



M | A | N | P
Maine Association
of Nonprofits

Reopening with Purpose

Guidance for Maine Nonprofits Impacted by the Pandemic

"Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smokey skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it."

- Arundhati Roy

COVER IMAGE

courtesy of Friends of Isle au Haut Lighthouse
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June 2, 2020

The last several months have been incredibly challenging for Maine nonprofits. As charitable organizations, our central purpose is to steward, sustain and strengthen the common good. And, yet, many of the institutions, beliefs and values that comprise the foundation of our public life are strained to new limits. Our public health, economy, and communities are struggling. Systemic inequities are being illuminated and exacerbated. Our social safety net is fraying.

And, yet, I firmly believe out of chaos, new life will spring. As people dedicated to building healthy, resilient communities, our sector will continue to be at the forefront--tending to the frayed edges, joining hands that help and forging new pathways to lead us to a better place. Whether we operate a local food pantry or a countywide support agency, a museum or theater, an outdoor youth or racial justice program, a library, animal shelter, or social enterprise, we wake up each day with a shared purpose: to make the world a better place. Since lockdowns began mid-March, in many respects, nonprofits have never closed. As one nonprofit leader said: "The front doors are locked, but the work inside continues." As so, over the next weeks and months, we will be navigating reemergence, which includes the challenge of adopting new ways to operate and the opportunity to refresh and reinvent how we go about our work. Indeed, now is an ideal time to revisit the change we want to see in the world and invite reflection on how our organizations will be part of redefining, rebuilding and healing our communities.

Looking forward, as we shift from a sprint mindset to that of a marathon, there are many procedures to follow and formative questions to ponder. It will be up to each organization's leadership to determine for themselves when and how to unlock the doors. To assist in this effort, we are sharing this set of guidelines and recommendations, specific to Maine nonprofits, to complement resources from other state and nonprofit organizations.

Many thanks to all of Maine's charitable nonprofits for staying dedicated and focused on the work. We have a tough road ahead, but the opportunity to "imagine another world (A. Roy)" will motivate and push us to do better and be better for the common good in our state.

Mainers can count on Maine's nonprofits every day. You can count on us.



We have your back.

Jennifer Hutchins
Executive Director, MANP

MANP'S TEAM



Katie Manter



Katrina Ruffner



Kelly McCormack



Mary Cloutier



Marvin Tala



Molly O'Connell



Sarah Skillin Woodard

Special Thanks

Nonprofit State Association Colleagues

This publication is based in large part on *Going Forward: Best Practices and Considerations for Nonprofit Re-engagement*, a guide developed by Oklahoma Center for Nonprofits and generously shared with their state nonprofit association colleagues with permission to adapt their good work for other states. MANP is proud to be a member of the [National Council of Nonprofits](#) and part of its collaborative, national network.



Advisors

The recommendations and guidelines in this document were originally compiled by nonprofit, philanthropic and faith leaders from across the state of Oklahoma, and then were reviewed, adapted and updated by nonprofit leaders, attorneys and advisors here in Maine. MANP is deeply grateful to the following colleagues and advisors who shared their time and insights to inform this guidebook:

Roland Adams, Communication for Results
Tawny Alvarez, Verrill
Elena Brandt, Brandt Associates
Alan Cantor, Alan Cantor Consulting
Amy Cohan, Spurwink Services
Kristen Farnham, Spurwink Services
Tony Payne, MEMIC
Tony Scucci
Jeff Wahlstrom, Starboard Leadership Consulting

Purpose and Values of this Guidebook

Purpose

This guidebook is for Maine nonprofit organizations looking for trustworthy guidance to inform their plans for reopening offices, resuming programs, and/or expanding in-person services while prioritizing public health.

While the practices and recommendations in this guide at times reference office environments, they are largely applicable to other types of work environments and properties as well as many diverse missions and types of nonprofits.

No single tool will address all circumstances, and the environment in which this guide was developed is rapidly changing. This guide should be used in concert with public health recommendations and available industry-specific guidance. MANP is compiling a library of supplemental resources, samples and tools at: www.NonprofitMaine.org/Reopening.

Values

The following values were expressed in the development of this resource.

