The nonprofit sector may be the most impacted by COVID-19. Nonprofit organizations, small and large, who continue to serve the needs of communities during both good times and bad, have shown no immunity to the financial impact of the virus.

As a leader or board member, now is the time to prepare your organization for your next chapter of serving your community and constituents. These ideas can provide the structure and focus you need to address “what’s next” while you’re also busy dealing with “what now.”

This guide is for nonprofit organizations that are ready to look forward.

This is not another overview of what you need to be doing now but is meant to serve as inspiration for what your organization should consider doing in the next six weeks to make sure it’s ready to grow and prosper once again.

This six-week plan provides the questions and strategies to assess every aspect of your organization. Share with your leadership team and board, be honest and, most importantly, be bold. This time presents challenges but also presents new opportunities.

Ready to get started? We hope so.

As you embark on this new journey, please email us info@orgstory.org if you have questions, want to discuss a topic, get feedback or just talk.

COVID-19 HAS CHANGED THE WORLD. NOW IT’S YOUR TURN TO DO THE SAME

Week 1: ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT
DEVELOPING AN ASSESSMENT
DELIVERING ON THE MISSION
PROCEDURES, PROCESSES & MANDATES
DONOR OPPORTUNITIES & GRANTS
FINANCES

Week 2: STRATEGIC PRIORITIES & GOALS
STRATEGIC PLAN
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Week 3: OPERATIONS ANALYSIS
FURTHER EVALUATION
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Week 4: FINANCIAL ANALYSIS
CURRENT FINANCES
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Week 5: FUND DEVELOPMENT
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FUNDRAISING EVENTS

Week 6: COMMUNICATIONS
DETERMINE STORIES TO BE SHARED
INNOVATION SESSION
PREPARE STORY AMBASSADORS
DEPLOY YOUR STORIES

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Week 1:

ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT

In light of the impact of COVID-19 around the world and at your organization, do an honest assessment this week of your entire organization.

1. Revisit your organization’s ability to deliver on its purpose, vision, mission and values

**EXERCISE:** Share the organization’s purpose, vision, mission and values with your team and board and ask them to share stories where they’ve seen the organization’s purpose shine during the crisis. The impact of the virus may provide an opportunity to modify these key foundational tenets. Ask each person to write down three things the organization did well, three things it plans to do and three mistakes it made during the crisis.

2. Review procedures, processes and mandates during the crisis

**EXERCISE:** Ask each person to write down the procedures, processes and mandates that must remain in place going forward, that should be modified going forward, and that are no longer required and can be eliminated.

3. Analyze short-term donor opportunities and grants

**EXERCISE:** Develop a specific list of outstanding “asks” and grant applications; develop the same list for the next three months. Also, review your donor and funder databases and continue to communicate in-person to the top-third that are most important to your organization and via regular email with the remaining.

4. Assess the organization’s finances

**EXERCISE:** Have an updated balance sheet prepared based on current data; have a cash flow analysis prepared that covers the next three months. Be realistic. Use this information to make needed changes.

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Week 2:
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND GOALS

The crisis may have changed your organization’s priorities or require you to alter goals. Now is the time to align both to a new environment.

1. Revisit your strategic plan and create an addendum

**EXERCISE:** After a thorough review of your current strategic plan, and its key priorities, determine what priorities are still priorities. At the same time, review the goals set throughout the plan to make sure they reflect the new reality. Develop an addendum to your current strategic plan that brings those new opportunities forward. What can be/should be added? Like the balance of the plan, establish goals and objectives and create an action plan to get there.

2. Affirm the needs of those you serve and re-evaluate as things may have changed

**EXERCISE:** Do a thorough analysis of those you serve and determine if your mission still meets their needs. The impact of loss of employment, no school being held and other factors may suggest there are new needs or changed needs.

3. Re-evaluate your competitive landscape

**EXERCISE:** Update the environment to best understand the role moving forward of other agencies serving similar/same clients. Your organization may have a bigger role to play, or there may be new opportunities to find synergies in service.

4. Establish short and long-term timelines

**EXERCISE:** With new goals and opportunities possibly established, set short-term (six months) and longer-term (up to 18 months) timelines that provide a road map for progress.
Week 3:
OPERATIONS ANALYSIS

Now that you’ve done a quick organizational assessment, use what you’ve learned to begin the road to recovery. This week, take an intensive look at all parts of your organization.

1. Further evaluate procedures, processes and mandates

**EXERCISE:** Review, renew, revise or remove those that no longer meet the needs of your emerging organization. Some of these changes may be a result of the crisis; others may be opportunistic to make the changes now that have been long overdue.

