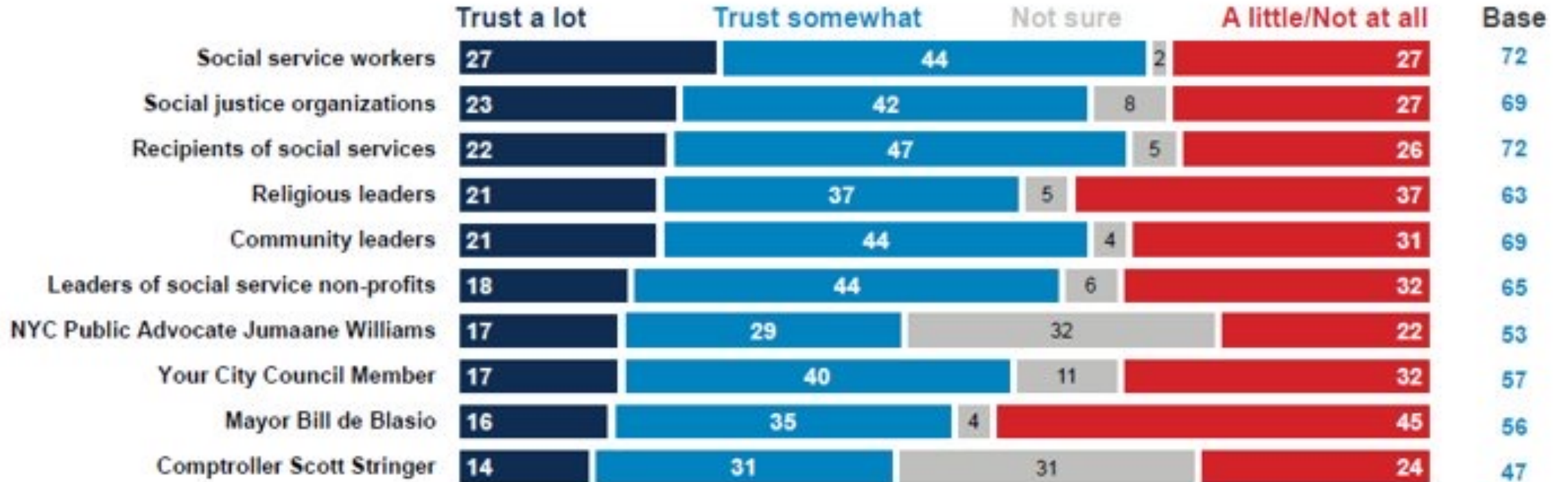
Instead of this....	Try this...
Human services uplift <b>marginalized</b> and <b>at-risk</b> communities.	Human services impact the <b>entire community</b> , both directly and indirectly.
Human services nonprofits run off <b>philanthropic dollars</b> .	The human services sector gets the majority of its funding from <b>government contacts</b> .
The government <b>subsidizes</b> human services.	Human services nonprofits are a good investment and act as a <b>strong economic driver</b> in local communities, when properly funded.

**Example Question:** In a time of tight budget pressures, why should we devote scarce resources to non-essentials like opportunities for recreation for youth or seniors?

**Falling for Pitfalls:** Providing services like recreation for youth and seniors might not be as essential as food and shelter, but these types of services are indeed crucial. For one, they serve as gateways to other social services. The older adult who shows up for the coffee might stick around for the blood pressure screening or a diabetes management program. And in fact, research shows that older adults who participate in senior center programs can learn to manage and delay the onset of chronic disease. The same line of argument holds for youth opportunities.

**Reframed Answer:** The purpose of our public budgets is to support the shared well-being of all our residents, young, old, or in between. When we do this, we make sure that everyone can reach their potential and fully contribute to our communities. Recreation opportunities provide many of the materials that are essential for wellbeing: physical activity, social relationships, a sense of connection. A good public budget is one that meets our needs now and also plans for our future. We all need opportunities to thrive, and so programs like these are a responsible use of our resources.