- **Trust in health experts.** We must let our decisions be guided by up-to-date public health guidance.
- **Safety first.** Humans are all essential. The health of staff, volunteers, clientele and constituents (donors, friends and allies) must be primary in all decision-making, especially as it relates to gatherings. We must consider repercussions for the most vulnerable of populations and not put them at undue risk.
- **Missions matter.** It is vital to put mission, vision and values front and center in any approach to reopening.
- **No typical nonprofit.** Maine's nonprofits are diverse. There is no one approach that will work for every organization, community or culture.
- **Collaboration.** These recommendations were crafted with the input of many partners and as a contribution to collective efforts to keep communities safe.
- **Transparency.** Honest, consistent communication builds trust in our organizations and decisions.

Important Disclaimer

The guidelines in this document are intended simply as recommendations that can help organizations develop their own plans. They should not be used as a replacement for legal advice. Organizations should consult their own legal counsel and financial professionals to craft plans appropriate to their particular employees, clients and communities.

What Should Guide Us in Our Reopening

Over the next several weeks and months, as areas stabilize from the COVID-19 pandemic and stay-at-home restrictions are lifted, organizations will begin to bring workers back into the physical workplace. It's already begun in some parts of the state, country and world. The migration of a furloughed and remote workforce back to places of business will look different for every organization. In some cases, a segment of the workforce may continue working remotely.

One thing is clear, however—the management of the process is without precedent. How can employers ensure they are prepared to receive their workforce—and that their employees are prepared for the return—so that the transition is safe, efficient, effective and aligned to the needs of the organization and the needs of our people? How can we advance our missions and meet the very real needs of our communities while keeping staff, volunteers and clients safe?

Your most important guideposts will be your mission, organizational values, and public safety.

- Follow all guidelines as directed by federal, state and local health departments as you begin this process.
- The [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#), and [Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(OSHA\)](#) should be your primary sources for guidance on COVID-19 and other health-related issues.
- Gather information from those affected to inform your decision-making. This pandemic does not affect everyone equally. Nonprofit organizations have an opportunity to bring new awareness to how their decisions do or do not reflect and advance equity, inclusion, cultural responsiveness and justice.
- Look to your peers and communities for mutual support; we're all in this and learning together.
- Rinse and repeat. In an environment where things are rapidly evolving, you will need to be ready to adjust your plans as well.

READINESS ESSENTIALS

- Up-to-date understanding of public health guidance and Local/State/Federal orders
- Workplace preparation
- Strong board/staff partnership
- Updated policies, procedures and training
- Transparent two-way communication with staff and volunteers about new policies and procedures
- Consistent external communication to clients, donors and the public
- Teams/processes in place to revise and adapt plans in response to a rapidly changing environment

Operations and Workplace Readiness

While the pandemic affects all parts and levels of our organizations, when anticipating and planning for reopening offices and resuming or expanding services to the public, many organizations may find it a useful first step to create a task force responsible for creating a plan (and adjusting it as guidance evolves). For many organizations this task force is likely to be led by the organization's executive director, along with other key leadership staff who bring different expertise and perspectives, as well as potentially board members or other stakeholders. Ensure that this task force has a clear charge regarding their purpose, the extent of their decision-making authority, and pathways for communication.

Communicate plans, protocols and procedures BEFORE staff returns to the office. This not only establishes those best practices, but also demonstrates the seriousness and care you are taking in protecting the health and well-being of employees, volunteers and those you serve.

Preparing the Workspace for Return

The CDC has indicated that transmission of COVID-19 occurs most often through respiration over a period of extended exposure to an infected individual. The primary objective, therefore, is to eliminate to the extent possible any prolonged personal contact. This is essential in spaces that do not have regular introduction of fresh air. Though to a lesser extent, transmission may also occur through touching un-sanitized surfaces. The following guidelines and practices prevent infection and spread of this virus.

