



RASCL ANNUAL SUMMIT
EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED:
PLANNING WITH
UNCERTAINTY
VIRTUAL: DECEMBER 9-10, 2020



4th Annual (Virtual) Delaware Resilient and Sustainable Communities League Summit

Thanks to everyone who asked questions during the webinars. Below are questions that weren't answered during the live webinars due to time constraints

RASCL Summit Webinar 1 – Wednesday, December 9th 10:00am-11:30am

Recover Delaware Initiative: Improving Economic Resilience During and After COVID-19

1. I wonder what the economic COVID effect data is - employment; tax take reduction; etc

Erik: This is a big question but I'll address 2 sets of issues. On revenue loss, we know that the [National Association of Counties](#) has estimated that county governments have lost more than \$114 billion in revenue in 2020, and city government revenues shortfalls are expected to [exceed more than \\$360 billion between 2020 and 2022](#). On small business, the best estimates from summer noted 22% decline in no. of US small business owners. These impacts were much higher for minority entrepreneurs (eg. Black business owner number down 41% and Latinx down 32%). Not pretty.

2. Don't forget about the retail crisis with major regional malls shutting down. We need to find a reuse for closed malls to help these communities affected.

Erik: This is challenge but opportunity as well. To create new community spaces or to deal with the housing crisis which is major issue in all US communities, not just big cities (like San Francisco) that get media coverage.

Troy: Agreed. Also, if community uses are desired, it may require positive community action to make those desirable uses happen. For example, some malls have at least temporarily been turned into fulfillment centers. These uses provide jobs, but may not provide the gathering spaces some communities need/desire.

3. It seems that when things go well with the economy, the ingenuity of the private sector is praised, but when things go poorly, the blame goes to the government. Especially during COVID, the government is being blamed for the failure of businesses due to measures to "flatten the curve." How can we get beyond this and frame things in a way that recognizes that the virus has dealt the economy a big blow, and we need collaboration between the private and public sectors to rebuild?

Erik: This is a big, almost existential issue, in US where we refuse to acknowledge important role of government. I'm just starting to read a new book on this very topic--When More is Not Better: Overcoming

America's Obsession with Economic Efficiency. I'm only a few chapters in, but it's right on point to this topic. It argues that we need to rethink our perceptions of capitalism.

Troy: One of my personal favorite authors of the last several years is economist [Mariana Mazzucato](#) and she gets a lot of attention in Europe (and has provided economic policy advice to Rep. Ocasio-Cortez, for instance)-she persuasively argues that the public sector receives far less credit for economic growth than is deserved. While I like many things about her argument, what appeals to me most is her call for "mission-oriented" approaches to development and innovation. I think "missions" are powerful things to frame around. We can look to the "space race" for example. Rallying around a mission is easier said than done, but I think we are faced with a number of crises (apart from COVID) that may demand this approach (e.g., climate). Even so, how that mission is communicated and carried out is likely to (necessarily) vary a great deal at federal-state-local scales and from community to community. As a guest speaker in my class last semester said, "there's an incredible premium on leadership" right now.

4. At what point is the answer retreat - some of the DE communities have wonderful assets now but face not only COVID but sea level rise and climate change - how much investment do we continue to put into places that may face insurmountable challenges?

Troy: Certainly considerations like these should be factored into recovery planning--an economy isn't resilient if environmental conditions threaten the viability of commerce/development in the foreseeable future.

5. VT has seen a substantial influx of new people. Has DE seen that?

Erik: Don't know numbers for DE, but many mid-sized metro (eg Burlington VT, Richmond, VA, Wilmington, NC) and rural places are seeing an influx of people and booming real estate markets.

Troy: Also don't know the numbers for Delaware, but anecdotally some communities have reported a bit of an influx with people taking advantage of remote work requirements to find new surroundings. As social distancing requirements wane, it will be interesting to see how this potential redistribution plays out longer-term. Incidentally, places like Vermont and Tulsa, Oklahoma had been making efforts to attract remote workers pre-pandemic. There will likely be many more programs like this--formally and informally--in the coming months and years.

6. There are many federal funding opportunities but it can be overwhelming for small towns to find those and compete. What strategies can be used to help them find and apply for recovery funds?

Erik: Towns need to pool resources to share funds (e.g. shared grant writer) and reach out to partners (like Troy Mix) who can provide support and capacity building help.

Troy: This is an area where we need to do more and--with the prospect of considerable federal funding for recovery in the near future--now is the time to lean in on this. I surveyed towns on areas of interest for technical assistance and "grant application workshops" was one of the popular items. I think we need to work closely with the Congressional delegation, hear directly from the federal agencies, and then avoid piecemeal responses (i.e., shooting for big regional responses that rely on things like pooling funds for a shared grant writer as I'd above).

