

LISTEN4GOOD THROUGH THE PANDEMIC:

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# 5 Learnings from Nonprofits Serving Northeastern Pennsylvanians

PRESENTED BY

**NEPA** Funders  
· Northeastern Pennsylvania · Collaborative

# Introduction

Listen4Good is a Fund for Shared Insight initiative to help direct service organizations build sustainable, high-quality, client-focused feedback loops. Grounded in the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion — and using a proven five-step survey methodology — Listen4Good has provided nearly 550 customer-facing nonprofits with expert tools, coaching and resources to listen and respond to those whose voices are least heard.

**In February 2018, five Northeastern Pennsylvania (NEPA) nonprofits were awarded Listen4Good grants.** Notably, these grantees were the first in Pennsylvania to take part in the nationally-recognized initiative.

**Outreach – Center  
for Community  
Resources**  
*formerly Employment Opportunity  
& Training Center (EOTC)*

**The Wright  
Center for  
Community  
Health**

**United Neighborhood  
Centers of  
Northeastern  
Pennsylvania**

**United Way  
of Lackawanna  
and Wayne  
Counties**

**Women's  
Resource  
Center**

Two years later — in early 2020 — six grant-making organizations came together through a strategic, visionary partnership known as the NEPA Funders Collaborative.

**NEPA Funders  
Collaborative**  
• Northeastern Pennsylvania •

The Collaborative aims to foster a learning community of funders and nonprofits throughout the region, and expanding the Listen4Good opportunity to include five more nonprofits was the first order of business. **The second cohort of Listen4Good participants in NEPA was selected in early 2020.**

**Children's  
Service  
Center**

**Commission  
on Economic  
Opportunity**

**Maternal and  
Family Health  
Services**

**NEPA  
Community  
Health Care**

**Volunteers  
in  
Medicine**

Despite the challenges of 2020, each grantee remained committed to the Listen4Good feedback-gathering process. Some implemented widespread surveys for the first time (amid the pandemic), while others had already operationalized and integrated feedback-gathering as a vital part of their daily work.

The information in the report was gathered through interviews with the staff directly involved in implementing Listen4Good. Through the data, stories and examples shared, five core themes emerged.

On behalf of the NEPA Funders Collaborative, it is our honor to share the experiences and learnings of six Listen4Good grantees. We wish you continued success as you listen, learn, respond and grow within your own organization and communities.

**AllOne Foundation & Charities** | John Cosgrove, Executive Director

**Moses Taylor Foundation** | LaTida Smith, President and CEO

**NEPA Health Care Foundation** | Laura Ducceschi, President and CEO

**Scranton Area Community Foundation** | Laura Ducceschi, President and CEO

**The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation** | Rachel Garbow Monroe, President and CEO

**United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties** | Gary Drapek, President and CEO

# Acknowledgments

*The NEPA Funders Collaborative gratefully acknowledges the following Listen4Good grantees for sharing their experiences to develop this report:*

**Children's Service Center** with its affiliate, Robinson Counseling Center, is an integrated behavioral health organization that provides services to children, adolescents, adults and families. The CSC's assessment, crisis and referral services are staffed 24-hours a day, seven days a week, by psychiatric professionals for initial assessment and referral. Offering twenty-five unique programs, CSC services cover a continuum of care from least restrictive to residential. *The team includes Mike Hopkins, President and CEO; Susan Hennemuth, Director of Development; Steve Merlina, Corporate Compliance and Quality Officer; and Britni Yenchak, Quality Assurance Coordinator.*

**Maternal and Family Health Services** is a nonprofit health and human services team working to meet the health and nutrition needs of Northeastern Pennsylvania's women, children and families through information, education and quality care. *The team includes Maria Montoro Edwards, PhD, President and CEO; Shannon Hayward, Vice President of Service Delivery Operations; Iyana King, Customer Service Representative; and Sherry Koch, Customer Service Coordinator.*

**Outreach – Center for Community Resources** is a designated Pennsylvania Family Center. As a community-based safe haven providing evidence-based prevention, education and intervention services to individuals and families, Outreach relies on research and measurable outcomes. *The team includes Linda Ciampi, Executive Director; Jane Augustine, Program Director; Liz Ratchford, Director of Community Outreach and Resource Development; and Jennifer Shoemaker, Program Manager Workforce Development and Employment.*

**United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties** fights for the education, financial stability and health of everyone in the community. The organization advocates for and supports quality education that leads to graduation, steady employment and sufficient income to support a family's financial stability while enjoying good physical and mental health. As a safety net in times of crisis, the organization distributes critical funding to regional nonprofits. *The team includes Gary Drapek, President and CEO and Peg Kopko, Vice President, Community Impact.*

**Volunteers in Medicine** is a nonprofit, community-based organization helping to meet the primary healthcare needs of employed individuals who do not have access to or cannot afford health insurance in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania. Free primary and preventative health services, including dental care and counseling, are provided to eligible individuals. *The team includes Kelly Ranieli, Executive Director; Frances Feudale, DO, Medical Director; Chris Gaughan, Nursing Director; Ivanna Kolesa, RDH, Dental Hygienist; Kimmy Nguyen, PharmD, Clinical Pharmacist; Tamara Panowicz, Social Care Coordinator; and Darcie Schaffer, Manager of Dental Services.*

**Women's Resource Center** works to end domestic and sexual violence against adults and children. The Center provides comprehensive services for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking and human trafficking in Lackawanna and Susquehanna Counties. Services also include a crisis hotline, crisis counseling, emergency shelter, safe housing, legal services, support services, community education and advocacy. *The team includes Peg Ruddy, Executive Director; Sarah Dawgert, Education Manager; Patty McLain, Teen Educator; and Nancy Perri, Grants & Education Program Director.*

*The NEPA Funders Collaborative also gratefully recognizes all team members and volunteers who selflessly continued to serve the Northeastern Pennsylvania community throughout the pandemic. The collective efforts of many incredible individuals who delivered essential health and social services are deeply appreciated.*

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*To learn more about The Fund for Shared Insight and Listen4Good, including eligibility and participation information, visit [fundforsharedinsight.org/listen4good](https://fundforsharedinsight.org/listen4good).*





*Photographs in this report were taken at various points before and during the pandemic. All appropriate safety guidelines (such as mask-wearing and social distancing) were followed at the time the image was captured.*



# learning 1

**Involve staff at the onset and consistently communicate results.**

**Close feedback loops.**



Nurses like Ariana from Maternal and Family Health Services learned, through direct feedback, how much their role matters.