# Workers and Clients and considered the most credible messengers on human services funding.





# Messaging

What you say

# Messaging an Effective Story?

- Explain what your organization does
- Outline the problem at hand
- Lay out the consequences in relatable terms
- Empathize why government should act
- Include a call to action

# Ineffective Messaging

- Telling people how to think
- Repeating opponents' messages
- Speaking over the heads of the audience
- Invalidating the audience's feelings by treating opponents, audience, others disrespectfully
- Being too impersonal not connecting your point back to people

# How NOT to Connect:

“The most recent DYCD RFP does not require linkage agreements or MOUs with community organizations and fails to build in an annual baseline operating cost escalator over the term of the contract for employee benefits and OTPS.”

“Do not believe what politicians tell you about the sector, we are the ones that know best and you should have been listening to us all along.”

“City contracts are registered late 89% of the time, which can impact nonprofit’s payroll resulting in turnover rates upwards of 40% in a workforce that is 82% women and 80% people of color.”

# Identifying Your Audience

# Reaching Your Audience:

- We belong to multiple communities and are experts on the experiences we have in the communities we are from.
  - **Geographic**
  - **Demographic**
  - **Psychographic**
  - **Vocational**
- Identifying these communities will help you identify:
  - Your areas of expertise outside general human services
  - Potential audience and, by extension, media outlets
  - How to make your message resonate best with the communities you are rooted in

**Exercise: List out personal examples to each of these categories**

# New York's Human Services Landscape

The human service sector in New York is in a state of crisis due to 4 core issues:

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Accepting, strong understanding of issues and commitment to the human services sector

Detached supporters, conflicted; want to do the right thing but not sure what that is

Strongly opposes additional government funding for the human services sector



# Who are the Moveable Middle for Human Services and the Issues Facing our Sector?

Unmute yourself to chime in or put your answers in the chat!

# Who are the Moveable Middle?

- Motivated to be good people
- Want do the right thing
- Views human services nonprofits as charities
- Unaware that majority of funding comes from government contracts and/or the issues with those contracts
- Scared of looking ignorant
- Values community
- Often only exposed to negative media converge of human services providers
- Cares about housing affordability, availability, and homelessness but not involved
- Believe that the human services sector is necessary
- Have a family member of someone close to them who have been clients in human services programs

# Connect with Your Audience

- You are not speaking to the media but through the media to reach your audience.
- Think of a “movable middle” or “detached supporter” in your life and interview like you are talking to that person.

