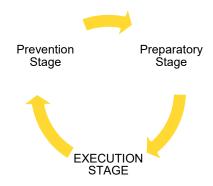# CRISIS MANAGEMENT

TESTING YOUR STRATEGY FOR UNANTICIPATED CRISIS: 5 KEY STEPS

Introduction

Every Member Organization is in a different place in dealing with the crisis at hand. Whether just beginning to assess your strategic priorities and operating plan or ready to implement your revised plan, this resource can serve as a guide.

Crisis Management is not a onetime shot. It is a circle in which you have a phase that you are always going though. You are either in the prevention stage, preparatory stage, or execution stage. Each stage builds on the other. This resource deals with mostly with the Execution stage.

Prevention Stage → Preparatory Stage → EXECUTION STAGE

Most of us are in the throes of dealing with the present situation and looking at ways to manage continuity. Keep in mind that each crisis typically plays out over 3-time frames that are overlapping and rolling.

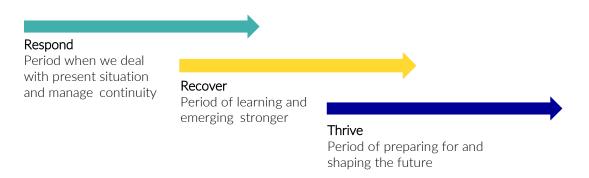**Respond -**the period when we deal with the present situation and manage continuity

Recover - the period of learning and emerging stronger

Thrive - the period of preparing for and shaping the future. This is also the period to evaluate how well you addressed the crisis. What did you do well? Where do you need to make improvements?

The Progression for Crisis Recovery is Evolutionary

Respond
Period when we deal with present situation and manage continuity

Recover
Period of learning and emerging stronger

Thrive
Period of preparing for and shaping the future

5 Key Steps in Strategy Testing:

1. Gather a response team

This could include the lead paid staff, the Chief Commissioner, members of the board, and other staff and volunteers appropriate to the crisis. This should be those staff and volunteers in decision-making positions. This group should not exceed 10 in order to work efficiently and effectively. This team is a centralized cross functional rapid response team enabled with necessary decision-making authority, charged with making clear decisions, monitoring and/or taking control of the situation and with sufficient team members and resources to take a day by day agile approach to navigate the changing environment.

Here are some key practices that can help to work efficiently and effectively:

- Be mindful of your own personal well-being; acknowledge and express empathy and compassion for each team member's individual situation, assure one another that safeguarding workers' health and safety, followed by economic wellbeing are priority in all that you do.

- Set the stage for a calm methodical approach to whatever is going to happen next, including reviewing or redefining your operating principles and decision-making boundaries.

- Define the non-negotiable for your planning such as the Girl Guide/Girl Scout mission, our promise to girls and our concern for safety. Make this an intentional team discussion so that the team is on the current page. Even in a crisis, it is important that everything be tied back to the purpose and values of Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting.

- From the beginning, build into your discussions and planning communication and stakeholder engagement strategies.

2. **Review and update your data**

Get as much data as you need to not be flying blindly - and then make a decision - don't engage in analysis paralysis.

3. **Prioritise challenges and responses**

Capture Opportunities and Deflect Threats

Evaluate your current strategic plans terms of feasibility during and post crisis, what is doable in the situation even though it may not be perfect. *See Appendix 1: Questions to help guide the conversations.*

Are there elements in your plan that are no longer feasible? If you can't do anything about those elements – move on. In some cases you may revisit the factor to determine what other choices can be made to "save" that plan component.

Some factors may affect the feasibility though NOT in a negative way —how can these be leveraged for additional positive impact on other choices you can make?

Some factors may not affect the business in any way.

4. **Planning Options for Recovery**

Now what, you have updated your data and evaluated the elements of your current plan for feasibility, now it is time to focus on your action for the future. Planning for different scenarios will help you be more adaptable going forward.

Ask yourselves - what if ... and how confident are we in the potential future X or Y or Z? Search for the right balance between short- and long-term plans: short term should outline ways to survive the crisis, - long term will shape your new normal rather than adapt to it.

Encourage creativity, innovation, and remember that staff and volunteers at all levels of the organisation may have some great insights and experiences to inform the scenarios.