A foundational concept in the Listen4Good process is soliciting involvement on multiple levels and setting the tone for an honest conversation about organizational improvement.

While this certainly makes sense in theory, within the mix of limited resources and already-busy days, leadership may have concerns about how staff will react and may even assume the response will not be favorable. Will team members be reluctant to add another responsibility to their full list of to-dos? Are they likely to push back, assuming a survey will highlight perceived shortcomings or failures in service delivery? A transparent survey process — from creating to distributing, analyzing and reporting — can shift the perception from overwhelming to exciting.

*We anticipated getting staff... to support this project to be a somewhat complicated process. Asking staff to do 'one more thing' seemed daunting. Surprisingly, once we explained the purpose of the project and staff realized they could have as much input into the overall design of the project as they wanted, they couldn't wait to get feedback. Ownership of the project and staff buy-in were key.*

**JANE AUGUSTINE**, Program Director, Outreach – Center for Community Resources

**Staff may find their own perceptions addressed (and possibly even contradicted) once survey results are analyzed and shared.**

For example, Maternal and Family Health Services' Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), a home-visiting program, was significantly impacted by pandemic-related restrictions on in-person visits with clients.

Many nurses wondered if their work was making a difference during such a challenging time. Without face-to-face, personal interactions, the nurses felt disconnected and frustrated.

Once the Listen4Good survey was deployed and analyzed, the clients' responses told a very different story.

Shannon Hayward, Vice President of Service Delivery Operations at Maternal and Family Health Services, says, "I've never heard the word 'love' mentioned so much in a survey. The open-ended question, '*Why do you stay involved with the NFP?*' had multiple responses about how the clients love their nurse. I wasn't surprised by it because we hear that all the time. Our clients and the nurses are very connected. What surprised everyone was even clients who were new to the program during the pandemic, who never had an in-person visit, were still feeling that way even without the face-to-face connection. It was validating to see the trust and connection even during these difficult times."

While communicating survey results with staff may not be a new concept to more sophisticated nonprofits, sharing feedback, survey results and learnings with the individuals and families receiving services typically is.

**Known as "closing the feedback loop," consistently communicating results inside and outside of an organization can be as simple or complex as resources allow.**

Feedback loops can be closed through conversations, emails, posters, paper signs, printed handouts or a combination of many vehicles. Women's Resource Center made emailable graphics [shown below] to share themes and actions with school administrators and teachers, who then relayed the information to students who responded to the surveys. The United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties provided professionally designed dry-erase boards to ten regional food pantries so anyone on staff could get involved and share quick, timely updates. And Outreach – Center for Community Resources created simple letter-sized printouts with verbatim feedback.

Jane Augustine, Outreach's Program Director, adds, "... it actually got to a point where they [survey respondents] would ask us for updates as the quarter was ending. They wanted to know what, if anything, was new, found, added or could be updated."

The lesson here is to be specific with what was "heard" and provide actionable, implementable points regarding what will change due to the feedback. 🌟

**West Scranton High School students- your voice matters to the Women's Resource Center! We asked and you answered.**

1	What is Safe Dates good at?	2	What was the most important thing you learned?	3	What could Safe Dates do better?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teaching us about healthy vs unhealthy relationships</li><li>• Raising awareness of dating violence</li><li>• Teaching us how to stay safer</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• About dating abuse</li><li>• Red flags/warning signs</li><li>• How to help a friend who is abusing or being abused</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nothing</li><li>• More/better swag</li><li>• Be more interactive</li></ul>

We heard you! WRC will work to make the sessions more interactive and bring more variety of swag. Other suggestions we will address: use less paper, include LGBTQ relationships, talk more about male victims, use more real life examples. We're on it-thank you for the input!



*We have conducted surveys in the past, and results were not shared with the patients. Survey content was focused on ensuring that we were providing great customer service and if the patient felt comfortable in our facility. The results would be shared with staff or volunteers, but we did not directly share with the patients. The process through Listen4Good had a positive impact on educating on closing the loop and sharing with all stakeholders including the patient.*

**KELLY RANIELI**, Executive Director, Volunteers in Medicine

Maternal and Family Health Services (MFHS) is a health and human service organization dedicated to meeting the community's needs through information, education and quality care. MFHS' team delivers essential services to 90,000+ low-income, uninsured, and under-insured individuals annually across sixteen counties in the Commonwealth.

The most recognizable and widely-utilized program administered through MFHS is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). The size of the WIC program and leadership's desire to find ways to improve it made it an ideal service line to dig into using surveys. The MFHS team began working with their Listen4Good coach in early 2020, but the pandemic brought the project to a halt.

In-person interactions were replaced with phone calls, texts and telehealth. For the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) — a home visitation program to support at-risk individuals throughout their pregnancy and the first two years following the baby's birth — “going virtual” was a complete departure from the delivery model the team was comfortable with. The nurses devised creative ways to stay connected with the clients and babies, yet still felt disconnected from their clients without face-to-face interactions.

“Part of what Listen4Good does is encourage us to engage the staff,” says Shannon Hayward, Vice President of Service Delivery Operations. She heard the nurses' concerns and suggested changing course to survey the NFP

clients — a much smaller subset of the MFHS client population and a service line where the nurses were feeling especially frustrated due to pandemic-related changes and restrictions.

“Our staff contributed to the development of questions, were interested in learning more about how the clients were responding to remote services during the pandemic, and actively encouraged clients to take the survey,” Shannon shared.

NFP nurses stepped up in a big way, manually sending the survey link to each client via text message. Shannon believes the authentic relationships the nurses created with clients were a key driver of the 44% response rate.