- Prior to reentry, thoroughly clean and sanitize the workspace, particularly common areas, bathrooms and other congregating facilities (lunch rooms or break areas, kitchens, conference rooms).
- If you rent your office, some of these areas (bathrooms, common areas, conference rooms) may be the responsibility of your landlord. Request information on their protocols.
- Ensure you have cleaning supplies on hand for more active, daily cleaning for the foreseeable future. These include sanitizing wipes, bleach, disinfectant sprays, paper towels, etc. Order online for best availability of supplies.
- Follow any and all guidelines for sanitation and social distancing from your local health department.
- Before staff arrival, assess the space for social distancing (desks six feet apart, use of cubicles or other barriers, offices). Also look for areas where staff, volunteers or clientele could congregate (waiting rooms, conference rooms, etc.) and assess those spaces for social distancing (while a room may have a capacity of 30, to ensure social distancing is possible, consider limiting occupancy to one person per 36 square feet (6x6) and adjust signage accordingly).
- Review procedures with your landlord for entering and exiting the building (e.g. use of stairs vs. elevators, limits on elevator occupancy that assure six-foot distancing, etc.).
- Make cleaning supplies and sanitizers available in all parts of the office.
- Your organization might consider bringing staff back in phases or shifts to the office while others will continue working remotely.

Ongoing Sanitation and Social Distancing Guidelines

- Offices should be cleaned daily, especially where people congregate (waiting rooms, conference rooms, bathrooms). You may want to increase professional cleaning and sanitation for these reasons. Remove trash daily.
- Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs. Also sanitize common equipment (copiers, projectors, monitors, etc.) daily if used by multiple people.
- To disinfect, use products that meet the Environmental Protection Agency's criteria for use against COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface. Most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).
- Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks, other work tools and equipment) can be wiped down by employees before each use.
- Staff should wash hands regularly and should avoid excessive touching of communal surfaces if possible and always wipe after use. Have disinfecting wipes available in all public areas as well as hand sanitizer and cultivate a culture of "if you touch it, wipe it."
- Ask staff to sanitize their own desks, equipment and office areas on a regular basis (at least daily) to prevent spread of germs.
- If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- Prohibit workers from using other coworkers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. If necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use.
- Use good judgement on sanitation and let all staff and volunteers know your internal procedures for cleaning to set expectations and alleviate concerns.
- Nonprofits are full of huggers and hand-shakers. It will be hard, but we must avoid physical contact.
- Require masks at work when no barrier exists between two people for a period of ten seconds or more; remind people of "respiratory etiquette" that includes covering a cough or sneeze, using and throwing away tissues, etc.
- Place signage in bathrooms to wash hands, dry with paper towels, and wipe faucet handles, along with signage to remind people of social distancing and etiquette.
- When in doubt, do not put groups of people into hygienically compromising situations.
- Don't assume everyone understands hygienic concepts. You will find yourself in situations with some clientele who will need instruction, reminding and assistance with some basic tasks such as hand-washing, sanitizing, etc. Post bold graphic signage at your entrance and in all high-traffic areas for the behaviors that will be required.

Consider the following social distancing suggestions to avoid unnecessary exposure:

- Implementing flexible worksites (e.g., telework)
- Implementing flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts)
- Increasing physical space between employees at the worksite

- Increasing physical space or erecting barriers between employees and customers
- Implementing flexible meeting and travel options (e.g., postpone non-essential meetings or events)
- Downsizing operations
- Delivering services remotely (e.g. phone, video, or web)
- Delivering products through virtual and/or digital platforms
- Relying less on paper that is passed around the office

Food Handling

- At first, prohibit communal food in the office or organization. This will require that all employees and volunteers bring their own meals or eat off site. Potluck style meals or open, self-serve buffets, up to and including communal coffee service, should be suspended for the time being.
- All refrigerated food and containers left at the end of the day should be discarded.
- No supplies such as plastic or serving utensils, cups, etc. should be available.
- Consider asking all employees to eat alone to preserve social distancing.
- For any food prepared and served for clientele, follow local health department guidelines. Additionally, [the FDA has produced a set of guidelines](#) for communal food preparation and service.
- If you do serve any food at your offices, facilities, houses of worship, etc., remember that appetizers, hors d'oeuvres, food, and/or all beverages, including water, tea, wine, beer and/or adult beverages, should not be self-served. All food and beverages should be served from service staff that are wearing appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to reduce any contamination. Organizations should not provide any buffets, tables with appetizers, and/or any self-serve wine and/or beverages to staff and/or attendees.

