COVID & THE LGBTQI MOVEMENT IN 2021: RESULTS FROM THE Q2 2021 COVID PULSE SURVEY

SEPTEMBER 2021

MAP
movement advancement project

This report was authored by:

Movement Advancement Project

MAP's mission is to provide independent and rigorous research, insight, and communications that help speed equality and opportunity for all people. MAP works to ensure that all people have a fair chance to pursue health and happiness, earn a living, take care of the ones they love, be safe in their communities, and participate in civic life. For more information, visit **www.lgbtmap.org**.

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This report is part of a series assessing the impacts of COVID-19 on major organizations in the LGBTQI movement. To see previous reports in the series, please visit www.lgbtmap.org/covid-19. For additional research on the overall capacity of the LGBTQI movement, please visit www.lgbtmap.org/lgbt-advocacy-organizations.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to shape nearly every aspect of life in the United States. LGBTQI and allied movement organizations continue to navigate the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic all while continuing to serve LGBTQI people and advocating on their behalf. For many organizations, this has meant shifting operations to a virtual format, offering programs online, and identifying and obtaining pandemic financial relief.

Since 2006, the Movement Advancement Project (MAP) has conducted surveys of organizational capacity within the LGBTQI movement. These surveys have helped organizations identify opportunities and learn from another, grounded funders in response strategies during times of need, and engaged individual donors more deeply in giving to the movement.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, MAP has frequently surveyed organizations. Reports released in September 2020 and January 2021 revealed the flexibility, creativity, and ultimately the continued resilience of LGBTQI and allied organizations during 2020. Throughout 2021, MAP is continuing to survey organizations in a quarterly pulse survey, tracking confidence and concerns as the pandemic continues. The first quarter (Q1) survey, collected in April 2021, included reflections on 2020 as a whole and experiences from January through March 2021, showing that organizations felt relatively confident for the new year.

This brief report presents the results from our second quarter (Q2) pulse survey, fielded in August 2021, illustrating how quickly organizations' expectations and experiences have changed in just a few short months. The Q2 survey shows that organizations face ongoing challenges—particularly with new delays or cancellations, staff mental health concerns, and declining confidence in revenue—amid another resurgence of cases and the Delta variant of COVID-19.

PARTICIPANTS

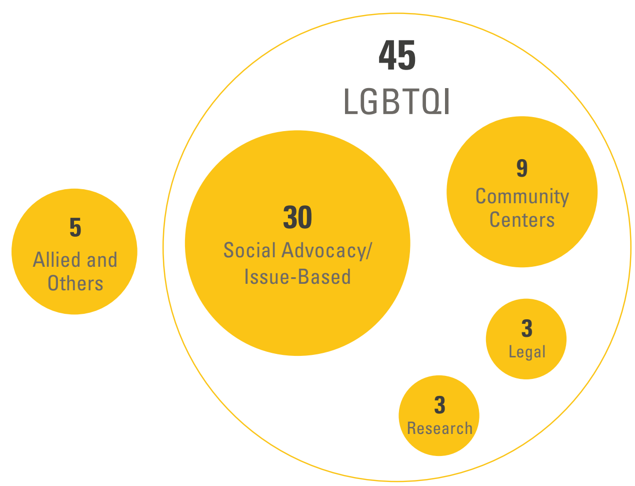
In total, 50 organizations participated in the Q2 survey, conducted in August 2021. Of these, 49 organizations also participated in the Q1 survey.

As shown in ***Figure 1***, the majority (90%) of participating organizations were LGBTQI organizations, and the remaining 10% were allied or other organizations.

The majority of participating organizations work at the national and/or state level, though some participants report working primarily regionally (e.g., in the U.S. South). Fewer report working primarily internationally.

Figure 1: Majority of Participating Organizations are LGBTQI

n=50



COVID RESURGENCE

Delta Variant and COVID Resurgence Causing New Struggles and Exacerbating Old Ones

Participating organizations reported clear and challenging impacts from the resurgence of COVID-19 and the emergence of the Delta variant. As shown in ***Figure 2***, a majority of organizations reported they had delayed or cancelled travel or gatherings (74% of organizations), events (68%), in-person programs or services (58%), and office reopenings (52%). Two in five (40%) organizations also report reduced confidence in fundraising due to the resurgence.

