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.