



Think Like a Business— Act Like a Movement

Social Sector-Informed Strategies to
Sustain Organizations and Missions



From natural disasters to policy threats, nonprofits are on the frontlines of multiple crises impacting our communities. This “toolkit” was developed by nonprofits, for nonprofits, to navigate the impact of recent disruptions, such as the 2025 Los Angeles fires, executive orders, changes in federal funding, as well as future disruptions. Learn how other nonprofits are building sustainability in turbulent times through proven best practices and identify common themes that can inform future strategies.



COMMUNITY IMPACT AND PROGRAMS

**Tactics to make progress towards
your mission while remaining
adaptable.**

Potential Strategies

Embrace pivoting and alternative opportunities to serve your community—every decision should connect you back to your organization’s purpose.

Remember to always keep the community’s interests front-and-center.



Remember the importance of community and collaboration.



Talk to each other. In times of crisis, we tend to go into a scarcity mindset and forget how powerful we are as a community of practice.



Introduce partners to strategically aligned funders.

Gather data that affirms your mission and highlights the continued need for investment in your community.



Community Leadership.

Convene partners.

Give voice to the community.

Provide trusted info/education.



Power of Knowledge.

Use data to exert influence.

Demonstrate understanding of community needs.



Systems Change.

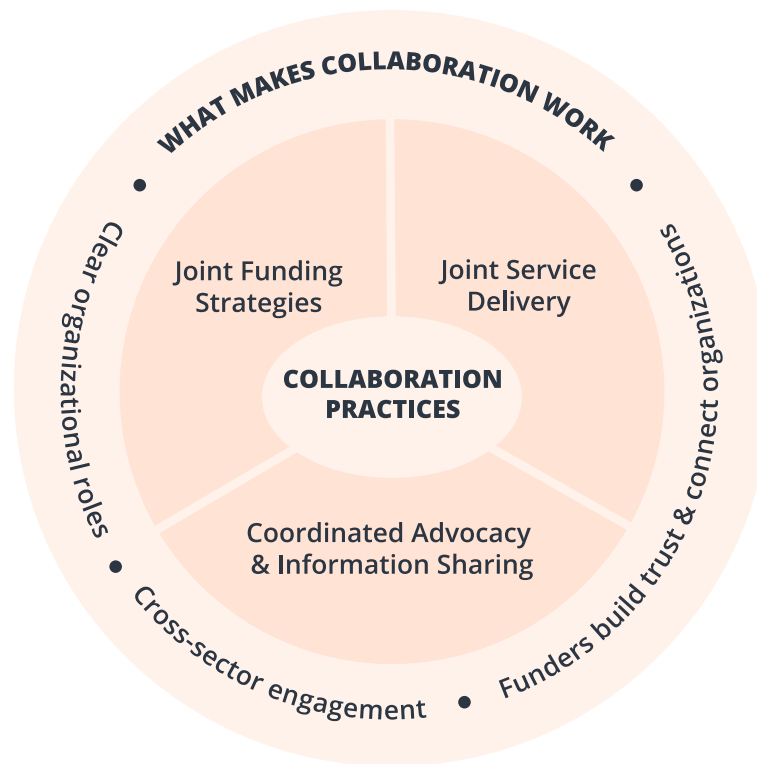
Inform funders.

Reduce unnecessary reporting practices.

Consider strengthening the program/service elements that your organization is best at. Double-down on your defined lane. Be known for it. This allows organizations to work together and avoid duplicative work across multiple organizations.



Think creatively about partnerships and opportunities for collaboration.



- Joint service delivery – pool resources and staff capacity to serve the same community and/or deliver the same type of programming.
- Joint funding/fundraising strategies – leverage the attractiveness of coordinated community efforts to reduce competition for resources and increase the chances of the work/community being supported.
- Coordinated advocacy and information sharing – align voices from your community to gain the attention of philanthropy and local government.
- It's essential for organizations to maintain clarity in their roles and responsibilities, while actively engaging in cross-sector collaboration to maximize impact.
- Encourage funders to take the lead role in building inter-organizational relationships to create trust, identify unknown synergies across their grantees, and alleviate some of the administrative burdens of organizations.

