

# First Alaskans Institute

*"These are uncertain times... but we are not uncertain people."*

*- Valerie Nurr'araaluk Davidson (Yup'ik),*

*[\\*Virtual Coffeetime for the People\\*](#) on March 18, 2020*

## **Tips for Tribes and Non-Profit Organizations Navigating Operations During Crisis**

As Tribes and small non-profit organizations navigate the uncertainty of this health and economic crisis, we are faced with urgent decisions to protect the health and wellbeing of our staff, families, organizations and communities. Should we close down or operate remotely? How will these changes impact our community? How long can we sustain operations?

Alaska Native peoples come from incredibly resilient Ancestors who have navigated many difficult times throughout history. Though these challenging times looked differently than they do today, a binding force is the knowledge that we are stronger together. By drawing upon each other's strengths and navigating these challenges in a good way, the opportunity is before us to come through this challenge stronger than ever before. Quyanaqpak for all you've done and continue to do to contribute to healthy, thriving peoples and communities!

As we are collectively navigating this new situation alongside our community, we wanted to share tips we are picking up along the way, in the hopes it can be helpful for others.

### **Making sure organizations and employees are covered**

Working remotely is new territory for many and may have unforeseen risks and costs. Contact your insurance provider to ensure the place of business is covered, whether in the primary office or within an employee's home. Staying in good communication with your insurance company is important. Disclose where staff will be working. They can help you put together and share important information with employees about their coverage during this time and may include information about additional benefits employees may have access to or qualify for, including short-term disability, FMLA leave, wellness programs, financial counseling, medical testing, and more.

### **Reviewing organizational accounts**

There are many factors in transitioning fiscal operations to a virtual setup to consider.

- Confirm individual signers and their authority levels for business accounts, and create a backup plan in the event signers are unavailable;
- Review online access and note who has access and knowledge how to use the program;
- Confirm proper controls are in place to ensure payroll runs smoothly;
- Keep electronic banking information protected and readily available to pay vendors;
- Gather necessary electronic information from vendors to pay electronically where possible;
- Troubleshoot tools and methods to both provide and accept payments;
- Review accounts regularly for fraudulent charges and activity; and
- Ensure staff are aware of fraudulent schemes and how to avoid scams.

### **Protecting financial information**

As always, lock up confidential, sensitive, and otherwise protected business information. Promptly deposit all cash and checks. With your offices left empty for a significant period of time, this will help protect you in the event of a break in.

### **Setting up good communication channels**

Maintain open lines of communication with all funders, vendors and contractors with the best updated contact information, and notify them if your office has transitioned to virtual or if some or all operations have been closed down. With funders, if you have planned activities that are impacted by COVID-19, make sure they're aware of this and find out what flexibility they can provide either through funding extensions or diversion to general operations. In this unprecedented time, it's important to advocate for what you need – funders want to see your organization succeed.

### **Determining the solvency of our organizations**

It is unclear what the short-, mid- and long-term impacts of this crisis will be, or if funding drawdowns will continue to be accessible; make sure the organization is current on all grant drawdowns. Determine how much cash the organization has in the bank, and if it is classified as “unearned revenue” from a grant source or available to pay bills. How long will this available cash last to pay your bills, including payroll? Make a contingency plan for various scenarios.

### **Mapping various budget scenarios**

In times like these, it's good to have three budget scenarios: 1) the current one with minor changes, assuming all will go back to normal soon; 2) a moderate budget decrease assuming things will go back to normal in six months; and 3) a worst-case budget scenario that includes the bare bones funding for services necessary to operate and keep doors open. Discuss this with your leadership and be transparent with staff without instilling fear as best as you can.

### **Fundraising**

For many of us, fundraising is how we keep our organizations afloat, however, fundraising during a recession can be problematic. Individuals and businesses are hit economically and may be reluctant to give right now. Fundraising may look different for quite some time. Organizations that rely on social events may have to be prepared to not hold them for at least a year. This is a good time to develop a long-term plan. There are many online resources that offer creative ideas to raise funds.

### **Useful links and resources:**

<https://kindful.com/blog/coronavirus/>

<https://kindful.com/blog/tips-working-from-home-coronavirus/>

<https://cathexispartners.com/creative-approaches-to-p2p/>

<https://www.forakergroup.org>

<http://www.ncai.org/initiatives/partnerships-initiatives/resources-for-indian-country-coronavirus>

<https://www.leadinggood.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Crisis-Survival-Guide-for-Nonprofits-Leading-Good.pdf>

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/kajabi-storefronts->

[production/sites/42951/themes/1689514/downloads/AWwripa8RDSRDQYvpYpy How to Handle Donor Communications During Covid-19.pdf](production/sites/42951/themes/1689514/downloads/AWwripa8RDSRDQYvpYpy%20How%20to%20Handle%20Donor%20Communications%20During%20Covid-19.pdf)