She adds, “We were concerned that if nurses could not be in the home with clients, the program would not have the same impact, benefit, or value. The survey results helped us understand that, while in-home visits are preferred, most clients are still receiving the same level of support from their nurses and experiencing the same level of connection to their nurses during the pandemic.” MFHS' team was critical to helping clients navigate the profound uncertainty of the last year and parenthood in general. Now, the data has been captured to prove it.

The Listen4Good initiative was also vital to staff morale. Shannon says, “We had data and words from clients to show the nurses the feedback. We focused on closing that loop with them and saying, ‘See what great work you're still doing. These connections — your work — has such an impact. You might feel like just a

voice on the phone, but look what your clients are saying about you.”

Listen4Good concepts are expected to have longer-term organizational benefits at MFHS. “We're institutionalizing feedback loops within our operations and quality improvement efforts now,” added Maria Montoro Edwards, MFHS President/CEO. “And I think we are going to come out of the pandemic stronger and more agile.”

Shannon adds, “Listen4Good provided our staff with training not just on how to properly survey clients to get useful feedback, but then how to take that feedback and create actionable items that will further improve our client experience.”

She mentions with a smile, “Even if you think you know how to do surveys, or you think you don't need a survey coach, and you don't need extra support in creating new surveys, you do.”

*We know from our work in the community that listening to the people we serve is a crucial step in using our resources to the best advantage. The pandemic and the way it limited face-to-face interaction has amplified the importance of this feedback. With Listen4Good we know that the women and young children served are receiving the support they need during this important time in their lives.*

**LAURA DUCCESCHI**  
President and CEO,  
NEPA Health Care Foundation  
Partner, NEPA Funders Collaborative



## learning 2

Every word matters.



Outreach — Center for Community Resources' team realized its survey had inadvertently driven a rise in program participation.

Although communication between nonprofits and those they serve happens every day, its effectiveness can, at times, be questionable. Through the Listen4Good initiative, grantees were paired with a coach to carefully construct their client-facing surveys, thoughtfully and objectively selecting the exact questions and verbiage.

**Even after multiple reviews for clarity, notable differences were identified between the grantees' intent and the survey respondents' interpretation.**

Outreach – Center for Community Resources' project focused on surveying incarcerated individuals. Executive Director Linda Ciampi recalled the one question she struggled to buy into: *"How likely are you to follow up with Outreach for help with your future plans after your release?"* Linda's Listen4Good coach convinced her to keep the question, and respondents were also encouraged to share the reason for the answer they chose. Many individuals responded they were *"likely"* or *"very likely"* to follow up with services. A correlating 21.6% rise in foot traffic into the Center seemed to reinforce this sentiment.

When the team asked participants why they came in for help, surprising responses included, *"You asked me to on the survey."* or *"On the survey, I said I would. I stand by my word."* That one question — the question that was almost omitted — was perceived as an invitation, almost a verbal contract with the individual, to follow through with services upon release.

The Volunteers in Medicine team also experienced language-related learnings throughout the pandemic. Although a significant amount of Spanish-speaking survey respondents said they were educated about COVID, the staff realized that words used to communicate with a patient who had tested positive or had symptoms (such as *"quarantine"* and *"isolation"*) were not fully understood. The staff and volunteers changed the instructional phrases to *"stay at home"* and *"stay in a separate room from other family members"* to ensure the directions were understood.

## Learning 2: Every word matters [continued]

Words, phrases and interpretation all play a part in soliciting and receiving meaningful feedback. Exploring the nuances of language also helped Women's Resource Center's team unpack some curious survey results.

Despite receiving generally positive student feedback, the scores for one specific question — *"How likely is it that you would recommend this program to a friend or family member?"* — were notably low. Nancy Perri, Women's Resource

Center's Grants & Education Program Director, decided to dig deeper.

She learned that the students interpreted the word "recommend" to mean they would be actively encouraging and influencing others to go through the program.

Although responses to other questions consistently indicated the students found value in Safe Dates, the thought of literally "recommending" it to those around

them was not something they were willing to do. The Women's Resource Center's team recognized an opportunity to adjust — but not change — the process based on the real-time learnings.

The team began verbally clarifying the question — *"How likely is it that you would recommend this program to a friend or family member?"* — when administering future surveys so students could provide the most accurate response. 🌟



## Women's Resource Center

The Women's Resource Center (WRC) assists victims of domestic violence and sexual assault as they gain their personal and financial independence. The organization addresses prevention and social change in various ways — one of which is the Safe Dates program. Through Safe Dates — the focus of the WRC's Listen4Good project — students learn to understand common stereotypes and causes of dating violence, prevention techniques and how they can help a friend in an abusive relationship.

Sarah Dawgert, Education Manager, has overseen the Safe Dates program since its inception in 2018. She works hand in hand with colleague Patty McLain, Teen Educator, to deliver the ten-session curriculum to over 1,000 seventh- to twelfth-grade (high school) students in Lackawanna County's public and private schools each year. When embarking on the Listen4Good project, the team was engaged and excited to explore students' perceptions of the relatively new program.



### Safe Dates participants said:

*"I never knew there were resources here for people who experience this."*  
—9<sup>TH</sup> GRADER

*"I liked that we could talk about things (like dating abuse) that we would not normally talk about."*  
—9<sup>TH</sup> GRADER

*"I learned a lot, and I especially liked the part about how to help a friend."*  
—10<sup>TH</sup> GRADER





In-person Safe Dates sessions pre-pandemic transitioned to remote or hybrid in 2020.

Openness and the ability to embrace change have been vital. Feedback gleaned early on revealed the students' desire to explore specific topics like consent, same-sex relationships and gender in more detail. Sarah adds, "It's an evidence-based curriculum so there are certain things we can't change, but we did expand talking about consent. We heard comments related to relationships and even friendships, like, 'I never knew I could tell my friends no.' A lot of students commented that way. It surprised us, and we made sure to spend more time talking about that, so we know students really understand."