Create coalitions to address certain policy issues. This helps elected officials sort and prioritize incoming communication.



Build better relationships with local and state government officials.



Have deeper conversations about their needs and your work.



Assist officials with solving complicated community issues – provide them with apolitical solutions.



Utilize community convenings and collective voice when it feels too vulnerable for your organization to be front facing with government.



Communicate with them in meetings, not through social media.



Build rapport with their aides.



Don't call them out – call them in.



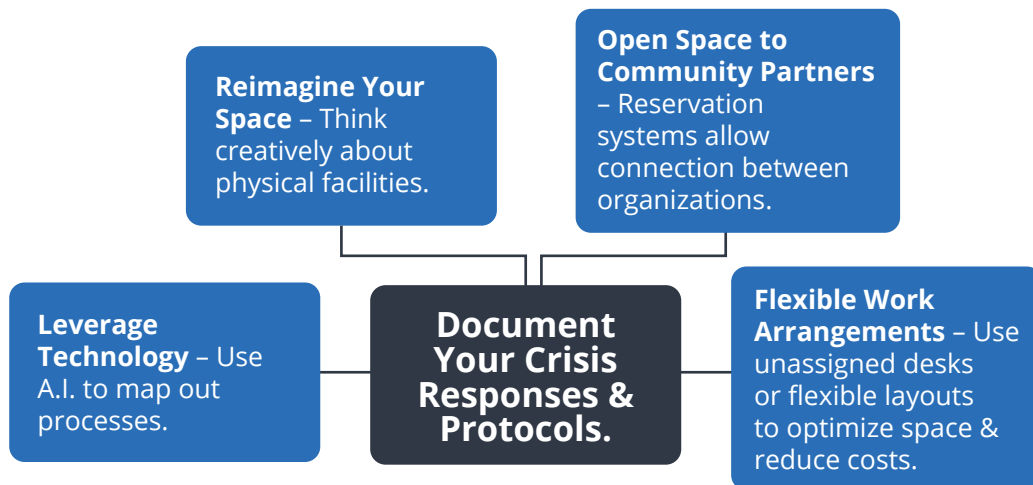
ORGANIZATION AND OPERATIONS

**Preparations for multiple
scenarios and making decisions
in the face of uncertainty.**

Potential Strategies

Document your crisis responses and protocols so that you can refer back to resources and strategies for the next crisis.

Maximizing Your Resources During a Crisis



Leverage board members' expertise, retain general counsel, or seek pro bono counsel to stay legally informed and prepared, and to understand implications for staff and operations.

Maintain clear and consistent communication with your staff.

So everyone understands the proper protocols and messaging for handling any uncertainties in day-to-day operations. Keep middle managers well informed so they can implement changes effectively and share on-the-ground feedback to improve strategy.



Be prepared!

Work with your team and board to [scenario plan related to budget and finances](#).



Do not do it on your own—do it with others! Reach out for help and collaboration.

Assign lead roles to ensure accountability and bandwidth to address all that is happening.



Be willing to be vulnerable to obtain partnerships. Have difficult conversations upfront. Be transparent about your organizational finances to ensure proposed strategies and partnerships can work



Know your strengths and challenges.



Be willing to share resources.