Protocols for Public Opening and Closure

- While your office may be ready to bring back employees and volunteers, your organization may not be accepting public appointments. Ensure you communicate on doors, your website and social media when public hours may resume.
- Inform employees about who is allowed in the building and who should not enter. This could include family members or friends of employees, donors, volunteers, etc. Let employees and volunteers know when the organization can receive visitors or the public.
- If you do receive the public, ensure signs about hygiene and disease prevention protocols are visible and accessible. If you regularly work with clientele where English is not a first language, translate those into the appropriate languages.
- For contact-tracing purposes have ALL visitors sign in when they enter. That information may be necessary for local health departments.
- Regular visitors (including board, committee members, volunteers, clientele, etc.) should all read and/or sign an “Oath of Personal Responsibility” (sample in next section).
- If you have had mail services forwarded or collected, contact the USPS to ensure mail is delivered when ready.

Human Resources Considerations

Your staff and volunteers are the lifeblood of your nonprofit mission. A number of issues will arise as you bring staff back into offices and facilities. We highly recommend that you follow Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) best practices and guidelines, as well as seek counsel from employment attorneys and professionals as you go through this process. MANP is also compiling sample policies and procedures at www.NonprofitMaine.org/Reopening.

Human Resources and Staffing

- Once your office return is assessed and determined, organizational leadership should meet to discuss which staff should return to the office and when.
- These decisions should be very flexible, as you will not only have to consider staffing needs but also potential accommodations for some staff in certain categories. In all situations, ensure your decisions are made in a non-discriminatory fashion without regard to age or medical risk.
- Review human resources policies to make sure that policies and practices are consistent with public health recommendations and with existing state and federal workplace laws (for more information on employer responsibilities, visit the Department of Labor and the Equal Employment Opportunity websites).
- Ensure you have communicated any new procedures and protocols to all returning staff members and trained them appropriately.
- Upon notifying employees of return-to-work needs, participate in the interactive accommodation process with staff whom you know, or are made aware, have compromises to their health or those in high-risk health categories.
- Be open to some staff requests for continued work remotely privileges, particularly those in higher-risk health categories or who have child-care restrictions.
- Familiarize yourself with the provisions in the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act \(FFCRA\)](#) and establish a procedure for responding to employee requests for leave.
- Leadership and Human Resources should establish protocols for any employees requesting further work from home, accommodations or exceptions.
- You may continue (for the time being) remote work plans for those who can effectively do their jobs away from the office to lower physical capacity and increase social distancing at the office or facility.
- Familiarize yourselves and your staff of all paid-time-off policies including internal vacation and sick leave, as well as state or federal protected leaves including the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), paid sick leave, and leave under the FFCRA.
- Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of and understand these policies.
- Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member or take care of children due to school and childcare closures. Additional flexibilities might include giving advances on future sick leave and allowing employees to donate sick leave to each other.
- Employers that do not currently offer sick leave to some or all of their employees may want to draft non-punitive “emergency sick leave” policies.

- ❑ Remain updated on the CDC's COVID-19 symptoms. Some organizations may wish to ask staff to take their temperatures prior to coming to work or create a self-screening checklist. Any staff member who expresses any symptoms of COVID-19 should leave the location immediately and go home until they have been symptom-free for the period of time prescribed by the CDC.
- ❑ Provide instructions about how and when to safely return to work.
- ❑ Employers should not require a positive COVID-19 test result for employees who are sick to validate their illness or qualify for sick leave, or to return to work. Employers should work in partnership with employees to assist them in safely returning to work.
- ❑ Provide access to testing or resources where employees can find testing.
- ❑ Connect employees to employee assistance program (EAP) resources (if available) and community resources as needed. Employees may need additional social, behavioral, and other services, for example, to cope with their work with the field and/or with the death of a loved one.
- ❑ Plan for staff absences. Staff will need to stay home when they are sick (or showing symptoms) or they may need to stay home to care for a sick household member or care for their children.
- ❑ Identify critical job functions and positions and plan for alternative coverage by cross-training staff (similar to planning for holiday staffing). Provide instructions about how and when to safely return to work.

Anxiety, Depression and Other Mental Health Issues

- ❑ For most, the COVID-19 quarantine experience has been very concerning, and some individuals will report significant anxiety, fear and reticence about re-entering the workplace. Organizations should not be dismissive or judgmental about this anxiety. These feelings could rise to a level of a disability.
- ❑ Staff members should have some avenue to express concerns: identify a clear path or point person for communication.
- ❑ Leadership, management and co-workers should be ready to work with staff members and volunteers in an empathetic and trauma-informed manner.
- ❑ Remember, trauma and anxiety can manifest in a number of ways. Be proactive and find information on mental health counseling and resources in your area should an employee approach you and express a need for such services.
- ❑ It is important for nonprofits to understand that this isn't "business as usual" and that we will need to be perceptive and attuned to our staff's, volunteers' and clientele's mental health.

