



2020 PANDEMIC LEARNING TO ADAPT AND ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

RESOURCE FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Translation and adaptation courtesy of Townshippers' Association

The pandemic has suddenly plunged us into a period of adjustment and uncertainty that is far from over. To this end, the boards of directors (BOD) as well as management must juggle multiple challenges to legally adapt their practices while respecting their groups' unique character. It is also important to keep in mind that containment measures and all health guidelines remain in place; it is therefore still prohibited to gather and for the moment or hold meetings in person.

Health and safety:

Administrators have a legal responsibility to provide this component for employees, volunteers and members.

If an individual within the organization has concerns about their health, they have the right to file a complaint with the (CNESST) *Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail* (Commission on Occupational Health, Safety, and Security); if there is an investigation, you may have to justify any decisions and practices in place as they relate to health and safety in this context.

In order to adequately reflect on a gradual deconfinement plan adapted to your specific context several components need to be discussed and considered. This should be done collectively, by members of your BOD and in collaboration with management and the work team. [The new information package from the CTROC](#) is a comprehensive resource that can help facilitate this discussion (available in French only). In addition, we have included some discussion starting points below:

- What is the current situation of your employees and/or volunteers?
- What parts of the organisation should be closed, opened, or modified?
- Does your civil liability insurance need to be reviewed?
 - although this is an exceptional situation, it is a good idea to verify that your organisation is protected in the event of litigation should an individual contract COVID-19 and pursue a claim.

Suggestions



Consult the [CNESST tool kit](#) as well as the *Institut national de santé* publications to determine the procedures that should be put in place to ensure the health and safety of all within your organisation and during its activities.

Examples:

- Daily cleaning and disinfecting of bathrooms, dining areas, frequently touched surfaces (door handles, telephones, computers, printers), etc.
 - A rotating schedule for employees' lunch hours and breaks in order to maintain physical distancing (the microwave should be washed after every use).
 - Installation of physical barriers if a 2-metre distance cannot be maintained in the work area.
 - If necessary, provide the appropriate personal protective equipment for the level of risk associated with service delivery and activities.
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Other questions to ask:



- Is an in-person meeting with a member or colleague when we may have to wear masks, gloves etc. actually more welcoming than meeting via videoconference?
- Since gatherings are still prohibited even while respecting physical distance, how can we exercise democracy and communal life in our organisation?

Directors' terms of office



Since exceptionally this year's AGM may be postponed and possibly cancelled, Directors' terms are automatically extended. Directors still have the right to resign at which time the BOD is entitled to fill positions that may become vacant during the year.

*It is important to stay abreast of any updates and new information disseminated re: AGMs and other legal obligations for your organisation as they may change periodically.

Additional things to consider:

Your choices: a reflection of your values



As an NGO you are all working for a fairer and more equitable world; you work to improve people's living conditions and develop individual and collective potentials. **Since you know how to do this for your members and your community, you also know how to do this for your volunteers, the work team and management.**

As a member of the BOD of an NGO it is important to **be compassionate**. During these troubled times, individuals may not be able to perform at the same level as usual and expectations must be adjusted.

Favour the use of Telecommunication



This remains the safest strategy to prevent the spread of the virus. Using telecommunication, the vast majority of organizations have impressively adapted their way of doing things.

- Can your current way of doing things be sustained for a few more weeks or months?
- Is it necessary to immediately decide on an official reopening date?

How do you plan for the next year?



Things are changing so rapidly; it may be difficult to plan long-term. Take your time!

- From now until the end of the summer, which projects should you prioritize for your organization?
- Should you wait until the containment measures are officially lifted before drafting a formal action plan?

Caring for emotional and mental well-being



Epidemics are a stressful and anxious time for all of us. Be on the lookout! This year more than ever, employees, volunteers, and management will need time (vacation or otherwise) to relax and unwind.

- What mechanisms have you/can you put in place to ensure the well-being of your volunteers, management and work team?
- How have you planned for the organisation's summer period (in addition to vacation time for management and the work team)?



Wrapping up...

Checklist



Continue working with telecommunication

For organizations that are able to use telecommunication, this is the easiest way to protect ourselves and our communities.



Focus on communication

Make sure that information is well-circulated throughout the organization and that your communications are useful and easy to understand. Do not forget to use humour– it can be good for the soul right now!



Keep in touch

Our relationships are more important than ever. Nourishing them with positivity and caring can improve our collective ability to get through this pandemic.



Find the right tools

A great deal of information has been made available during this unprecedented time. Gather the information you need, pay attention to the sources of the information you find, and take the time to analyze it together before making decisions.



Flexibility and patience

Things are changing quickly and everyone's ability to adapt may be wearing thin. It is normal to feel overwhelmed by the situation and important to remember that everyone reacts differently.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

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