5. **ACT Promptly and COMMUNICATE effectively and consistently**

Your plan may not be perfect or elegant - there will be known-unknowns- and you will probably need to update it as you go along. Regardless of this, it is important that you still communicate what you are doing with your members, volunteers and other key stakeholders.

Implement an engagement and communication plan with key stakeholders and encourage questions and two-way communication.

Your communication has two purposes:

1. Inform: Let people know that you are not flying blindly, share pertinent data, highlight the fact that your plan is still focused on safety and your mission, and share the identified priorities.

2. Thank stakeholders for and ask for continued support.

Appendix: Testing Your Strategy in Time of Crisis:
Questions to help guide the conversation

What questions should you be asking during this time of profound change in the external and internal environments?

Here are few questions to get you started as you assess your strategy and operational plans in order to meet emerging needs.

Changes in Our External Environment

- What is the economic/unemployment situation?
- Are basic needs being met? What social safety nets such as food, housing, etc. are now available?
- What is the school situation? Schedules? Differences across regions?
- Are our meeting places available and safe?
- What are the priorities of our current funders – Are there new organisations and individuals with priorities that match our revised and new initiatives and program offerings?
- How has the support for girl program in the community changed? - e.g. museums, field trip destinations, supplies for troop/group or community wide events?
- How have the preferences and expectations of our stakeholders changed during the crisis? Are those expectations likely to remain as we move forward?
- Identify advisors for outside your perspective
- Think of other questions unique to your situation

Reaching and Retaining More Girls

- Have we reached out to girls and leaders to understand their situation and needs? What have we learned?
- What is our membership compared to last year? Group/troop membership by levels? Alternative Programmes Delivery by levels? By racial/ethnic, socioeconomic factors?
- What is the status of membership registration/renewal?
- What is the status of potential member leads and follow up? What is our adult membership now vs. last year?
- What customer segments will be our focus?
- What are our near-term priorities to reach and retain more girls? How can we expedite and simplify renewals?
- How will we keep the elements of foundational Girl Guiding /Girl Scouting in each experience?
- How many girls/parents have we reached since the crisis began?
- Think of other questions unique to your situation

Volunteer Support

- Have we reached out to leaders and others volunteers to understand their situation and needs? What have we learned?
- How can we keep a human connection with our volunteers and staff and support them at this time?
- What are the major challenges in our Volunteer Delivery System? Do we need to modify our Volunteer Delivery System?
- What can we do to enhance retention of volunteers at this time?
- How can we keep a human connection with our volunteers and staff and support them at this time?
- What new or existing partnerships with organisations or groups might help us deliver Alternative Programme Delivery (APD) or other programs during this time?
- What new formats do we need to consider to offer programmes?
- Do our current programme standards and policies give the appropriate direction to leaders and programme volunteers?
- What have we learned from how we have worked during this crisis that will help us as we move forward? What is the new mix of face to face meetings and other ways of work with volunteers?
- Think of other questions unique to your situation

Programme Delivery

- Are the opportunities we are offering strengthening linkages with girls and volunteers?
- Which of our partnerships are still viable? Do we need new partnerships for specific programmes? What are our opportunities to partner with other organisations, businesses to optimise resources?
- What changes will be necessary in our programme delivery system?
- How will changes in programme delivery impact on our budget in the coming year?
- Are there programmes that have been cancelled that can be revitalized?
- Are there programs that can be adapted to alternative delivery in this manner?
- What has worked well for us as an alternative delivery system that should be continued?
- What is our capacity to build, deliver and sustain alternative and hybrid delivery of programmes?
- Are there any health and safety standards that need to be revised and/or added?   Size of events, use of properties and other programme sites, etc.
- What are the unique nuances and risks of expanded virtual offerings? Safety, security, trademarks, intellectual property, etc.
- What questions do we need to ask about our property and its use during this time?
- What is the impact of this crisis on our outdoors' programme? How do alternative programme delivery options apply?
- Think of other questions unique to your situation