Figure 2: COVID Resurgence Has Led to New Delays and Cancellations for Majority of Organizations
Percent of organizations reporting each impact due to COVID resurgence

"All of our planning was altered by the prevalence of the Delta variant."

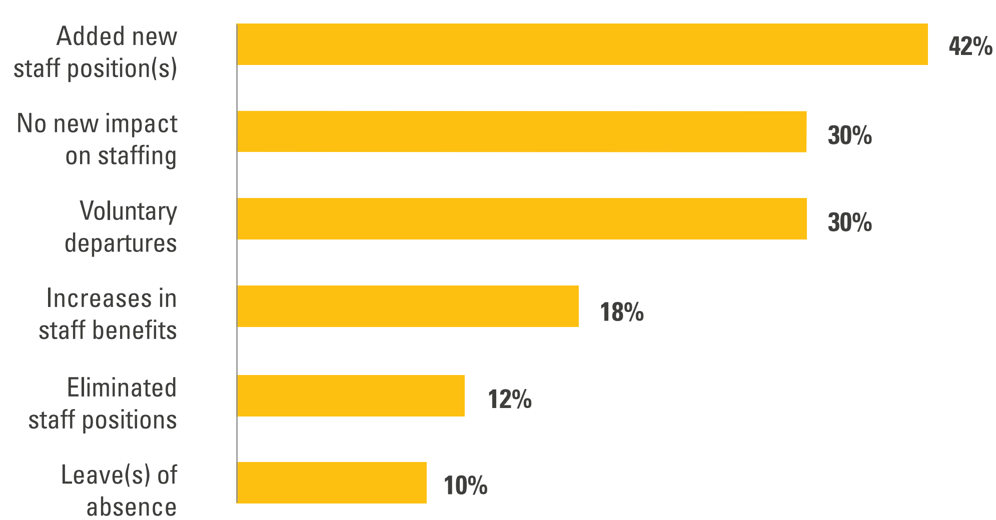
Things were actually easier during full shut down!!"

"Financially, we have been lucky this year – but we are very concerned about the long-term effects of the donor landscape."

Organizations Report Both Positive and Negative Impacts on Staffing Levels and Staff in 2021

When asked how COVID-19 is affecting the organization's staffing levels thus far in 2021, more than two in five (42%) organizations reported they added new staff positions, and 30% reported no new impact on staffing, as shown in ***Figure 3***. Nearly one in five (18%) organizations also reported increases to staff benefits in 2021. However, 30% of organizations also reported voluntary departures among staff, and roughly one in ten reported they eliminated staff positions (12%) or had leave(s) of absence among staff (10%) in 2021.

Figure 3: Organizations Report Differing Impacts of COVID on Staffing in 2021
Percent of organizations reporting each impact in 2021



"With the dumping of our physical office locations, we have freed up capital for increased staffing and benefits."

"We chose to move to unlimited PTO during pandemic – more focus on mental health wellness."

"Foundations have been very interested in investing in our work fueled by DEIJ interests. They are particularly supporting adding staff capacity."

In open-ended comments on the impact of COVID-19 in Q2 of 2021, organizations emphasized the ongoing toll of the pandemic on staff and mental health, including burnout, leaves of absence, and more. Comments also highlighted emerging challenges including high or increasing turnover, as well as difficulty filling open positions, especially in a timely manner.

"COVID-19 has impacted our ability to retain and hire staff. We have seen an increase in staff turnover and difficulty in rehiring replacement. Many individuals agree to a job interview only not to show up for it."

"Staff burnout has been a challenge in this working environment. Our work is challenging even in 'normal' times, and supporting staff in this environment of uncertainty has been truly difficult. Some people have decided to transition out of the organization, some have taken wellness-related leaves of absence."

"Staff have developed differing, often conflicting, opinions as a response to new guidance as it is released by the media, state and local governments, the CDC, and other [non-governmental organizations]."