Reopening in Phases

- ❑ Nonprofits may bring employees back to workplaces in phases or shifts.
- ❑ Consider the timing and triggers for those phases back to the office.
- ❑ Also consider evaluating each phase as it happens before starting the next. This could be done through surveying or data exploration as well as using data and guidance from outside sources (health data, economic data, etc.).

Regression

At any point, there could be a resurgence of the virus, forcing organizations back into quarantine or remote work situations. Should this occur, follow similar steps to a previous change to your operations. Ensure active and quick communication to your staff, volunteers, clientele and constituents. Have a plan at hand in case you need to move back a step or two in your reopening plan.

Oath of Personal Responsibility for Staff and Constituents

Ask all staff, volunteers, and board members to adhere to a simple “Oath of Personal Responsibility.” While not legally binding, it does remind all of us of our responsibilities both inside and outside of the office to practice social distancing, good hygiene and disease detection and management. A sample is below.

SAMPLE Oath of Personal Responsibility

I, _____ am aware of the potential spread of COVID-19, that could result in severe illness and potential death. Therefore, I will, to the best of my ability, practice proper social distancing at work and outside of the office as recommended by CDC and state health department directives, as well as practice good hygiene (handwashing, use of hand sanitizer, wearing of a mask when required, etc.) and follow other health recommendations and policies instituted by [EMPLOYER]. Should I become ill, or experience any of the symptoms associated with COVID-19 (cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell), I promise to self-report the illness and contact [EMPLOYER] to let them know of my condition. I will adhere to health guidelines recommended by my health care provider. Finally, if I am exposed or suspected to be exposed to COVID-19, I will self-quarantine and notify [EMPLOYER] as soon as possible.

Should I have any concerns regarding any of the above, [EMPLOYER] policies related to COVID-19, or the safety precautions [EMPLOYER] is taking concerning COVID-19, I will report those concerns to [NAME OF REPRESENTATIVE].

Signed,

Board Governance

During this time of crisis and change, the organization has an opportunity to maximize the value of the board by tapping into the collective wisdom of the full board and the individual talents of members. The following recommendations recognize the vital role board members play as strategic leaders and thought-partners during the reopening phase.

Board/Chief Executive Partnership + Communication

- ❑ Focus on relationships – we’re all going through this together, but we may not all be experiencing it the same way. Check in with one another.
- ❑ Effective boards govern in constructive partnership with the executive director. Management decisions should continue to be made by the executive director. Governance decisions are made by the board.
- ❑ A decision like whether or not to reopen demands careful strategy and reflection. In some cases, that will be a shared decision between boards and executives, particularly as it relates to restarting or expanding programs, services or events that are “non-essential” and/or not explicitly addressed in state plans, and/or which carry a higher level of risk. In other cases, planning will be largely directed by staff leadership, with the board being kept well-informed (and engaged with other governance duties). Determine in partnership what is appropriate for the organization.
- ❑ Executive directors should provide regular (and likely more frequent) updates about major management decisions happening at the staff level and how things are going.
- ❑ Acknowledge that there will continue to be uncertainty, even if entering a “reopening” phase. Many things simply cannot be assured in this moment and there will be bumps in the road.
- ❑ In a crisis, the balance of governing and managing can shift, depending on the size of the organization and the circumstances of its leadership.
- ❑ Ensure there is a crisis communications plan in place that establishes the spokesperson of the nonprofit, and that board members and staff are aware of who plays this role. Consistent messaging during times of crisis and rapid change is essential.

MANP has a wide variety of resources on board roles and responsibilities in our [free, searchable Answer Center](#), as well as recommended reading regarding the board’s role during the crisis at NonprofitMaine.org/COVID19.

Meetings

- ❑ Boards and committees should continue to meet on a regularly established schedule, though meeting lengths or frequencies need to be adjusted to provide effective governance and effectively manage crisis situations.
- ❑ Follow all public health guidance when holding in-person meetings. Hold meetings by conference call or videoconference if in-person meetings cannot be held in accordance with social distancing guidelines.
- ❑ This is all the more important for virtual meetings and may require extra preparation from the board chair and CEO.