When students noted the limited scenarios around same-sex relationships and gender, Sarah and her team took meaningful steps to respond. The team didn't change the curriculum, per se, but they shifted to gender-neutral names and pronouns and opened more space to explore LGBTQ+ relationships.

Safe Dates was typically delivered through in-classroom sessions, and the team was able to adjust at the onset of the pandemic. School districts' models varied: some moved to 100% virtual, some to hybrid and some remained in-person. Patty's approach became

varied as well. And although she's quite adept at Google Classroom, she is eager to get back into all of the physical classrooms as soon as she can.

By leveraging the Listen4Good insights to demonstrate the program's value, Safe Dates continues to grow.

A second educator was hired to complement Patty's work and focus on elementary and middle school students. Along with embracing a new age group, Safe Dates is also expanding into additional districts.

Sarah adds, "When we're presenting it, now we can say, 'This is what's happened while we were in Scranton or Abington [Heights] and Riverside.' We're able to show a bigger district, a smaller district and a private Catholic school that in the end, the students love the program . . . this whole process has helped us get our foot in the door in a few other schools."



*Listen4Good allows us to gauge programmatic effectiveness, which is essential for channeling support in the right direction. We are thrilled that more students will benefit from the Safe Dates program. Even though we knew the information was important for students to hear, the data from Listen4Good amplified the effectiveness of the program.*

**LAURA DUCCESCHI**

President and CEO, Scranton Area Foundation | Partner, NEPA Funders Collaborative





## Identify and engage your community within your community.



Volunteers in Medicine has developed a robust network of students to expand the capacity of its paid staff.

**N**onprofits typically have a finger on the pulse of community happenings and develop a network of partners and resources to call on as needed.

**Listen4Good provided a structured opportunity to generate even more awareness and collaboration between grantees.**

Starting in 2018, the first cohort of Listen4Good grantees convened quarterly, in-person, to share learnings, roadblocks, solutions and to network in general. In early 2020, the meetings transitioned to a virtual format that included current grantees, previous participants and funders.

The quarterly meetings continue to provide space for team members to connect cross-organizationally on a more personal level.

Along with exposure to regional Listen4Good grantees, structured networking and sharing has provided a vehicle for Northeastern PA nonprofits to be heard outside of the immediate community.

The Outreach team was invited to share their Listen4Good experience in 2019 during a national webinar titled “Empowering Families.” Jane Augustine, Program Director, and Linda Ciampi, Executive Director, presented, and Outreach’s project was also spotlighted on the Fund for Shared Insight’s website. Regionally, Rick Moyers, Fund for Shared Insight’s Communications Director, joined the Outreach team for a panel discussion at the 2019 NEPA Learning Conference, highlighting the learnings for community members, partners and funders.



*We compared, we were able to see what other agencies were asking, because a lot of times we’re interacting with the same people. You’re asking the same question — maybe in a different context — but it was interesting. For us, especially with Outreach — because we were doing a prison group and they did work in the prison — we ended up connecting on some other things sitting around that table. We were brought together because of this program. They [Outreach] invited us to come into their groups, so the women in the prison realized that we were available to provide counseling. We were getting the feedback from all the other agencies . . . to see what was happening in the community.*

**NANCY PERRI**, Grants & Education Program Director, Women’s Resource Center

A few months later, Outreach was invited to present to the board of directors at a local foundation. Even years after embarking on their Listen4Good journey, Outreach continues to share relevant client feedback in grant requests.

**Working with a finite amount of human capital is not a new concept for nonprofits. Engaging community volunteers, team members, learners and partners makes all the difference.**

For 13 years, Volunteers in Medicine (VIM) has successfully hosted students from local colleges and universities pursuing various curriculums: physician assistant, nursing, pharmacy, social work, medical, dental, marketing, office management and medical assistant. The VIM staff depends on volunteers and students to assist with the busy daily operations of the clinic and special projects. VIM's Executive Director, Kelly Ranieli, acknowledges that they could not have completed the Listen4Good project without additional help, especially during the pandemic. Kelly adds, "We have a master of social work student from Marywood [University], and that's an interesting rotation because they become like a staff member. Most rotations are six weeks, but they're here for months . . . we host a lot of students."

Outreach also leveraged their volunteer base in tandem with staff to implement the surveys in the prison setting. Security protocols restricted the use of outside technology or tablets, so the inmates completed all surveys with pencil and paper. Volunteers assisted by delivering the surveys and uploading the answers into SurveyMonkey for evaluation.

Although a bit tricky at the onset, once the process was approved,

the gathering and populating of data made possible by community volunteers ran relatively smoothly.

**Continuing to inspire teams — the heart and soul of a nonprofit's community within a community — throughout the pandemic quickly became a crucial focus.**

Pre-pandemic, Children's Service Center's leadership traditionally shared periodic updates through in-person town halls. Although it is still the preferred way to connect, Mike Hopkins, President and CEO, has realized some benefits of a virtual set-up.

Through online meetings, Mike's travel time has been reduced drastically. In the past, multiple town halls would have taken two or more days. Now, he can reach multiple teams across the organization's geographically wide service area in three and a half hours or less — and without even leaving his desk.

In the future, even once teams are able to gather again, virtual town halls will likely continue to be offered as an option for Children's Service Center's staff. 🌸



Ten regional food pantries were indirectly supported through Listen4Good via the United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties. *(Learn more on page 16.)*

Dana Force [above], Assistant Director of Community Services at United Neighborhood Centers' food pantry on Olive Street, Scranton, continues to tap into the region's network of dedicated volunteers who freely share their time and talents.

Volunteers organize and pack food boxes, manage inventory and even translate signage into multiple languages. Dana's volunteer calendar hangs on the wall in the canned food storage area, organized ever so neatly and filled with names of people who "always show up."



Andre Parks [left] has been "showing up" to help at the food pantry for years. Pre-pandemic, he volunteered two days a week. Watching the number of families served each day skyrocket from 70 to more than 200 at the height of the pandemic has motivated him to get more involved.