REVENUE AND NEW RELIEF RESOURCES

Declining Confidence in Revenue from Corporations, Government Grants, and Events

In Q1 2021, organizations reported overall confidence about different revenue streams. By the Q2 survey, confidence levels changed, especially amid the rise of the Delta variant and rising case numbers across the country. As shown in ***Figure 4*** on the following page, reported confidence for individual giving and foundation funding remained relatively steady, but confidence declined for corporate contributions, government grants, and especially event revenue. Confidence for event revenue was the lowest of any category in Q1, and it declined even further in Q2.

Causes for Fundraising Concerns: COVID-19 and Shifting Revenue Reliability

In open-ended comments, organizations cited many contributing factors to their growing concerns and declining confidences in fundraising revenue, in particular. First and foremost was the Delta variant and its continuing impact on the ability to plan events and cultivate relationships with donors. Organizations also noted shifts in foundation funding priorities, leading to significant cuts for some organizations in a key revenue stream. Concerns also referenced "individual donor fatigue" and "delays in government disbursements."

"Our events facilitate a lot of new leads for individual giving and, without in-person events, our outreach is limit reducing our overall individual giving revenue."

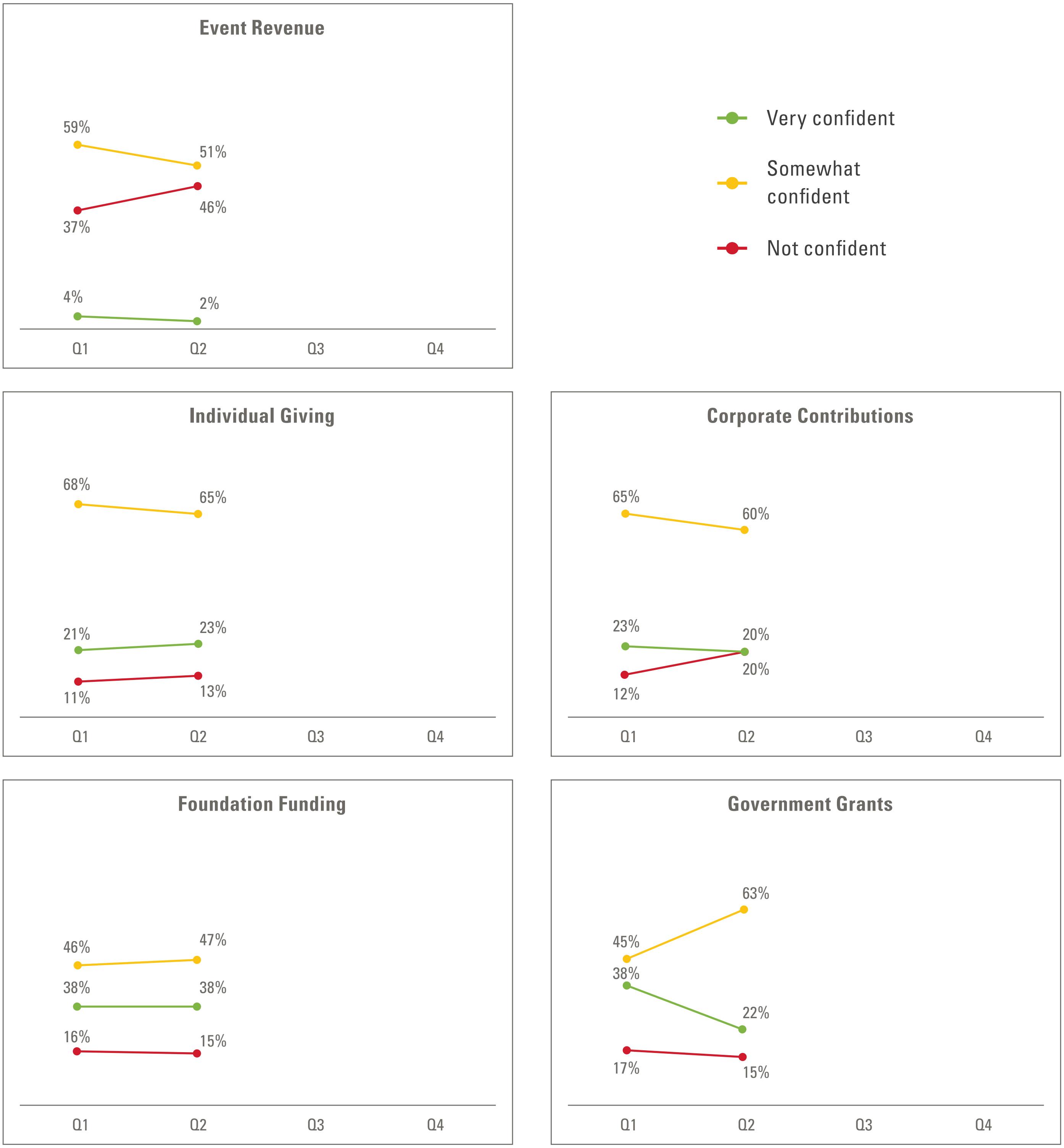
"Shifts in foundation grant funding are particularly concerning as they have previously been the largest portion of our revenue."