Governance Responsibilities

Monitoring/Fiduciary

- ❑ Review bylaws and current policies before making big decisions in a time of crisis. Some boards may want to delegate more leadership to an executive committee (if one exists) for emergency decisions, while others may determine that it is even more essential to engage the full board to ensure decisions have buy-in. Whenever possible, communicate fully and transparently with the full board and not a subset.
- ❑ The crisis may have made it necessary to alter, discontinue or enact new policies and procedures, especially as there is a return to offices and in-person programs. On a regular basis, the board should work to identify and codify necessary adjustments.
- ❑ Ensure a firm understanding of any risk or liability and who assumes it.
- ❑ Closely monitor the organization's financial circumstances.
- ❑ Review (or put in place) leadership succession plans and business continuity/disaster response plans. While we may be entering a phase of reopening for now, this crisis has reminded us all how quickly things can change.
- ❑ Depending on circumstances, a board may establish, or assign board members to support, a task force responsible for shaping plans for reopening and reengaging with the public.
- ❑ The board should stay up-to-date on general mission-related activities that continue amidst the crisis.

Strategic

- ❑ Review the strategic plan: how has the pandemic affected the organization's capabilities and priorities? What should the organization be doing more of, less of, stop? Bring a lens of creativity and innovation. (R-E-A-C-T-I-V-E to C-R-E-A-T-I-V-E. Move the "C").
- ❑ Engage in appropriate scenario planning, asking "what if..." (Find many resources on scenario planning at www.NonprofitMaine.org/COVID19.)

Generative/Visionary

- ❑ Seize this opportunity to articulate purpose and core values and ensure decision-making continues to be guided by them.
- ❑ A key question for the board is not how quickly we can get back to the way things were, but what have we learned from this pandemic and how can we integrate those lessons in a way that advances our mission and moves our organization forward? (See sidebar)

LOOKING FORWARD: QUESTIONS TO ASK

The board should be asking not how quickly can we get back to the way things were, but what have we learned from this pandemic and how can we integrate those lessons to advance our mission and move our organization forward.

- Are there changes that need to be made to our mission to respond to the immediate moment and/or ensure we can survive in the long run?
- What are the opportunities/threats over the coming years?
- Are we observing shifts in what we and/or our community believe to be true about the world, ourselves and our futures?
- What are the areas of distress and/or inequity that have been made worse by the crisis?
- What do we want to carry forward from this experience? What should be left behind?
- How can we listen for what the community is beginning to name that they need or want in the long term?
- What unique role do we play?
- Which collaborations or partnerships do we need to strengthen?

Find more advice and resources on strategic thinking for nonprofit leaders at www.NonprofitMaine.org/COVID19.

Communications and Public Relations

Communication is key in all of our relationships. Whether staff, board, volunteers, clientele, the media or the general public, during a crisis (even one we are all managing), transparency is essential. This is an optimal time to engage our closest allies as we navigate re-opening.

To All Audiences

- Devise a plan of ongoing communications for the next several months that outlines both internal work (staff, board, clientele, etc.) and external work (donors, supporters, general public). This is especially important to keep individuals informed about changes in programming or program delivery, protocols, procedures, policies, etc.
- Make clear that the most important consideration in the organization's decisions is protecting the health of all who interact with the organization, whether they are staff members, board members, volunteers, clients, vendors, members of the public or any other category of people.
- Revisit the communications channels available to you—email, social media, your website, press releases, newsletters and magazines, signage, mail—and whether you need to adjust your practices to use different (or more) channels to reach your audience.
- You may need to use different wordings for different channels, but make sure you are conveying the same "takeaways" across channels. There are few things worse for any organization than a perception that its messages are inconsistent or in conflict with each other.
- Be as transparent as possible about the processes and information that guide your decision-making.

To the Public

- Depending on your mission, you will want to communicate to the public your intentions about re-engagement. Let them know your general timeline and what to expect. This could be a press release, an email or a simple statement on social media and your website.
- If you are a very public-facing organization that regularly engages the public, communicate about protocols you have put in place to keep the public safe.
- Establish a “single point of contact” or spokesperson for all media and public relations purposes.
- Ensure your website, social media and all other channels reflect consistent updated hours of operation, protocols for visitors, etc.