Andre says, "I'm in here five days a week, without fail, and I'm really blessed to do this work. Everyone struggles at some point, and we need to lift each other up. A little compassion goes a long way."



Volunteers in Medicine (VIM) provides free medical, dental and behavioral health services to low-income working families in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania. VIM operates solely on donations, grants and special events, and has earned national accreditation for providing quality comprehensive patient care — a unique recognition for a free clinic. With only five paid staff, VIM has learned to engage volunteer healthcare professionals, students from local universities and the community to achieve its mission.

In March of 2020, VIM's Listen4Good survey was drafted and ready for implementation, but once the pandemic hit the nation, the clinic shifted to telehealth visits in April and May. After regrouping, the team decided to recreate the survey to focus on the COVID-19 virus and assess their patients' needs.

VIM's Executive Director, Kelly Ranieli, originally envisioned patients completing the survey in person during a visit, but CDC protocols encouraged the removal of items that can spread germs — including

pens and papers. The team reviewed alternative processes to administer the surveys and decided calling the patients on the phone would be the best option.

"We have limited paid staff, so we could not have accomplished the project during this hectic time without the help of students and volunteers. The clinic is seeing an influx of new patients due to many families losing insurance through the pandemic. We were fortunate to host a health administration student, Tavion, from Misericordia University. He had the responsibility of contacting over 500 patients, and Listen4Good allowed us to input the survey answers in our EMR [Electronic Medical Record] as opposed to SurveyMonkey. Utilizing the EMR allowed us to collect the data and input it into the particular patient chart, which also gathered demographics. Reports were then easily produced."

Using tools already in place — and not having to ask questions to which the team already had the answers — saved precious time. In four months, the team made 565 phone calls, capturing

the responses of 114 patients. Although the dedicated efforts paid off, they encountered additional hurdles along the way.

"A large percentage of VIM's patients are Spanish speaking, and, currently, the clinic doesn't have a staff member fluent in Spanish. There were also a lot of messages that had to be left on voicemail. Some patients requested the survey to be sent in the mail, which the clinic did, including a stamped return envelope. Surprisingly, many surveys were returned via mail indicating patients may have been more comfortable filling it out at home rather than answering the questions over the phone," said Kelly. "The Listen4Good project allowed us to explore and define pandemic-related communication challenges with VIM's patient base. The insights have been invaluable to VIM's team, leadership, board and partners."

Although 80% responded that they felt educated on COVID, the interaction with staff during visits and telehealth sessions was sometimes conflicting. After receiving a COVID-positive diagnosis, some patients still intended to run errands to the pharmacy or the grocery store. The staff quickly realized the importance of providing patients with clearer or more precise directions to instill the importance of quarantine and isolation.

VIM's survey asked participants if they or someone in their household had been tested for COVID-19. Initially, 32% reported having been tested, but as Tavion explored this in more detail, that wasn't necessarily the case.



Darcie, Manager of Dental Services, checks in with patients to understand their experiences and needs.



Respondents receiving daily temperature checks at their place of employment interpreted that specific screening measure as a “test” for the virus. This demonstrated yet another instance where widely accepted COVID-19-related vocabulary proved to be an increasingly complex challenge.

Seventy-three percent of respondents were interested in virtual health visits but worried they were not technologically savvy enough to properly use video platforms like Zoom. Access to a computer in the home setting to discuss health-related information was also an identified challenge within VIM’s low-income patient base.

More than 82% of respondents reported feeling safe and “very” or “extremely” likely to visit VIM for in-person healthcare services during the pandemic.

Kelly made sure to close the feedback loop with key stakeholders, a tactic she’d learned from her Listen4Good coach. She shared the survey results at a board meeting, displayed posters in the clinic and communicated with 2,000 subscribers who receive VIM’s monthly email newsletter.

Sharing the Listen4Good results with AllOne Foundation & Charities helped VIM attain additional funding.

For years, communicating with non-English speaking patients had been a challenge, and the data collected through Listen4Good validated the need for an outsourced, certified medical translation program.

VIM was awarded a grant from AllOne Charities to implement LanguageLine, a widely-used, healthcare-specific interpretation program, during the summer of 2020. Utilizing LanguageLine and accessing a translator either via video or phone call has resolved VIM’s translation issue.



Volunteers in Medicine used data to attain a grant for healthcare-specific translation software.



*AllOne Foundation & Charities is always looking for our partners to provide real solutions to the seemingly intractable barriers to good quality health care. VIM is an exceptional partner in so many ways, but especially when they strategically engaged those they strive to serve. When that data underscored a significant communication hurdle, they made an excellent case to us for the investment in LanguageLine. The improved access to healthcare has been measurable. And all because VIM listened so well!*

**JOHN COSGROVE**

Executive Director, AllOne Foundation & Charities  
Partner, NEPA Funders Collaborative

## United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties

United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties is a funder and fiscal agent supporting 41 educational, employment and health-related programs through 18 agencies. As a result, the organization's path to attaining and administering a Listen4Good grant — and now investing in the initiative as part of the NEPA Funders Collaborative — has been quite unique.

Vice President of Community Impact, Peg Kopko, typically has her hand on the pulse of regional happenings. Listen4Good was nowhere on her radar until receiving a call from Jeff Smith, Senior Program Officer at Moses Taylor Foundation, about three weeks before the grant submissions were due. Jeff encouraged her to check into the opportunity and explore how it might benefit the ten food pantries currently receiving United Way support.

Since Listen4Good recipients have direct contact with clients, which wasn't the case here, it was certainly a nonconventional approach, but Peg was curious and very interested.

After a few exploratory calls with the Listen4Good team, the United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties applied and received a notice of award shortly thereafter.

From the onset, the structure was atypical. The Listen4Good coach worked with the United Way's team, which then interfaced with the staff at the ten food pantries. Peg knew right away that handling all outreach, analysis and closure of feedback loops would be impossible due to limited staff and timelines. She engaged an educator from Marywood University, Dr. Diane Keller, and a graduate assistant to administer surveys across all ten food pantries.