New Funding Relief Resources in 2021

When asked what new funding relief resources organizations were actively pursuing in 2021, more than two in five (42%) organizations reported they were not actively pursuing any new funding relief resources at the time of the survey.

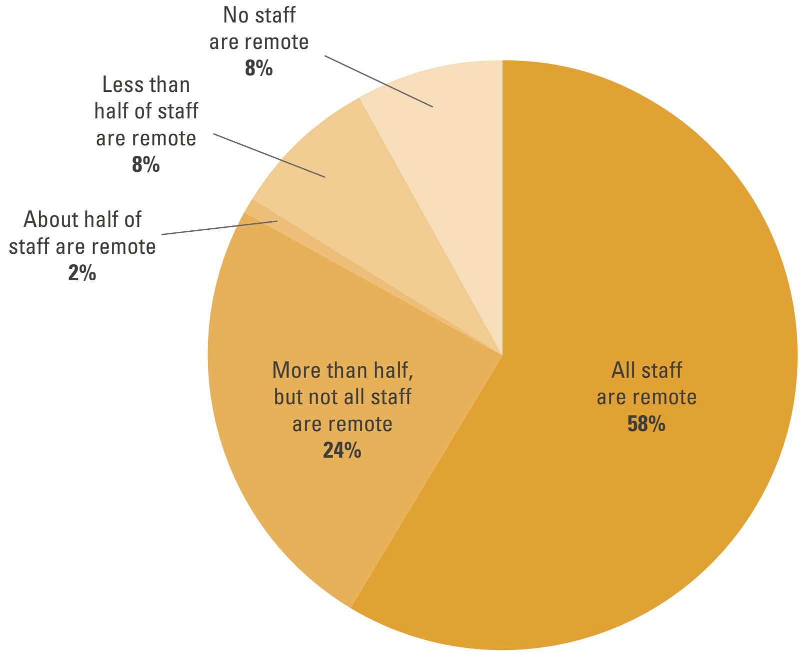
However, 32% of organizations said they were pursuing the second round of the Payroll Protection Program (PPP), and 26% said they were seeking the Employee Retention Credit (ERC).

Figure 4: Declining Confidence in Corporate Contributions, Government Grants, and Event Revenue
Percent of organizations reporting confidence levels in each revenue source in 2021



Most Organizations Still Working Mostly or Entirely Remotely, But Facing Equity Challenges

Figure 5: The Majority of Organizations Are Still Working Entirely Remotely



As shown in ***Figure 5***, the majority (58%) of participating organizations are still working entirely remotely, and an additional 24% of organizations report that more than half their staff are currently working remotely. Other organizations noted that, since they provide direct services, they must be in person at their physical locations.

When asked about future plans, more than two-thirds (67%) of organizations said at least some staff will remain remote on a permanent basis, including at least ten organizations that reported all staff will remain remote.

In open-ended comments, many organizations (who were not already fully remote) mentioned a permanent move to a hybrid model, with the expectation of at least some time in the office and some time spent remotely. Other organizations noted they have redesigned specific positions to accommodate remote work, that staff who were previously in-person have moved away but remain employed, or that they have hired new staff with the understanding they will not be expected to be in person (e.g., a New York based organization hiring someone with the understanding they will not move to New York, even when offices reopen).

