

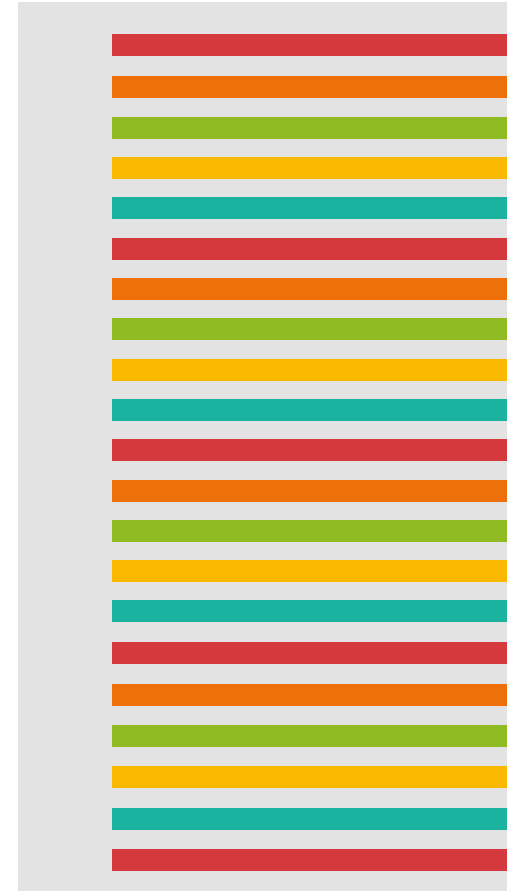
# Embracing Strategic Planning as a Community Engagement Tool

## Sarah Keister Armstrong

Principal, Sarah Keister Armstrong & Associates

she/her/hers

- Consultant to public and nonprofit organizations
- Skilled in using data to facilitate and inform decision making
- Has worked with dozens of small and mid-size organizations since 2013
- Three cats, two kids, and one husband



First things first.  
What are our  
learning  
objectives?

At the end of this  
session, you will  
be better  
equipped to:



1. Identify audiences to include in your next strategic planning process.



2. Use tips for incorporating internal and external feedback.



3. Pull together data, feedback, and your expertise into an actionable plan.

Strategic  
planning and  
community  
engagement are  
natural  
complements.



The pandemic  
has made  
nonprofit  
planning  
challenging.

## The Pandemic Propelled U.S. Giving to the Highest Level in 2020

Jun 29, 2021

Jul 21, 2021, 12:30pm EDT | 232 views

### 186 Nonprofits Shuttered Statewide As Covid-19 Crisis Squeezes Minnesota

### How Nonprofits Are Helping Workers Cope With Pandemic Fatigue

A year into the pandemic, nonprofit workers are struggling. Here's what leaders and foundations can do to help.

By *Jim Rendon* | MARCH 9, 2021

### With Donations Declining, LA Nonprofits Face Post-Pandemic Challenges

### Research shows nonprofit boards improved during COVID due to digital tech adoption

First published: 10 July 2021 | <https://doi.org/10.1002/nba.31041>

# POLL

**Which of the following has your organization historically been the LEAST likely to seek feedback from?**

- 1. Staff
- 2. Individual donors
- 3. Individuals or families you serve
- 4. Funding organizations
- 5. Partner organizations

Which voices  
should we listen  
to?

Those we  
serve

Those who  
support us

Those who  
lead  
decision  
making

Those who  
implement

# What does this participatory process look like in action?

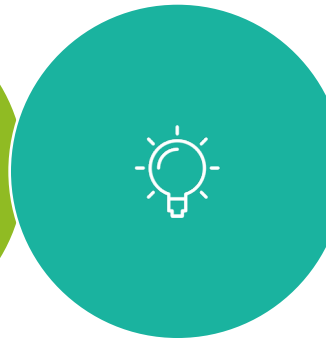
	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
SURVEYS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Can reach a large number of people</li><li>▪ Findings are easily tabulated</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Requires strategies to reach wide cross-sections of the community</li><li>▪ Depending on survey method, can be costly</li></ul>
FOCUS GROUPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Can provide in-depth discussion of specific topics</li><li>▪ Allows for follow-up questions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Reaches a smaller number of participants</li><li>▪ Requires strategies to recruit participants</li><li>▪ May require a third party facilitator</li></ul>
COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Can provide meaningful input through an informal discussion</li><li>▪ Allows for follow-up questions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Reaches a smaller number of participants</li><li>▪ Requires strategies to recruit participants</li><li>▪ Findings may be more cumbersome to analyze</li></ul>

Beware of silos  
and echo  
chambers!