Peg speaks highly of the Listen4Good coach, who was "wonderful" and of the nonconventional setup, she adds, "I always said we had two constituencies — the food pantries and the clients who utilize the food pantries. So we had an extra layer in there and had to close the loop two ways."

Peg openly shares the practical advice from her coach that has resonated most — **"Don't ask questions about things you can't change."** For example, don't ask if a food pantry's location is

convenient if there are no plans or financial resources to move. Or, if COVID-19 related guidelines dictate individualized, pre-packaged options instead of more client choice, don't ask about food preferences on the survey.

As with almost all Listen4Good participants, meaningful changes were made based on feedback received. Instead of giving clients reusable shopping bags, the United Way starting supplying reusable food storage containers. Some food pantries explored expanding their hours and integrated more dairy. Others purchased chairs to create a more comfortable atmosphere in common areas. Every food pantry received dry erase boards [pictured above] in English and Spanish and a fresh pack of markers. This simple, yet visual and impactful system was effective for sharing real-time changes and closing feedback loops.

Peg has wholeheartedly embraced the idea of feedback-gathering; she has even integrated a key question — **"How do you get feedback from your clients?"** — into the United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties' funding application. Now as a member of the NEPA Funders Collaborative, Peg has been able to provide a level of collegial support to grantees currently implementing Listen4Good. She says, "I'm always open to sharing my experience. I tell them, 'Here's where I was when I started. I was in your boots.'"

It's no secret communities' needs are significant and resources are limited. Peg adds, "We all should try and be on the same path as best as we can."



*Listen for Good provided a great opportunity to support positive change not only for the community members we aim to serve, but also for the nonprofit partners we work with so closely to accomplish our mission. Through this process we've learned the importance of closing the feedback loop — acknowledging that we're not just requesting feedback to "check a box," but we're actually reading it, evaluating it and determining what changes are feasible.*

### JEFF SMITH

Senior Program Officer, Moses Taylor Foundation  
Partner, NEPA Funders Collaborative



# learning 4

**Leverage captured data to validate and advocate for your communities' unique needs.**



Sarah from Women's Resource Center showcases data in easy-to-digest graphs.

A significant majority of nonprofits across the country collect data. Whether those efforts are consistently incorporated throughout the year or launched in response to a specific initiative or funders' requirement, surveys are (for the most part) commonplace. In juxtaposition, many nonprofits do not have the time, staff or resources to analyze that same data and derive useful insights.

**While most nonprofits — especially those in human services — have compelling stories to tell when illustrating impact and need, Listen4Good challenges participants to evaluate and advocate for the community's needs based on data.**

Using SurveyMonkey, an inexpensive data-gathering and analysis tool, various team members can access, analyze, share and compare longer-term learnings from surveys, year-over-year. Many of the Northeastern Pennsylvania grantees understood SurveyMonkey at a high level but had never experienced the expanded functionality of the paid version. They had also never worked through a survey process with the support of a trained, external coach.

Sarah from Women's Resource Center [pictured above] learned to use visual, easy-to-digest graphs and charts to best tell the Safe Dates program's story.

“SurveyMonkey allows us to organize and analyze the data, then run different charts and graphs to help us understand our impact based on key factors including gender identity, age, race and ethnicity, for example. This data helps us shape our programs to meet the needs of our community.”

**SARAH DAWGERT**, Education Manager, Women's Resource Center

Using data when communicating with boards of directors, funders and school administrators helps to, as Sarah says, “... keep bringing the message back to those donors about, ‘This is where your money is going. And these are the real results we're seeing.’”



## Learning 4: Leverage captured data to validate and advocate for your communities' unique needs [continued]

Women's Resource Center's Safe Dates program was originally funded through an Educational Improvement Tax Credit and a one-time board member contribution. Now — by submitting funding requests that include hard data gleaned through Listen4Good — the team has found success in securing diversified, longer-term program-related support.

WRC plans to keep the Listen4Good structure in place to monitor perceptions, continuously improve the program and assess longer-term outcomes (like reduction in the cycle of violence) over time.

Outreach – Center for Community Resources used data to request reinstatement of the General Educational Development (GED) program at Lackawanna County Prison. Although the program had been

paused as a cost-savings measure for years, the data showcased a valuable opportunity to make a positive impact on inmates' lives. The prison board and leadership digested the information presented by Outreach's team and decided to reinstate the program.

Volunteers in Medicine used data to advocate for — and attain — funding for a healthcare-specific language translation program. And the United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties now takes a close look at how nonprofits gather and share data when awarding grant funding each year.

Listen4Good participants were also encouraged to apply for easy-to-attain “mini-grants.” These additional resource infusions from the NEPA Funders Collaborative were earmarked for implementing changes and actionable feedback derived from surveys.

For example, Maternal and Family Health Services requested funding for activity kits and engagement packs that staff could drop off at clients' homes. The United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties assisted one of the regional food pantries by providing more chairs in the waiting area.

**Nonprofits don't have to have a researcher or data expert on staff to implement a program like Listen4Good.**

By leveraging available, easy-to-use, accessible tools — as well as showcasing the hard data to detail a community's needs — feedback and facts can support a compelling story and help potential funders and stakeholders clearly see the rationale behind a program-related change or grant request(s). 🌟



### Outreach – Center for Community Resources

Outreach – Center for Community Resources is a community-based safe haven. Providing prevention, education, and intervention services to nearly 5,000 lives a year, Outreach offers evidence-based programs and relies on solid research and measurable outcomes to guide and support families. Outreach's home base is in Scranton, but additional program locations at Skyview Park Apartments and Lackawanna County Prison (LCP) allow even more accessibility to generally low-income, unemployed individuals looking to increase their skills.

Led by Executive Director Linda Ciampi, Outreach's team was no stranger to soliciting feedback from clients. Program-related questionnaires are part of contractual requirements with funders and partners. Still, the questions typically focus on the clients' experience — not necessarily about Outreach or the individual client's relationship with the organization. Linda notes that Listen4Good was “that very opportunity to be able to ask the questions like *‘where do we fit in a person's life?’* We've enjoyed hearing from folks and adapting our programs in ways that make a difference — not just what we think needs to make the difference but from the end user's perspective.”

