

4 Corners People Working Group Member Engagement Survey

Deadline: April 2, 2025

Submission: Please submit to Maggie Riden, Sr. VP of Advocacy, mriden@fahe.org with “Member Engagement Survey RFP” in the subject line.

Introduction:

Fahe is a membership organization serving a network of 50+ housing and community development nonprofits serving Central Appalachia. Our membership base is diverse in size, programs, areas of expertise and geography/operating environment.

Members engage with Fahe at varied levels (we’ve identified roughly 3 tiers of Member participation: Active Member, Engaged, Very Engaged), and have historically cited different benefits to Membership. Fahe is currently seeking concrete recommendations on how we can:

- 1) Strengthen existing Member Organization engagement in the network,
- 2) Strategically grow our Membership and partners (in numbers and in capacity)
- 3) Align Fahe’s internal programmatic, financial and operations to respond to Member needs.

To date, efforts to A) identify what brings and keeps Members in our network, B) determine what drives the depth and degree of their engagement and C) determine satisfaction with existing programs and services, have been internally driven and executed. While this has revealed good insights, we are at a point in our organizational development where a more robust third-party analysis has value.

At this time, we are seeking an external firm that can 1) Help us obtain a quantitative data set on Member footprint and services that is visual and useful to Members in making strategic choices; 2) Provide us with qualitative and quantitative feedback from our Membership to inform how we can support Member capacity and outputs. 3) Help Fahe articulate the benefits to participation in Fahe programming and services.

Ideal Research Partner:

- Culturally competent, able to build trust and solicit meaningful engagement and evidence best practices in research with under-served communities and/or sectors.
- Familiarity with Appalachia, nonprofits and network/membership driven institutions.
- Understand that our Members are busy serving their communities and have limited bandwidth.
- Work with Fahe to identify existing data sources (internal Fahe sources like Membership Renewals; and external to Fahe like 990s) to save time and energy.

- Develop a data collection strategy that captures Member insights beyond just the Executive team of our Member organizations.
- Appreciate that research fatigue is a major challenge.
- Have experience in quantitative and qualitative methodologies
- Ability to do data collection of existing information sources to streamline the survey and interview process.
- Provide analytic insights and actionable recommendations in visual and/or narrative form to help Fahe's staff better serve our Network. Visual presentation is particularly relevant with regard to service delivery and geography.

What will be different:

- We will have info we need to continue building a robust and engaged network that is serving our communities. We will have a strong Membership base, with strength in numbers AND in their degree of engagement/participation. We will be more targeted, streamlined and effective in our services to Members (and community). Our members will get less "noise" from Fahe and instead get the information that matters, when it matters. Members can grow their own capacity and operational success through peer learning opportunities- thus strengthening the region.

Areas of Inquiry:

Member Operations: One of our current strategic goals is to 'expand our tent'. Specifically, we're hoping to grow our Membership base, launch a new "Fahe Partners" initiative. In addition, we hope to provide our Members with an update to date gap analysis (geographic and services) to help inform their own strategic growth. Themes and topics include:

- Services provided by each member
- Geography the Member Serves (County or Census Tract? And, over last 5 years to capture ebbs and flows of programs based on resources and funding?)
- Geographic Service Area (by service/program) (Over last 5 years?)
- Areas of self-identified organizational expertise and Member capacity to mentor/coach/support network colleagues
 - We'd be interested to see how these areas of expertise are spread across our Members based on size of the organization, service area etc.
- Areas of self identified growth potential- what would Members like to learn from colleagues (how Members would like to get that)
- What types of data do Members regularly use to make strategic decisions? What metrics do you use to measure growth and how could Fahe better support tracking progress?
- How do members track reporting information? What would help improve the accuracy and consistency of data collection?

- Tenure of Member Teams (How long has org been around vs./or including: How many have under vs. over x years with their organization or years in the field? What kinds of certifications do the organizations and staff hold? Allow us to say things like “collectively x years of experience” AND it may give us some insight into what we may be facing (or not) in terms of a retirement cliff in the not-too-distant future.

Member Perceptions of Benefits and Services: Fahe gathers basic information on Member participation in our services. A recent review of this data reveals that Members have varied levels of network engagement. Curiously, this does not seem to correlate to Member organizational size, scope, areas of focus or geography. If we are going to successfully increase member engagement in the network, we need to better understand these trends, what services Members currently value (or do not value) and possible gaps in our current offerings that could enhance participation/serve as an incentive to join. Themes and topics include:

- Why do Members join? Why do they stay Members? What do they value in Membership? What do they define as benefits? What are the gaps in our current Benefits?
- Feedback on Existing Service Lines (what they use, what they don't, why, what would improve these lines?)
 - Financial Services: Just Choice Lending, Community Lending, Virtual CFO, 502D intermediary
 - Membership Services: Caucus Meetings, Spring Retreat, Annual Meeting, access to NWA trainings, general networking with colleagues
 - Advocacy Services: Coalition facilitation, toolkits and webinars, coaching
 - Programs Services: Disaster relief, consulting, compliance and reporting, navigating federal requirements,
- Looking back, what has been different in your work/organization as a result of your participation in Fahe?
 - How has your organization's capacity changed over the past year due to Fahe's support?
 - What leadership or professional development opportunities have been most beneficial?
 - What technical assistance or funding or financial tools helped you expand your services?
 - How has being part of the Fahe network strengthened your ability to serve your community?
- Looking forward, what services, training, capacity building do members need as they move along their own organizational development continuum? How can Fahe build a scaffolded set of services that responds to this pathway?

Member Preferences on Communication: Fahe has grown naturally over the last 40 years to become a dynamic organization with multiple business lines and service offerings. Fahe staff and teams vary between in person/onsite and virtual. Further, our communications team has been skeletal over the last 5 years. While we've made strides in our internal staff communication, and we've gained increasing clarity on the narrative we seek to share among external stakeholders, we recognize that there is room for improvement in how we communicate with Members. This should include best methods/platforms for members to receive information, recommendations on how to strengthen/evolve our Member website, and strategies to enhance cross-member communication and peer learning. Themes and topics include:

- Feedback on existing member communications (everything from email to newsletters to events):
 - Content
 - Method
 - Frequency
- Feedback on maintaining accurate point of contact(s) with Members
- Feedback/insight on how we can better message the benefits of Membership and active engagement in the network.
- What are some possible strategies to driving comms to specific audiences?
- Members have identified a desire for peer learning and connection platforms, what would they suggest in terms of design/model/platform? What would they realistically use?

Open Ended Feedback: Finally, Fahe seeks candid feedback from our Members. We know we're excelling in some ways and falling short in others. Partnering with an external research team provides us an opportunity to solicit unfiltered insights on what we're doing well and areas of growth. The ideal firm will be equipped to analyze open qualitative feedback to isolate the main themes and takeaways for Fahe staff.

Timeline:

- To start spring of 2025, with project completion in 4th quarter of 2025.

Applications should include:

- A narrative RFP that speaks to your capacity to respond to the above goals and objectives. Examples of work in the region, and/or with nonprofits and nonprofit networks is encouraged.
- Proposed Budget