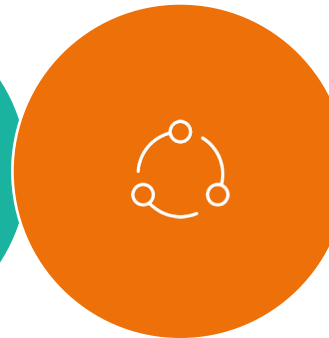
LACK OF  
REPRESENTATION



BIASED FEEDBACK  
LOOP



LIMITED PERSPECTIVE

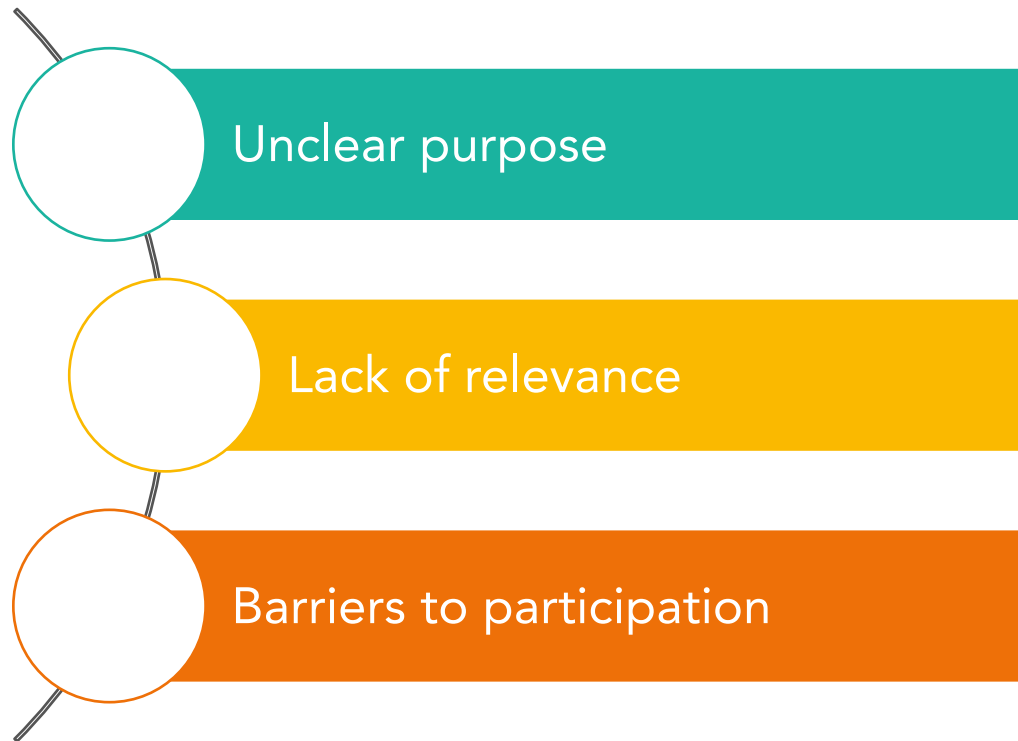


UNCHECKED  
ASSUMPTIONS





There are many reasons why someone may not be engaged in the process.



COVID-19 also  
has influenced  
our perceptions  
of our  
communities.

"Where do we fit  
in?"

"We need to get  
back to normal."

"I need help."

The local dialogues in 2020 and 2021 about reopening schools can tell us a lot about planning within a bubble.



*Photo by Bill Nino on Unsplash*

Sarah Keister Armstrong & Associates | [skaassociates.com](http://skaassociates.com) | [sarah@skaassociates.com](mailto:sarah@skaassociates.com)

All of this information is great.

But how do we sort through it and make an actionable plan?

1

**Compile data and community engagement input together:**

- Demographic information;
  - Surveys; and
  - Focus group and community conversation notes.
- 

2

**Review the findings in a group. Discuss and clarify.**

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3

**Compare themes against what is possible.**

Let's get back to our learning objectives.

Today, this information helped prepare you to:

## KEY TAKEAWAYS



1. Identify audiences to include in your next strategic planning process.



2. Use tips for incorporating internal and external feedback.



3. Pull together data, feedback, and your expertise into an actionable plan.

Excited to get started?

Here are some actionable next steps:

## ACTIONABLE STEPS



Thank you for  
your time today!

I'm happy to  
connect with you.

Sarah Keister Armstrong (she/her/hers)

Principal, Sarah Keister Armstrong & Associates

[sarah@skaassociates.com](mailto:sarah@skaassociates.com)

[www.skaassociates.com](http://www.skaassociates.com)

(224) 305-2701