Program Director Jane Augustine oversees Outreach's prison/court-related programs and workforce development efforts at Lackawanna County Prison. Implementing Listen4Good in this unique setting proved to be a pivotal decision with widespread impacts.

Prisoners aren't used to having their voices heard. So from the start and through the duration of the project, Jane stressed the importance of participating and made sure to keep survey respondents in the know.

She distributed simple flyers with actual responses but without names to close the feedback loops after each round of surveys. She mentions, “I would always hear people say, *‘I said that, I said that.’* They felt like they took ownership of something...”

Respondents indicated a strong desire for in-prison GED opportunities and expanded life-skills programs, and Jane set the stage to share the survey results with LCP's leadership.



Jennifer and Jane from Outreach – Center for Community Resources used data to help reinstate a General Educational Development (GED) program at a local prison.

After presenting the data to the warden and the prison board of directors, some on-site programs were extended, and the General Educational Development (GED) program (that had been paused since 2012 due to budget limitations) was reinstated.

Helping participants achieve their GED is life-changing, and for many participants, attaining a GED is the first time they have completed any type of formal education. Since the start of programming in October 2019, 31 individuals have taken the GED exam with a passing rate of 77.4%.

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, outside visitors — including Outreach’s GED instruction team — have been unable to enter the prison. The program was put on pause until further notice but is expected to resume once visitation restrictions are lifted.

An education paired with post-release support significantly reduces the likelihood of recidivism.

Of those who participate in Outreach’s programs, the recidivism rate is 30%, nearly half of the 56% recidivism rate of individuals released from Lackawanna County Prison who do not participate in services. The three-year recidivism rate across the country is 70%.

Jane knows — not only due to her meetings with former inmates but because of data — the changes implemented through the Listen4Good survey have long-term benefits.

She notes, “The bigger impact, for me, was the data that I was able to get. Having those numbers — the data behind why change was needed — helped so significantly...

That data was invaluable.” Jane adds, “To be honest in the beginning, I wasn’t exactly 100% sure how this — surveying and asking for feedback — was going to play out. The reality is it’s probably one of the best things I’ve done in all the time I’ve been here.”



*It is well known that a proper education sets the stage for a more productive and successful life. The outstanding work done by Outreach to help reinstate and expand the LCP General Education Program is a perfect example of the value of collaboration and use of information gathered through the Listen4Good program.*

**GARY DRAPEK**  
President and CEO, United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties  
Partner, NEPA Funders Collaborative



# learning 5

**Prioritize feedback-gathering for the long term and always be open to change.**



Children's Service Center engaged staff throughout the process and found value in working with a Listen4Good coach.

Competing day-to-day priorities are an obvious hurdle to feedback-gathering initiatives in a normal year. Interestingly enough, even throughout the year of the pandemic, all Listen4Good grantees in Northeastern Pennsylvania continued to move forward with feedback-gathering. Many credit their Listen4Good coach — a trained, external resource provided to grantees — with “keeping it all on track” and helping staff better understand the nuances and importance of surveys in general.

“It would have been very easy to say, ‘We don’t have time for a survey; there’s so much going on,’” said Shannon Hayward, Vice President of Service Delivery Operations at Maternal and Family Health Services. “The Listen4Good coach helped us keep our focus, and the feedback we received has been so valuable to us.”

Having a coach was beneficial for even the seasoned, in-house resources at Children’s Service Center. Britni Yenchak, the organization’s Quality Assurance Coordinator, has been immersed in surveys and quality improvement work for nearly a decade. She adds, “The biggest and most important lesson I learned from Camille [Listen4Good coach], and through this whole experience, was really to just embrace the unexpected and look at the possibility of new ideas for growth, for opportunity. She was always right in there just pushing us to think harder, to move forward and persevere.”

**Feedback gathering poses an opportunity to take an objective, honest look at services and operations over time.**

While many grantees plan to integrate new (non-COVID-related) questions in the coming months, minimizing survey changes over time was a notable takeaway. The teams plan to use the original survey structure and only add new questions to the end. Participants learned that the more a survey changes, the more challenging it is to compare and interpret year-over-year results and trends over time.



Maternal and Family Health Services' clinical and quality teams have already started institutionalizing Listen4Good practices across its multiple service lines. The team has also been open to change, using the COVID-related restrictions on in-person contact to become “paperless” in the Nurse-Family Partnership program. The administrative team and providers also embraced telehealth capabilities in place of in-person visits and have continued to offer virtual appointments now as an additional convenience for patients who prefer the telehealth option.

Outreach — Center for Community Resources, a 2018 grantee, has fully embraced the idea of surveying clients and, now, its staff. The team used their Listen4Good knowledge to craft an employee-facing survey, aiming to understand pandemic-related challenges and gauge how team members felt throughout the challenging year. Executive Director Linda Ciampi adds, “Surveys have become part of our culture. If it’s working, you keep it as a best practice as far as we’re concerned.”

**Implementing Listen4Good did not require on-staff researchers or data experts, but a plan to engage human capital resources was vital.**

Whether in the form of interns, volunteers or paid staff, people administered, tracked and analyzed the results. When responses were captured on paper, in-person or via telephone, additional time and manpower was needed to input the data into SurveyMonkey.

Institutionalizing Listen4Good practices for the longer term requires a formal integration of feedback-gathering responsibilities into an existing team member’s job scope or a plan to tap into a volunteer network.

**A complicated or expensive software investment is not required to effectively attain feedback.**

Every grantee agreed that gathering responses and analyzing data using technology was exponentially more efficient than manual systems such as spreadsheets or paper documents. Nonprofits typically used SurveyMonkey within the Listen4Good initiative, but many similar, easy-to-use and relatively inexpensive options are available.

Related to change in general, Listen4Good served as a reminder that all actionable changes — even minimal adjustments — are impactful.

Change does not have to be overbearing, complex, complicated, slow or expensive.

