



COVID-19 EVICTION PREVENTION FORUM

A Case Study in Collaboration

On April 22, United Way hosted its first Financial Wellness Partnership Forum with a conversation focused on collaboration and the [Tucson Pima Eviction Prevention Program \(Tucson Pima EPP\)](#). After a brief introduction and overview of financial wellness indicators in Pima County, **United Way Associate Vice President of Community Development Ken Briggs** facilitated a discussion between **Danny Knee - Executive Director of the Community Investment Corporation, Liz Morales – Director of Housing and Community Development at the City of Tucson, and Dan Sullivan – Director of Community and Workforce Development at Pima County**. Here are some highlights from their conversation with more than 40 local leaders and advocates:

Starting a New Partnership

- **Confirm your common purpose:** In this case, Tucson Pima EPP partners all came to the table with the same primary objectives - centering clients with a seamless, transparent process. This common purpose kept the work focused and moving forward.
- **Established trust and existing relationships help:** Prior experiences working together helped the project get off to a stronger start, prompting another question - how can organizations build trust in small ways so that partnerships are in a good position to launch when opportunities arise?
- **Know your strengths and weaknesses:** Partners spoke to the value of organizational self-reflection. What does your organization bring to the table, and what do you need? Sullivan said recognizing the County's long contracting process helped them see the opportunity of subcontracting, and others noted CIC's tech expertise as critical.
- **Resources make a difference:** The influx of federal money gave this project greater ability to start up in a new direction and innovate – something generally covered with dedicated Research and Development dollars in the private sector.

Managing Partnership

- **Leave egos at the door:** The partners have worked to keep Tucson Pima EPP centered on clients and the general public. Doing so has allowed them to give critical feedback about aspects like process improvements more freely, without worry about offending the project 'designer' or 'owner.'
- **No automatic no's:** They also committed to fully hearing each other's concerns and listening attentively. Instead of assuming an adjustment is impossible, they try to explore all possible avenues of a fix or response before ruling anything out.

- **Clarify expectations and capacity:** Each organization brings its own internal processes and capacity. Staying in communication about timelines and expectations has helped. Be cognizant that a partner's needs and priorities may be subject to pressure from outside the partnership or shift during the course of the project.

Most Valuable Lessons Learned

- **Keep working for deeper impact:** Knee stressed that efficient systems don't necessarily mean providers will work less but that they will have more time to dedicate to challenging cases or further innovation. Morales is especially interested in using that energy to reach people not already engaged with nonprofit and government services. How can we build systems that are not only designed for the informed, resourceful individuals who initiate contact?
- **Data is essential:** On a similar note, good data can drive that impact. Data collected during Tucson Pima EPP processes has helped partners see which parts of the community were not applying for rental/utility resources, prompting increased outreach in certain neighborhoods and a Spanish-language marketing push.
- **Partnerships flourish with flexible resources:** All organizations bring certain non-negotiables, so anywhere else that restrictions can be reduced or eliminated helps them focus their energy on the issue at hand. Unrestricted funding is a relatively simple way to do that and support innovative, impactful work – find an organization you trust and give to them freely.

Throughout the discussion and at the end, all attendees were asked to share ideas about how lessons from Tucson Pima EPP might carry forward into future work. **Suggestions included shifting aspects of one-stop locations to virtual spaces; centralizing application portals between multiple organizations, especially if that setup becomes a public expectation and preference; improving referrals with project management and technology; finding ways to use collaboration to keep the Pima County Eviction Prevention Task Force recommendations moving forward; and continuing efforts like the weekly Eviction Prevention Call.** Panelists also put out a call for ideas of how to spend American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) money, with initial suggestions including affordable housing, homeownership, financial education, and resource navigators.

Next Steps

- [Post-Event Survey](#): **We invite all of you, whether you joined the event or not, to add your feedback about what was shared and the ARPA question through our post-event survey.** Results will be shared back at upcoming Financial Wellness Partnership meetings and through our monthly newsletter.
- [Next Meeting - Financial Wellness Partnership](#): **You can also sign up to join us at our next meeting – Thursday, May 6th from 1-2:30pm.**