

SHIFTS

New approaches for executing high-impact outreach programs during changing times.



REDIRECT TRAVEL FUNDS

During periods of travel restrictions, it's critical to make this portion of the budget available should an urgent need arise. Consider moving money to technology, a new hire or even the development of a new program so that you may be of greater service during this time. Long term, set aside an emergency fund for operational expenses and gifts for staff doing outstanding work amidst difficulty. Be sure your organization's financial reporting and book-keeping practices are always above board.



CROWD SOURCE

If you are low on time but need to create a repository of pertinent information your community may utilize immediately, consider crowdsourcing the content. Start a Facebook group where people may swap tips for finding free resources like computers, food banks, homeschool resources or DIY hacks for self-care. Further this idea with a low-cost subscription to an open-source platform that allows people to post, search and share such needed information.



APPOINT A DIGITAL SUPPORT PERSON

Whether you hire a new employee or shift the role of a current one, be sure to have someone available to help your organization excel in web and digital spaces. They can move in-person events to video conferences and make you look great online. This person may also be able to support your partners and community members as they go digital as well.



HOST LISTENING SESSIONS

It's especially important to begin new projects by conducting meaningful needs assessments within the community you serve. Plan virtual forums, live sessions on social media, and emailed surveys to understand new pain points and to seek community-driven solutions. If your audience is national, don't forget to read op-eds and check comments on viral internet videos and posts. Gather nuanced feedback from local audiences by using one-on-one phone interviews.



TRY OLD TRICKS

Now more than ever, there is a push to go digital. However, it is worth discovering if older, low-tech solutions would be more suitable for your community's needs. Door-to-door service, phone trees, text messaging, snail mail and sidewalk chalk advocacy are all oldies but goodies. Big picture, think about working with local media such as newspapers, radio stations or outdoor sign printers to disseminate information and raise awareness.



TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE LULL

Undoubtedly, your organization maintains a laundry list of activities it could accomplish if only time would permit. Now is your chance to prioritize such tasks. Invest in professional development, pause for strategic planning or launch that webinar series. Don't let this time go to waste.



INCREASE YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE

Necessity will inspire your organization to grow its social media outputs. This may garner opportunities for expanded visibility as well as access to key thought leaders. You may discover new segments of your audience that are more comfortable behind a screen than in person. And your work may have an even bigger impact than you previously imagined.



CONVERT YOUR EVENT INTO A MOVEMENT

Canceling a major in-person event or conference can be disappointing. That is why it is important to actively recall the ultimate purpose of your event. What action did you want attendees to take after your event? How did you plan to equip or prepare them to take this action? Answering these questions are foundational for starting a movement, and that is more powerful than the event you had originally planned.



SHIFT THE TASKS NOT THE MISSION

It's easy to begin shifting your focus while in a panic, but remember to remain squarely within your area of expertise. It will be wise to seek new partnerships and adjust your methods. But do not change your mission. Your work fills critical gaps and serves a particular audience. Your organization's efforts will be most valuable when it aligns with your original mission.



These activities can be done immediately as an effective response.



These efforts require some planning and may take a few weeks to implement.



VARY YOUR APPROACH

Much of the information you provide during states of emergency will come in writing; this can present some health literacy challenges. When disseminating information online, be sure to accompany the text with a no-frills video explaining the topic or a downloadable graphic with minimal words. Keep all written material at an 8th grade reading level and follow plain-language guidelines.



PLAN FOR THE COME BACK

Although programmatic routines may not ever return to the way they once were, they will certainly settle into a new normal. Once this happens, be prepared with a strategy for continuing to serve emerging needs. Plan a new campaign launch, gather resources for linkage services, purchase needed tools and prioritize ongoing communication with your audience or network. Be sure that everyone is ready to go into action when the time comes.



IT'S TIME ENERGIZE THE MOVEMENT

NAATPN, Inc. is a national nonprofit dedicated to health justice for African Americans.