Visibility

- How have we connected with key stakeholders and the community at large? What do key stakeholders need to know – how will they be informed?
- How and where have we promoted Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting as alive and well?
- How are we perceived by the community at large during this time?
- Do we need new or different outlets for getting the word out? Are we taking full advantage of appropriate and safe social media outlets?
- What existing and new resources might we use to promote Girl Guiding/ Girl Scouting?
- How can we highlight our enduring service/action component in terms of all the ways individuals and groups helped during the recent crisis?
- Are we telling our full story as well and as often possible?
- Think of other questions unique to your situation

Financial Resources

- What are the revenue implications for the rest of this fiscal year? Evaluate your revenue model.
- Are we redefining budgets and targets as frequently as possible – daily, weekly, monthly by segment?
- Are we ensuring rigorous prudent cash management?
- Have we engaged with debt holders/banks to discuss potential for extended funding?
- What is our current income mix? How will it be impacted in the next year? Do we have a realistic projection for the next 12 – 18 months?
- Which of our costs are truly fixed?
- How much of our current operational and capital budgets could be considered discretionary?
- What is the impact on insurance premiums?
- What is the expected impact on our product sales – shops, cookies and other products? Are we making full use of virtual product sale tools?
- How is our current investment portfolio impacting income?
- How have our current reserves been impacted? Are there funds that could be deployed now?
- Which income streams will be most impacted by the current environment? Equipment sales, property rental, etc.
- How do we "monetize" new virtual programming?
- Which of our revenue streams is the most sustainable? Which can't be sustained?
- Think of other questions unique to your situation

Fund Development

- What is the state of our funders– how do we encourage them to keep their commitments? How are we connecting with current supporters?
- How can we help funders see us providing responsive programme in a changed environment?
- Do funders hear from us beyond solicitation for monies?
- How will we keep our commitment to funders who have designated operating or capital gifts? Have we talked with them about funding revised priorities or program innovations?
- What new partnerships could we cultivate with companies or organisations who support our priorities?
- How do we cultivate individual donors during this time?
- How robust is our targeted on line giving platform? (Action focused, based on frequent small gifts, speaking to millennials, etc.)
- Think of other questions unique to your situation

Effective Operations and Governance

- How have we acknowledged the needs and concerns of our staff and board members during this time?
- How are we supporting staff/volunteers in their individual situations? Including technology support?
- Are we avoiding conducting business as usual based on pre-crisis assumptions?
- How has our technology capacity influenced our ability to respond?
- What alternative (virtual) systems do we want to implement/maintain? Board and committee meetings, service unit meetings etc.
- Is our staffing model appropriate for our current reality? What is our plan for the new normal?
- Are we optimizing the talents and skills of each of our staff?
- Can we retool our existing staff for some new tasks, or do we need to retrain or hire staff with different skills?
- How are we using available partnerships to our best advantage?
- Are we prepared to apply (meet requirements) for grants, stimulus packages etc.
- What changes are needed in our governing documents and ways of work?
- Does our board have the mix of skills and expertise for emerging realities?) How can we supplement needed expertise?
- What does our insurance cover?
- Are there adjustments in our travel policies needed?
- Are work from home policies working for this situation?
- Are there any restrictions that need to be defined for use of the office, of our other properties?
- Do we have policies and practices in place to support those who are impacted by this crisis?

- Are we in compliance with regulatory requirements that may have changed as a result of the crisis?
- Do we have a safe channel for employees to notify us with critical messages?
- Think of other questions unique to your situation

General Questions

- How will we align with WAGGGS Strategy post crisis?
- Have we considered the safety of members and communities in every decision?
- Are our Girl Guides/Girl Scout values, cultural attributes and guiding principles underpinning our plan?
- How will we communicate our new direction to our members, volunteers, staff and stakeholders?
- Is our plan responsive and proactive?
- Think of other questions unique to your situation

What's next

- Where do we want to be? What are our gaps? What will we start, stop or continue in our existing plan?
- What changes might we need to reconsider in the next few months?
- What is your capacity to change?
- What are the implications of any change that we are considering?
- What is our new plan? Who can help us be successful?
- Revise and communicate revised operational plans, benchmarks and budget to staff and board
- Engage all staff in understanding and implementing the plan.
- Make sure appropriate details are communicated carefully and enthusiastically to girls and volunteers and stakeholders.
- Have we communicated proactively about all aspects of the business and efforts undertaken with staff, girls, volunteers and other stakeholders?