2. Evaluate your current team

**EXERCISE:** Review your organization chart to make certain the right people are in the right roles. Evaluate key leaders and staff as well as yourself. Provide feedback on areas that need improvement and praise for extraordinary performance.

3. Envision the team you’ll need moving forward

**EXERCISE:** The crisis may present new opportunities for new skill sets, experiences and backgrounds of your leadership and staff. Can your organization leverage volunteer relationships further? Determine what those changes may be and develop a plan to prioritize and add to your team, as possible.

4. Validate your organization’s program outcomes

**EXERCISE:** Make sure the current measurement of your organization’s programs still makes sense in light of a changed environment. Update and modify, as needed. Explore new impact measurements that support the importance of your organization’s work.
Week 4:
FINANCIAL ANALYSIS & PLANNING

The financial outlook of your organization has changed. Address how the change impacts your road to recovery.

1. Reassess the organization’s finances

**EXERCISE:** Revisit the balance sheet prepared in week one. Have projections changed? Use this information to make needed changes.

2. Update your organization’s financial position

**EXERCISE:** Consider creating a “pre/post” COVID-19 balance sheet and cash flow analysis. Use these to help determine required changes to your organization structure and expense exposure during the next six months. Look at every expense – office expenses, travel, staff salaries, memberships and affiliations – everything. Consider each of these line items and include a key leadership team in the conversation to answer, “what if we reduce or cut this expense?”

3. Evaluate earned revenue potential

**EXERCISE:** Analyze revenues and look for possible ways to increase or add value to current services and programs that present future opportunities for growth. Brainstorm new revenue possibilities – from new programs and services, new events or a new social enterprise.

4. Report financial changes and position to stakeholders

**EXERCISE:** Create a report that provides a snapshot of cost-savings measures and the current and projected financial position of the organization. If possible, demonstrate how these changes have an impact on the mission and programs. This will reassure constituents that the organization is a good steward of financial resources, and focused on the mission.
**Week 5: FUND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT**

The most effective nonprofits have been transparent and in touch with their donor base during the crisis. Cultivation and stewardship have taken on a new importance. A robust and fully functioning development effort has never been more important.

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1. **Assess individual donor behaviors and opportunity**

   **EXERCISE:** With your development team, now is the time to dig deeper into your donor database. Leverage every relationship and start filling out your top donor prospect list. The crisis may have created a new urgency from those that have never supported your organization before. Or, maybe you’ve never done the needed cultivation of recent introductions.

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2. **Assess foundation relationships and grant opportunities**

   **EXERCISE:** Like individual donors, now is the time to have a thorough analysis of the foundations from whom you’ve received and/or solicited grants. It’s also the time to research upcoming grant submission windows as many funders have created special funding opportunities due to the crisis.

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3. **Evaluate fund development plan and engagement processes**

   **EXERCISE:** Does your organization have the right person engaged with donors and prospects? Does your organization have a specific, strategic and sound development plan in place? Has it created a six-month crisis development plan? Do the evaluation now so your organization benefits in the future — make changes accordingly.

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4. **Assess organizational fundraising events**

   **EXERCISE:** Assess upcoming events and their schedules. What looks like it could happen? What should happen? Use this time to carefully consider how your organization can move the people-power and financial resources from events into other strategies that will result in a higher likelihood of raising significant dollars faster.

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Week 6:
COMMUNICATIONS DEVELOPMENT

Your key stakeholders assume COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the organization. If you don’t determine the right stories to support your recovery, they’ll create their own.

1. **Determine what stories should be shared**

   **EXERCISE:** Identify positive stories that showcase the difference your organization made during the crisis — client stories, staff stories, community stories. Identify financial stories that share the reality of the financial impact to your organization due to the crisis, such as lost revenue, staff reductions or cost-cutting. These stories can ultimately be used in your Annual Report, 990 and grant applications. These short pieces can be shared in emails, meetings and on your social media channels.

2. **Facilitate an “innovation session”**

   **EXERCISE:** Develop innovative initiatives that lead to modifications of current programs and services, or new programs and services altogether. For each, develop an action plan, timeline and budget and assign responsibilities and craft stories that support those initiatives. And don’t forget the public relations possibilities for these.

3. **Prepare and inform crucial story ambassadors**

   **EXERCISE:** Develop key talking points and share with staff members, board members and volunteers. These talking points are to be used to address and answer any questions they may encounter and will help ensure the alignment and consistency of the organization’s message.

4. **Deploy your stories on-line**

   **EXERCISE:** Update the organization’s current website with content, photos and videos as possible. Also update the agency’s “about us” pages on social media and develop a robust social media plan to implement so these stories reach your stakeholders.