# Break!

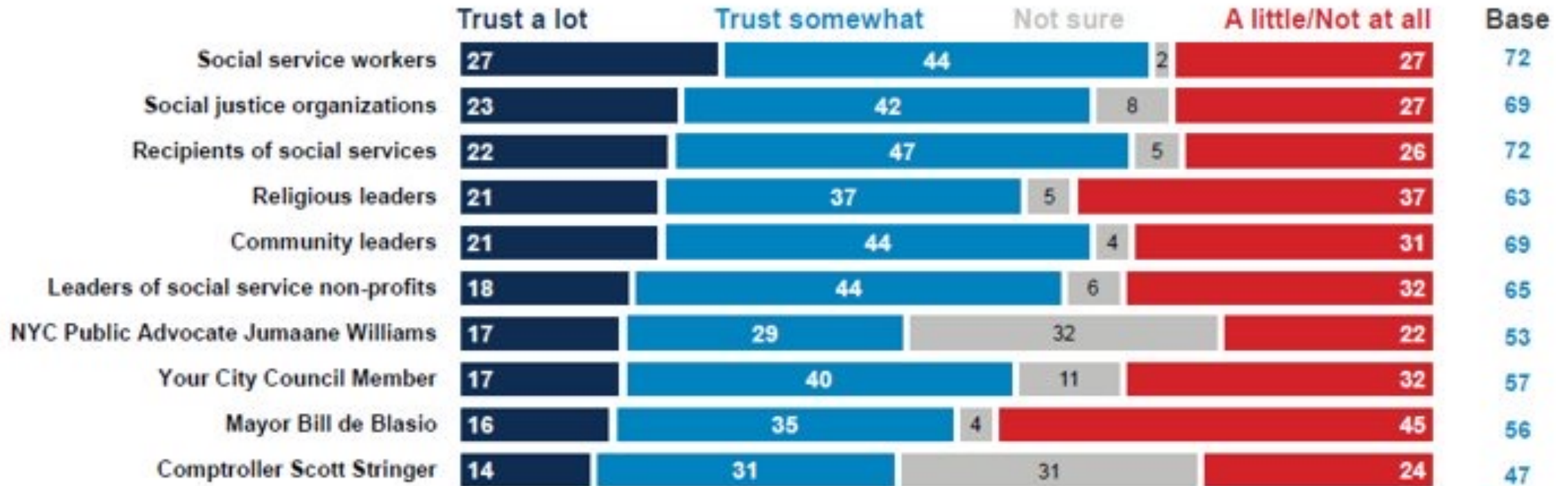
# Impactful Storytelling

Do not think "Any Story Will Do" but rather "What Will This Story Do?"

# How to tell compelling stories about dense, complicated, and sometimes boring topics...

- Think of story as a mnemonic device for complex ideas
- Reconnect with your own motivation for being involved
- Focus on what you need people to understand
- Eliminate jargon
- Look for the people behind your issue:
  - “Ask yourself: Who’s involved and who has something at stake? Many nonprofit stories are boring precisely because they’re about an organization, issue, place, or thing—everything but real people!” – communications expert Andy Goodman

Remember: Workers and Clients are considered the most credible messengers on human services funding



# Ethics of Using Worker & Clients Stories

When someone tells their story, they become open to criticism, attack, misinterpretation, or even physical harm. They're also open to good things such as empathy or support or change. Either way, the storyteller is vulnerable.

## Elements of Informed Consent:

- **Disclosure:** Explain the use and purpose of the story, such as where and to whom it will be shown, and what effect the organization hopes it will have.
- **Voluntariness:** Consent must be given voluntarily and with an understanding of whether or not the storyteller will be anonymous.
- **Comprehension:** The teller must understand the implications of sharing their story; for example, the possibility that a reporter will publish aspects of their story in an article. The storyteller must be able to comprehend the implications of their participation.



# What makes an impactful story?

**VALUE → PROBLEM → SOLUTION → ACTION**

Lead with **VAULES** & vision

- Starting with a shared values helps audience to “hear” our message.
- Research has shown that rooting stories in opportunity, the ideal that everyone deserves a fair chance to achieve their full potential are the most impactful way to change people’s perception of an issue.
  - Examples of opportunity values: equality, mobility, voice, redemption, community, security.

# What makes an impactful story?

VALUE → PROBLEM → SOLUTION → ACTION

Then introduce the **PROBLEM**

- This is the place to pull out personal examples and/or statistics that are likely to resonate with the target audience.
  - Frame problems as threats to shared values.
  - Choose facts and statistics carefully. Facts do not tend to change minds if they are not couched in values.

# What makes an impactful story?

**VALUE → PROBLEM → SOLUTION → ACTION**

Pivot quickly to **SOLUTIONS**

- Positive solutions leave people with choices, ideas, and motivation. Assign responsibly—who can enact this solution?

Assign an **ACTION**

- What can this specific target audience do? Try to give them something concrete, that they can even picture themselves doing and steer clear of vague “learn more” messages, whenever possible.

# BREAKOUT ROOM ACTIVITY – 10 mins



- 1) Introduce yourselves.
- 2) Determine an issue facing the human services sector you want to practice this on.
- 3) Practice breaking down the issue into the four components of impactful storytelling:
  - a) What **values** are this issue attached to?
  - b) How would you explain the **problem** to people who are not familiar?
  - c) What is a **solution** to the problem?
  - d) What **action** do you want your audience to take to help get to that solution?

# Media advocacy & building relationships with reporters

# Working with Reporters

- **Reporters need information & often do not have much time to find it.** Make yourself—and any reports, statistics and spokes people you have—available on a regular bases.
  - DO NOT bombard reporters with a series of non-newsworthy press releases but DO familiarize reporters with the types of resources you are able to offer them.
  - Offer to meet. They may decline, but the offer is there.
- **Be a consumer of the media.** Have a good idea of what might interested the media generally or the reporters you are targeting specially.
- **The goal is persuasion, not just publicity.** While earing publicity is obvious and crucial, it should not be at the expense of the right message. While you may need to talk to reports largely to develop relationships, be sure to “do no harm” to your short and large term goals.

