

COVID-19 PUBLIC GARDEN JUNE 2020 SURVEY RESULTS

In March 2020, public gardens across the country closed during the COVID-19 pandemic as part of mitigation efforts to reduce transmission of the disease. In late June 2020, our third survey of member gardens was conducted. These results show that while a number of public gardens are beginning to re-open, the impacts, status, and future of these gardens remains critically vulnerable.

Long road to fully reopen. With results consistent to previous surveys, June surveys indicate that greater than 80% of reported closures (n=189) occurred between March 12 and March 24 with a few closures as late as May due to seasonal schedules. As of June 30th, 58% (n=131) of responding gardens had fully reopened or began the process of reopening. Two-thirds of the surveyed gardens hoped to reopen by September of 2020 (Table 1). The average closure length of gardens was 80 days, with 17% of gardens closed for more than 100 days. Results indicate that while the majority of gardens are reopening slowly, many still remain closed. Only 17% report being “fully open” in the June survey.

Critical revenue impacts. Closures resulted in revenue impacts beyond entrance and attendance fees, with gardens noting cancelled education, external events, fundraisers, and ticketed events.

Ninety four percent (94%) of gardens experienced a drop in earned revenue (n=106; Figure 1). Earned revenue decreased by 50% or more for 54% of reporting gardens. *As the average garden relies on 60% Earned Revenue, this is potentially devastating.*

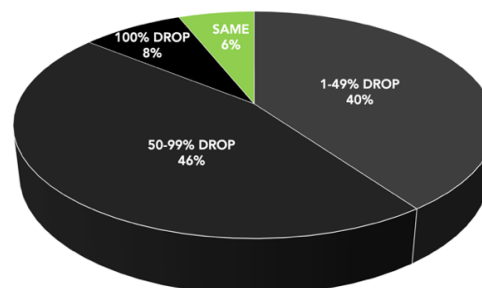


Figure 1 Earned revenue changes since COVID 19 in terms of the percent change relative to normal earned revenue

Reductions in membership sales and donations further drove a decrease in contributed revenue for more than 60% of gardens (n=121; Figure 2). About 1 in 4 gardens saw some gains in contributed income due to generosity of members and donors, however these increases were offset by losses in earned revenue. Many gardens (n=23) saw reductions in *both* contributed and earned revenues of more than 50%.

Financial concerns resulted in 1 out of 4 gardens being forced to resort to staff layoffs or furloughs during and following closure. More layoffs and furloughs are expected to occur into 2021 as gardens work to absorb budget cuts and reduced revenues.

Table 1. Status of gardens during the COVID-19 pandemic and state of recovery as of June 2020 (n=244). Note that those gardens that never closed are considered to be fully open despite never closing to the public.

Current Status as of June 30, 2020

Closure Status in Response to COVID-19	Current Status as of June 30, 2020		
	Fully Open	Beginning to Reopen	Remain Closed
Fully Closed	10.0%	35.6%	17.0%
Partially Closed	3.9%	9.6%	20.4%
Never Closed	3.5%*		

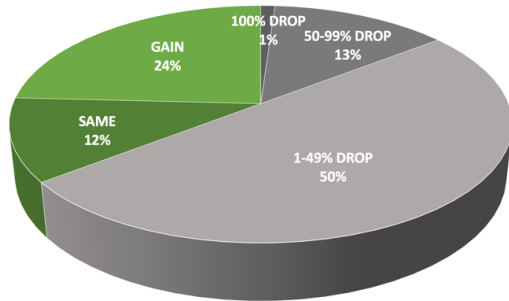


Figure 2 Contributed revenue changes during COVID 19 in terms of percent change relative to normal contributed revenue. Some gardens reported gains in contributed revenue, noted as such in the image.

Recovery time will be long. Even as gardens begin to reopen, 52% of gardens are expecting more than a year to recover and resume pre-pandemic revenue levels.

Thirty-one (31%) are slightly more optimistic stating at least 6 months to begin to recover financially. Of note, gardens with larger operational budgets are concerned about the time to recovery. Forty percent (40%) of gardens anticipating 12+ months to recover are those with annual budgets greater than \$1 million. Initial benchmarking data (April 2020) estimated collective losses of \$3 million dollars every day public gardens were closed. Obtained survey data supports this, estimating an average loss of \$3.25M+ (\$3,253,511) per day of closure across the industry, based on losses to earned revenues.

Loans and grants are not the answer.

Governmental loan and grant programs have been offered to American businesses as methods to combat these financial losses. However, only 28% of small gardens (those with budgets of \$1M or less) applied for federal loans, compared to 70% of larger gardens. This combined with 35% of small gardens not applying for grants (while 80% of large gardens applied) means that a disproportionately large number of small gardens did not apply for any financial assistance. This can be contributed to two

main factors; the first is that many smaller gardens were ineligible to apply for grants and loans and/or that they noted a lack of staff to assist with applying for assistance. For example, \$1M+ budget gardens were 14x more likely to apply for Institute of Museum and Library Services and National Endowment of the Humanities Grants compared to gardens with budgets less than \$150 thousand. While some foundational grant opportunities such as the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust are available for smaller gardens, most can't provide complete funding relief. A future survey will be administered this fall to determine reopening progress and other trends.

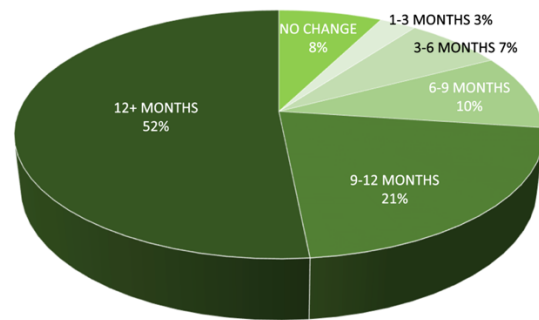


Figure 3 Expected return to revenue status prior to COVID 19 by percent

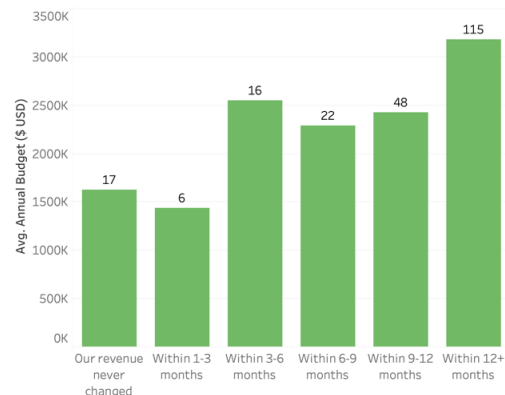


Figure 4 Expected return to revenue status prior to COVID 19 by average annual budget.