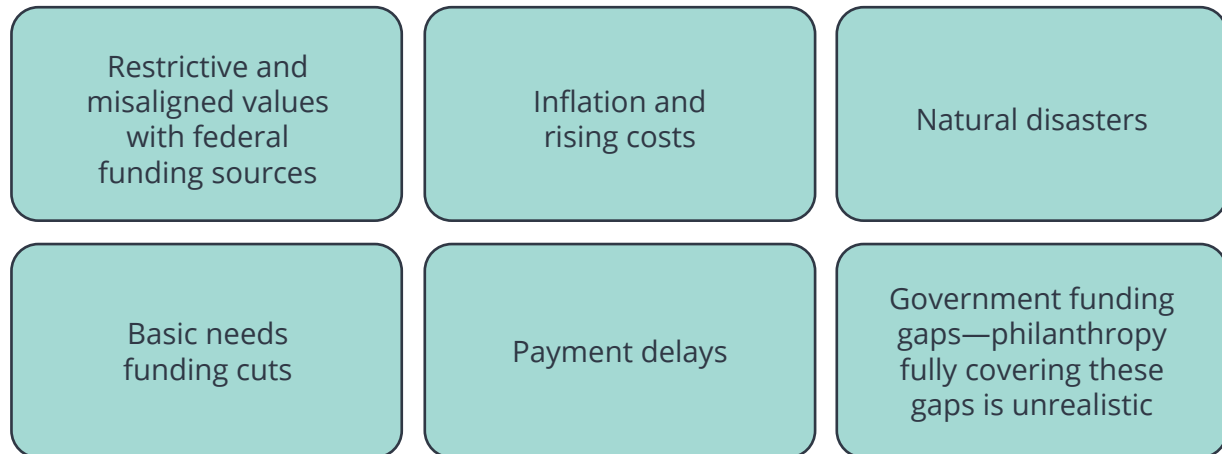
Understand the impacts and implications of actions at the state and federal government levels—consider hiring a policy liaison, solely or collaboratively, to better understand what is going on.



FINANCE AND FUNDING

Identification of your biggest risks and vulnerabilities to guide both cost-cutting and new fundraising as remedies.

Examples of Current Risks and Vulnerabilities



Potential Strategies

Understand your **budget outlook** and potential **shifts in funding** or revenue availability to inform decision-making.



Scenario plan for the best and worst cases. Determine how your organization can pivot.



Ask yourself the following questions:

- What are our key sources of revenue?
- Which funding sources are likely to change? Are changes anticipated to be minimal, moderate, or severe?
- Is our mission and/or programming currently being politicized? If so, how might they be at risk?
- If revenue dips, what financial reserves can we draw on to sustain operations?

Share your needs with funders to maintain services—funders are aware of and understand the shared context, and they may adjust grant timelines or reporting requirements, or even provide additional resources or connections.



Focus your fundraising efforts on funding sources that best align with your impact goals and mission.



Avoid seeking to raise money everywhere, spreading yourself too thin, and/or allowing for mission creep.



Identify categories of funding that are the best “fit” with your strategy and focus fundraising efforts there.

Think creatively about partnerships and opportunities for collaboration.

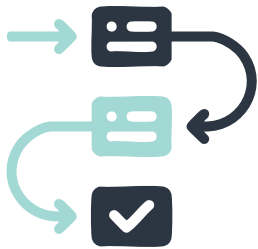


- Joint service delivery; joint funding/fundraising; coordinated advocacy; and coalition-based hiring.
- As funders are aware of common challenges, it is often more attractive to present collaborative funding opportunities rather than operating in silos.

Advocate and get involved in efforts regarding fair and timely reimbursement structures from government funding sources.



Analyze potential cost savings before reducing services or using reserve funds.



Audit and streamline operations and vendors.



Explore strategies to further streamline functions such as HR, payroll, etc.



Take time to investigate current costs and identify cheaper alternatives.

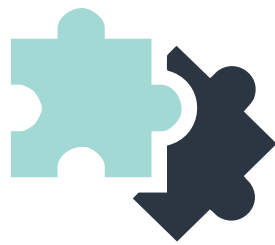
Look into income generating opportunities.



Nonprofits are permitted to create Social Enterprises to make additional revenue.

- A social enterprise is an activity of a nonprofit that employs entrepreneurial, market-driven strategies for earned income in support of its mission.

Dedicate more time and/or funding for risk management and infrastructure planning.



Set strategies for large, sudden changes ahead of time.



Structure your organization and finances intentionally around the likelihood of these changes occurring.

Additional Resources

- [Radical Collaboration: How to Create and Make the Most of Inter-organizational Arrangements – NonprofitGPS](#)
- [StrongNonprofits Toolkit - Governance and Strategy | Wallace Foundation](#)
- [Get Help | Public Counsel](#)
- [StrongNonprofits Toolkit - Financial Management | Wallace Foundation](#)
- [StrongNonprofits Toolkit - Budgeting | Wallace Foundation](#)
- [NPGPS Action Research: Dynamics and Trends in the Nonprofit Economy – NonprofitGPS](#)
- [StrongNonprofits Toolkit - Operations | Wallace Foundation](#)