REMEMBER: Your audience is NOT the reporter; it is who their reporting will reach.

# Working with Reporters

- **Staying on messages is not easy & requires practice.** Have the basic points you want to convey in front of you during the interview, if possible.
  - Remember: **VALUE → PROBLEM → SOLUTION → ACTION**
- **Know that nothing is off the record.** In interviews, have basic points you want to convey and stick to them. This includes ANY time you communicate with the reporter before and after the actual interview. They can use anything you tell them. Never go off-the-record unless it is a very close and trusted relationship.
- **Pivot!** Move from the question that you are asked to the one that you want to answer.
  - Give a short non-interesting answer to the question you are asked and quickly move to “What is really important is...” or “I’m really hear to talk about how we can grow opportunity in this community”

# Pitching

- **HOOK INTEREST** Make your story stand out to a busy reporter
- **GET TO THE POINT** Put essential information into intro short paragraph
- **BE SPECIFIC** Provide supporting facts, names and details *in the body of the email*
- **KNOW THE ISSUES** Have messages ready and be prepared to demonstrate in-depth knowledge
- **BE A RESOURCE** Be ready to provide photos, background information and relevant sources
- **DOCUMENT PROGRESS** Keep track what stories you pitch to whom. Keep track of reporter interests and preferences for future use



# Case Study: Indirect

Problem: Too wonky for the general public. Not directly connected to direct outcomes. Not compelling enough to hook press into covering the story.

Solution: Connecting the cuts to indirect funding to a larger pattern from the Mayor, showing the larger picture of how he was not following through on his public promises to ensure New Yorkers had access to services and the impact it was having on NYC's COVID-19 response and recovery.

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NEWS

## City Nonprofits Face 'Financial Catastrophe' Due to Pandemic's Demands

BY BETH FERTIG, WNYC

APRIL 21, 2021 5:01 A.M. • 7 COMMENTS

POLITICO

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+

A photograph of New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, wearing a blue suit and a light blue face mask, interacting with a group of children. He is leaning forward, possibly fist-bumping or high-fiving a child. The children are also wearing face masks and backpacks. They are standing in front of a brick building, likely a public school.

New York Mayor Bill de Blasio greets students as they arrive for in-person classes outside Public School 188 in New York. | John Minchillo/AP Photo

### Non-profits say de Blasio broke a litany of pandemic promises

By ERIN DURKIN | 04/12/2021 07:43 PM EDT

# Basic Tips for Drafting a Pitch Email

- **Your email address** – Always send from a credible, professional email address.
- **Subject line** – Must include your news hook, the one thing that makes your story stand out and demand a journalist's attention & keep it under 8 words
- **The first sentence** – Get right to the point; journalists are time-poor and there is no need for pleasantries such as "how was your weekend."
- **Body of the e-mail** – Indicate you know about their past work and the email is personal to them. It will not be taken as seriously if it reads as a stock message that was sent to others.
- **Closing your e-mail** - End on a useful note; your job is to help the reporter do their job so invite them to contact you if they need more information.

# New York Media Landscape



POLITICO

***NEW YORK POST***



**THE**  **CITY**

**CITY**  
**LIMITS**

**CITY &  
STATE**  
NEW YORK

**The  
New York  
Times**

**SPECTRUM  
NEWS** **NY 1**

**GOTHAM**GAZETTE  
The Place for New York Policy and Politics

**TIMES**  **UNION**



**DAILY**  **NEWS**

**Newsday**

 **gothamist**

**101**    
**WINS**

# Additional Resources:

- FrameWorks Institute, [Building a New Narrative on Human Services Communications Toolkit](#)
- Working Narratives, [Storytelling and Social Change: A Strategy Guide](#)
- Human Services Council, [Essential or Expendable? How Human Services Supported Communities Through COVID-19 and Recommendations to Support an Equitable Recovery](#)



# Debrief

## Open Discussion + Q&A



### Contact:

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# Thank You!

Please fill out the feedback poll before you leave!