To Staff

- Communication to staff, board and volunteers should be especially transparent and with as much detail as possible.
- Give sufficient notice so staff can make their own accommodations as they transition from working remotely.

Events and Donor Relations

Nonprofits host a number of special events with a cadre of purposes. Below are suggested guidelines, though decisions will depend heavily on updated health department regulations around in-person gatherings. We suggest nonprofits, performing arts organizations, congregations and other organizations that gather groups together continue to follow guidelines from local and state health departments to preserve the health and safety of all involved.

Special Events

- Follow local regulations about the number of people allowed to be together.
- Consider what the event would look like under social distancing and other pandemic-related guidelines. If the number of people allowed by state and/or local guidelines is smaller than what you would typically attract, consider whether that smaller number of attendees would undermine the effectiveness, spirit, and impact of the event. (It may be wise to be conservative in estimating the number of attendees: simply because the government authorities say it's safe to attend, that doesn't mean that all of your supporters will feel comfortable taking part. Be realistic in estimating the crowd.)
- Encourage those attending in-person gatherings to wear masks and observe their own social distancing techniques. Inform all guests of any special protocols in place at events before they attend (mask wearing, social distancing, food, other etiquette you will observe).
- For food handling, use a restaurant or licensed caterers and allow no "self-service" type handling. We do not recommend self-catered or "potluck" style group meals, particularly if you are working with individuals in high-risk groups.
- Have contingencies in place in the event of postponement, cancellation, change of plans, etc.
- If you have postponed an event to late summer or fall of 2020, have a cancellation contingency in place.
- Keep registrants/ticket-holders informed of all contingencies.
- In the event of a cancellation, organizations may want to consider communicating the impact of event cancellation on the organization's ability to advance the mission, and encourage ticket-holders to donate the price of their ticket rather than request a refund.
- Be aware that your usual sponsors may be hard-pressed to fulfill their commitments. For organizations incorporating auctions or raffles, some items/prizes you might typically offer – for tourist destinations, restaurants, and resorts – will not be attractive to donors in a time of semi-quarantine.
- Consider making your event virtual, which may lower the cost of the event (thereby minimizing the financial risk). Moreover, if marketed correctly, going virtual may earn the appreciation of many of your supporters. Find many resources about virtual events at NonprofitMaine.org/COVID19.

Foundations

- Communicate with your program officer or community relations director (the person responsible for overseeing your grant or sponsorship) as soon as possible to check in. They want to hear from you.

- Ask how they're faring. Highlight any new resources/support your organizations is offering to people during this challenging time.
- Let them know your plans, any changes to program delivery, and any changes on deliverables or expectations.
- Provide them information on your financial position and be completely transparent. Emergency grant programs along with various emergency funds have been established around the state.
- Ask if/how you can work together to un-restrict some funds if you're in need.
- Let them know if you successfully applied for and received PPP funding from the Small Business Administration.

Sponsors + Corporate Partners

- Communicate with your community relations director (the person responsible for overseeing the corporate gift or sponsorship) as soon as possible to check in. They want to hear from you.
- Ask how they're faring and if you can be of assistance. Consider highlighting resources/services you are offering to the public.
- Let them know your plans, any changes to program delivery, and any changes to deliverables or sponsorship benefits, such as due to moving events or programs online.
- Provide them information on your financial position and be completely transparent. While some corporations will also be experiencing their own financial challenges, others may have (or know of) emergency funds.

Individual Donors + Families

- Communicate with your donors as soon as possible to check in. They want to hear from you.
- Ask how they're faring and if you can be of assistance. Consider highlighting resources/services you are offering to the public.
- Let them know your plans on re-engagement and opening and any changes to program delivery.
- Provide them information on the impact of COVID-19 on your clients, staff and organization.
- Share ways that donors can help further your mission.

MANP has a wide variety of resources fundraising and communications during the pandemic at NonprofitMaine.org/COVID19.

Additional Resources

To supplement and complement the contents of this guide, MANP is compiling a library of public health guidance, industry-specific checklists and tools, sample policies, and other resources at www.NonprofitMaine.org/Reopening. We will be continually updating this webpage as guidance evolves and additional resources are developed.

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