Many organizations also noted ongoing challenges with equity in remote work policies, such as how to create balance and equal support for staff who are thriving working remotely, for staff who would prefer to be in-person, and for staff who are obligated to be in person due to the nature of their work. As discussed in a later section of this report, organizations said their top needed resource at this time is more information on remote/hybrid work policies and procedures.

"There are opposing views on staff about the value of working remotely. Not everyone is being affected equally by a remote working scenario."

"A constant issue is balancing equity."

"The experience of the last year+ has raised questions about how we best support all employees' preferences to work remotely, in a solo office/co-working space or [organizational] office in ways that are both equitable and serve organizational needs."

"Because the government is no longer issuing mask mandates or halting in-person hearings/meetings, some staff, specifically legal clinic attorneys, must work in the community despite the organization's ongoing remote work policy."

"We classified each position as on site, hybrid-eligible, and remote-eligible. Almost all but a few positions ended up as hybrid-eligible. We expect to start this new policy in September."

"We provide direct services to individuals so we need to be at our physical locations."

Majority of Organizations Already Have Either a Mask or Vaccination Policy for Staff

Overall, 68% of organizations reported they currently have a mask wearing policy. Fewer organizations, but still a majority (52%), reported they currently have a policy addressing vaccination for employees.

Just under half (48%) of organizations have both a vaccine and mask policy. Not surprisingly, organizations that have a vaccine policy for staff are far more likely to also have a mask policy; 92% of organizations with a vaccine policy have a mask policy, while 71% of organizations that have a mask policy also have a vaccine policy.

Just under one quarter (24%) of organizations currently have neither a vaccine nor mask policy.

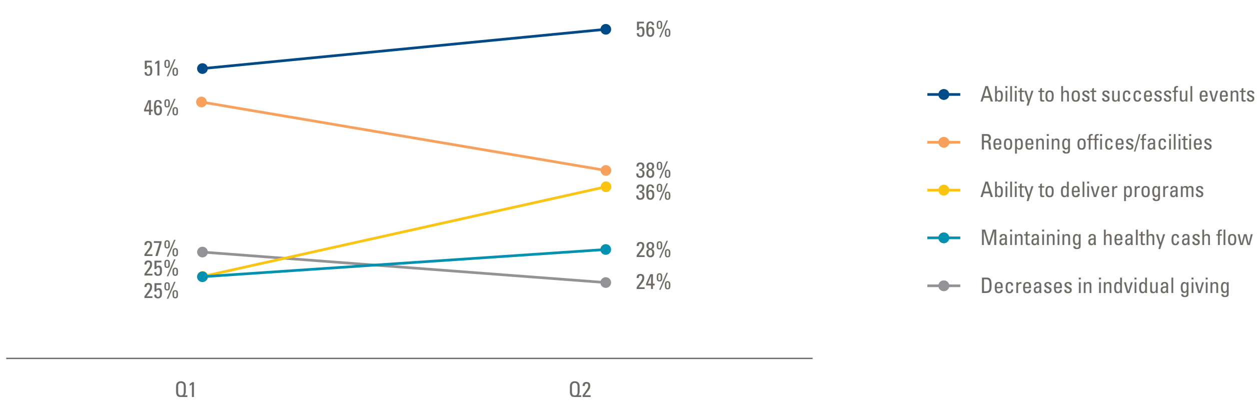
TOP CONCERNS & NEEDED RESOURCES

Top Concerns in Summer 2021: Concerns Grew in Q2 for Ability to Host Events and Deliver Programs

In both Q1 and Q2, organizations were asked to identify their top concerns for 2021. In Q1, the most frequently cited concern was the ability to hold successful events, with 51% of participating organizations mentioning this concern. This was followed closely by reopening offices or facilities (46% of organizations), with a relatively distant third top concern of decreases in individual giving (27%).

As shown in ***Figure 6***, in Q2, the top two concerns remained the same, but the distance between them widened noticeably. The top concern, an ability to hold successful events, grew even more concerning, with 56% of organizations citing this. The second concern, reopening offices, fell to 38% of organizations but remained the second top concern. The third top concern in Q2 became an ability to successfully deliver programs, with more than one-third (36%) of organizations mentioning this, up from 25% in Q1.