7. Don't underestimate the agility of the American firm and its workforce... especially regarding shopping, playing, traveling, experiencing. (Charles O'Donnell, GMB Consulting)

Erik: Agreed--some of our greatest innovations and companies were birthed in crises. And, we see great innovation in COVID 19 too. Vaccine in one year--pretty impressive!

Troy: Yes, agreed. The pace of innovation during COVID-19 has been impressive. Innovation is inherently disruptive though and some communities/firms will adapt more readily than others. The call isn't to fear the future, but that communities should scan the horizon a bit and think about what shifts they can lean into, and what shifts they may need to guard against a bit. There will certainly always be some natural churn in the economy with winners and losers along the way.

8. Kirsten McGregor served in DE Economic Development Office. What is the role of State in small business support and recovery?

Erik: States need to play big role but don't necessarily need to deliver services directly. Should partner with local groups and business networks in these endeavors.

Troy: In terms of immediate relief, the Division of Small Business in the Delaware Department of State has played a key role in administering Delaware Relief Grants and assisting small businesses with applications to this opportunity and opportunities at the Federal level, including the Paycheck Protection Program. They have also communicated guidance on safe operating procedures for business. Apart from new big \$ programs administered by the State, a key role for the State is to connect small businesses to a range of small business assistance programs/organizations like SBDC, Chambers of Commerce, SBA, entrepreneurship support organizations, etc. The State can't tell these organizations what to do, but they can provide leadership in bringing organizations together to maximize the impacts of efforts. Coordination is always easier said than done, but it is a role the State can play.

9. I encourage local communities looking to improve their schools to look into Pathways to Green Schools: <https://greenbuildingunited.org/initiatives/green-schools>

RASCL Summit Webinar 2 – Wednesday, December 9th 2:00pm-3:30pm

Understanding Social Stressors and How to Factor Them into Community Resilience Planning

1. CCC4COVID has done a considerable amount of work to put maps and resources together, particularly as a volunteer coalition with no dedicated funding source. How did you leverage funding and human capacity to do all this work? And is what you did scalable and/or transferrable to other communities/jurisdictions?

Patti: CCC4COVID had no funding for the process or tool-building; our coordination team facilitated the process. I did the initial organization and legwork on the public food map and drafted the hard copy flyers. Nicole Minni sought and obtained approval from the University of Delaware to develop and train us on the ARCGIS map analytics. Our coalition partners offered several of their volunteers for the phone bank needed to reach other emergency food resources around the county, and also for the Spanish and Haitian Créole translations. In short, we sourced the human effort from among the coordination team and member volunteers. CCC4COVID's coordination team then facilitated collaboration among a subgroup of partners to design and implement solutions and distribute communications. Partners reallocated their resources [food] among themselves as needed; non-food items came from the public drive. For an interim period, one business partner did add their purchasing power to complement several of the mobile pantries added. Yes, the tools and approach are transferable and scalable to other communities - it boils down to the size and resource adequacy of the partner network.

FYI - on the food side, CCC4COVID collected data for all of Sussex County. The Dept of Agriculture subsequently retained an intern to do parallel research for both Kent and New Castle counties - all of that information is already on the map and available for any interested organization or agency to use for their own analytics for other communities: <https://arcg.is/HOCDv>

While we used emergency food resources as the case study, I could easily see this tool being extended to analytics for homeless shelters, and, possibly, affordable housing.

RASCL Summit Webinar 3 – Thursday, December 10th 2:00pm-3:30pm

Lessons from the Trenches: Tips for Preparing for the Next Extreme Event

1. (DEMA) - Do you feel that DEMA and other State agencies are better positioned and structured now for a future calamity like this pandemic?

AJ: I think this year has been a tremendous learning experience, will we be better prepared, we will continue to learn but also need to remain flexible to solve whatever is next.

2. (DEMA) Is it fair to say that when dealing with compound events things will move slower and the impacted community has to be vigilant and proactive on keeping services on point? Example: Capital School District had a middle school destroyed by tornado in early August. CSD has yet get an estimate of funds, nevertheless, payment, from the state insurance office. These kids are unlikely to have a school until next fall

AJ: I would say, yes, somethings may move slower, but I cannot answer specifically for the insurance office... However, we also need to level set that any federal assistance that we qualify for takes time, it is a process and is not quick.

3. Considering the success of countries like Japan and Korea in limiting Covid spread, are there any tools (from those countries) you would like to utilize here?

Dr. Rattay: Several Asian countries have implemented tools that we have since implemented as well. This includes widespread access to testing, a thorough contact tracing program, and utilizing Bluetooth technology to assist in exposure notification all were instrumental in these countries controlling COVID. DPH has worked to utilize all of these important components to great effect.