



Notes on Crisis Board Communications

March 2020

1. Clarify the Current State

- First and foundationally, the entire board must understand the organization's current state, both programmatically and financially. This includes:
 - What work has been suspended, decreased or increased?
 - What impact is that having on the people we serve?
 - How much cash is accessible, and what is the weekly/monthly burn rate?
 - What is the status of our employees?

2. Consider the Scenarios

- After fully understanding the current state, the board can consider staff-created scenarios, such as:
 - How long will cash on hand last under various scenarios of layoffs, emergency donations, reopening, etc.?
 - Which programs can be restarted and which cannot, depending on how long they're shuttered?
- The key here is managing:
 - the *number* of scenarios the board must consider (not enough to overwhelm);
 - the *confidence* you have in the likelihood of the scenarios (having your arms around all possibilities);
 - the *timing* of when scenarios are presented to the board (resisting the temptation to share them when confidence is low and the number of potential scenarios is high).

3. Sequence the Critical Decisions

- Partner with the board chair to create a clear written timeline of what organizational decisions must be made when. Those decisions may include reducing or halting operations; furloughing or laying off staff; modifying upkeep on physical assets; or launching an emergency funding appeal.
 - *How are critical decisions intertwined, and which decisions must happen first?*
 - *How good are we at asking, 'Is that really the decision we need to make now?'*
- A clear one-page calendar of upcoming decisions increases board focus, preserves a more strategic board altitude, and reduces scattershot side conversations.