Figure 6: Top Two Concerns Remain the Same From Q1 to Q2, But the Top Concern Is Even Clearer; Ability to Deliver Programs Became a Top 3 Concern in Q2
Percent of organizations citing each as a top concern for 2021

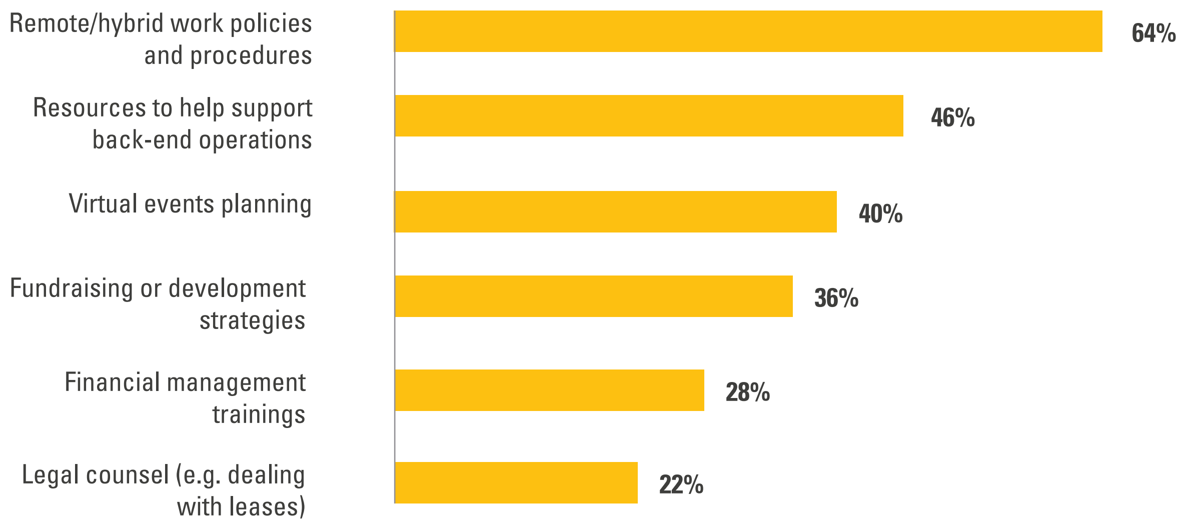


Q1 (n=63)	Q2 (n=50)
#1: Ability to host successful events (51%) #2: Reopening offices/facilities (46%) #3: Decreases in individual giving (27%) T-4: Ability to deliver programs (25%) T-4: Maintaining a healthy cash flow (25%)	#1: Ability to host successful events (56%) #2: Reopening offices/facilities (38%) #3: Ability to deliver programs (36%) #4: Maintaining a healthy cash flow (28%) #5: Decreases in individual giving (24%)

Needed Resources: Remote Work Policies and Resources for Back-End Operations

When asked what additional resources would be helpful to organizations right now, the top answer, with 64% of organizations, was remote work or hybrid work policies and procedures. Just under half, 46%, cited resources to help support back-end operations.

Figure 7: Organizations Need Resources on Remote Work Policies and Back-End Operations
Percent of organizations saying each resource would be helpful right now



CONCLUSION

While this summer was widely expected to allow many businesses, organizations, and social events across the country to reopen, factors such as the Delta variant, plateauing vaccination rates, and some state government policies brought about a very different reality.

Participating organizations in this survey report a similar expectation and disappointment, with most organizations reporting they had to delay or cancel office reopenings during Q2. Even more organizations reported delayed or cancelled programs, events, and travel. Staff burnout and mental health concerns remain a significant and widespread challenge, and confidence in key revenue sources is declining.

However, organizations also report adding new staff positions, increasing staff benefits, and making plans and policies to support staff and operations in the long-term. MAP will continue to survey and support organizations during 2021 and as the pandemic continues to shape how organizations operate, advocate for, and serve LGBTQ people.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report examines the impact of COVID-19 on LGBTQI and allied organizations and is part of a broader series of reports available at https://www.lgbtmap.org/covid-19. Additional research focused on the LGBTQI movement's capacity overall is available at https://www.lgbtmap.org/lgbt-advocacy-organizations.

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