Small wins might help processes run more smoothly, remove a barrier from a client’s path or become a stepping stone towards a larger organizational goal.

Implementing a core Listen4Good concept of “closing the feedback loops” — communicating exactly what was heard and the actions surrounding it — encourages staff engagement, allows openness to flex and change course, and fosters a culture that not only welcomes but thrives on feedback. 🌟



*No matter where you are in your performance improvement cycle or your culture of quality improvement, the Listen4Good project will help you — it’ll take you to the next level. If you’re experienced like we are, it’s a lot of good collegial discussion. But at the same time, if you’re a novice and you’re new to this, they will help you through the process from the ground up. It’s a wonderful opportunity for any nonprofit organization.*

**STEVE MERLINA**

Corporate Compliance and Quality Officer, Children’s Service Center



Maternal and Family Health Services offered a mix of in-person and telehealth appointments through the pandemic.



## Children's Service Center

Children's Service Center (CSC), with its affiliate, Robinson Counseling Center, is an integrated healthcare provider committed to the wellness of more than 10,000 children, adolescents and adults in the region. Integrated care — designed to meet physical and mental needs — is proven to deliver better outcomes for children and families, and CSC's Integrated Care Expansion serves as a convenient, one-stop location for behavioral, physical and pharmaceutical services.

Children's Service Center's Listen4Good project centered on consumers' awareness and usage of on-site primary healthcare services [The Wright Center for Community Health] and a full-service pharmacy [Genoa Pharmacy].

Britni Yenchak, Quality Assurance Coordinator, led the Listen4Good project along with Steve Merlina, Corporate Compliance and Quality Officer. The quality-focused duo was no stranger to administering surveys and uncovering continuous improvement opportunities.

Even with years of collective experience handling Joint Commission accreditations and navigating thousands of pieces of internal and consumer feedback, the team was eager to enhance the processes already in place.

Britni focused on composing the survey questions with her coach, Camille. The plan was to administer the surveys using pencil and paper while consumers were on-site, waiting for appointments. The team called on CSC's consumer-facing therapists to help administer the surveys.

Britni reached out to the therapists through email and in-person conversations, explaining the goal of the survey and its ties to a grant.

Generating team buy-in for Listen4Good wasn't a challenge. Britni added, "And of course they all want to see more of their consumers utilizing the services — Genoa Pharmacy and The Wright Center [for Community Health]. They were all open to really get as much feedback as possible."

Surveys were administered over six weeks, targeting consumers who had visited Children's Service Center at least three times. The team believed that by that point, the consumers would have been acclimated to the campus and be aware — or not — of what additional on-site services were available.

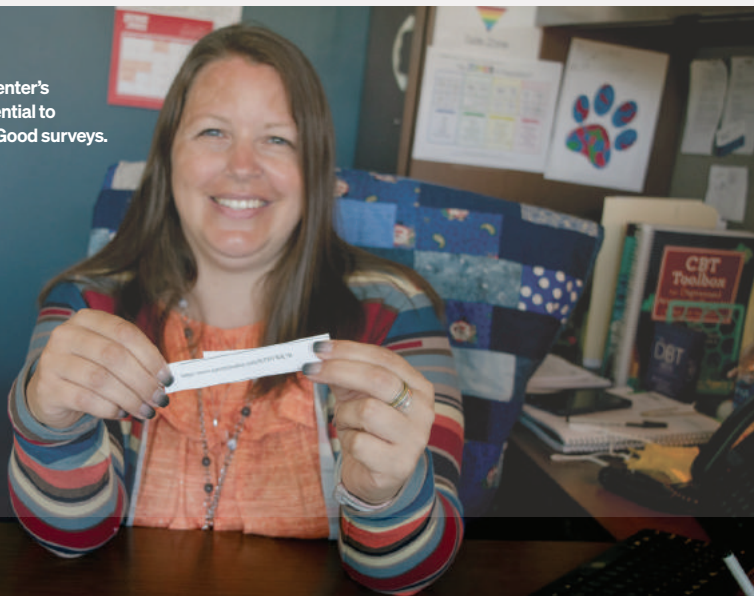
Mike Hopkins, President and CEO, was very supportive of a tailored and personal approach. Therapists would talk to the consumer about the survey first and then share the SurveyMonkey link through email, text message or on a small piece of paper [pictured below].

Mike mentions, "The consumers have a relationship with a therapist, so the trust is already there. If Britni was just cold calling people who don't know her, the response rate was not going to be as high."

Survey feedback revealed 70% of CSC's consumers had not received services from The Wright Center and 90% had not utilized the on-site Genoa Pharmacy. Many were unaware the services existed and those who were aware reported not having enough information about why or how to access services.

The CSC team quickly put a few organizational changes into place. On-hold music was replaced with informative messaging about the on-site primary care and pharmacy options. Posters were placed throughout the campus for more visibility. Representatives from

Children's Service Center's therapists were essential to distributing Listen4Good surveys.







Steve and Britni from Children's Service Center made sure to engage staff and partners, as well as close feedback loops with customers.

The Wright Center and Genoa Pharmacy were invited to the CSC teams' outpatient meetings, positioned to share their input and experiences, too.

Despite pandemic-related challenges that could have easily derailed Children's Service Center's Listen4Good plans, like all other grantees, the team made a commendable effort to keep the project on track. They've also recognized an opportunity to transition all internal and external surveys into electronic formats. The team is in the process of moving away from the handwritten pencil and paper method used before the pandemic and prior to the Listen4Good experience.

Working closely with Britni, Steve maintained oversight of the overarching process and methodology and is always open to improvement. He adds, "We learned to be flexible. I think that's key to all of this. The challenges were there, but we didn't want to stop our process and take a pause."



*The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation has long been proud to support the Children's Service Center and the comprehensive set of services that they offer. The survey received quick response, which indicated a need to market those services more widely in the community, highlighting the value of listening to clients and constituents as partners in advancing this important work.*

**EARL MILLETT**

Program Director,  
The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation  
Partner, NEPA Funders Collaborative





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