

# Governance in a crisis for small charities

A crisis can be a difficult time to be on a committee or board of a charity. These are a few tips adapted from JB Were's guidance\*.



1. Support your charity to get to a stable position – check in with your **people**, assess your **finances**, and think about your **services** to make sure your charity can continue to operate.
  - People – do your staff and volunteers feel supported? Are key personnel available, and do you have backups in place if they are unavailable? Consider your core activities and services that best support your beneficiaries in the context of your charitable purpose.
  - Finances – Have your income sources changed? Have fundraising events or activities had to be cancelled? Do you need to access reserves? Are there other funding options open? Try and maintain your normal or key operations if possible and where you can, implement cost cutting measures.
  - Services – Can you continue to offer your services? How will you operate at different alert levels? Can you pause or offer services in different ways or collaborate? What are your key services you should be prioritising and are there services that are not as vital?



2. Think how you can best support your charity to further that purpose in line with your values.

**HINT:** if you don't know the wording of your purpose, look on the [Charities Register](#) under the [Charity Documents](#) tab.

- Think about the critical actions you can take to ensure that you continue to fulfil your charitable purpose. Is branching out into other areas to meet funder aspirations the right move for your charity? Consider the core activities and services that best support your charitable purpose and your beneficiaries. If there are activities or services that are no longer serving this purpose now may be the time to step back from them.
- It is also a good idea to conduct some risk planning. Identify potential risks that your charity might face, such as your financial position, cybersecurity or your employees and volunteers. Try and do some scenario planning to think about how your organisation will respond to different future environments.



3. Connect with your stakeholders – **communicate** with the groups that are a part of and interact with your organisation and **keep beneficiaries at the centre of your focus**.
  - Talk to your funders, donors, service users, your vendors and suppliers, and charities or other groups offering similar services.
  - Understand how your stakeholders are impacted and what their needs are. Think about how you can work together to support people who are the most at need.



4. Fundraising focus – we know a lot of charities will see revenue reduced during a crisis.
  - Empower your people who work on fundraising to adapt and think of creative ways to fund your charity. If you rely on donations, take the time to connect and engage with your donors.



5. Lead with empathy. A crisis is a challenging time for everyone – not all your people, volunteers or the groups you support will react in the same way. Be kind and prioritise wellbeing. You don't need to have all the answers or control everything but what is more important is that you can communicate the steps you will take so that your stakeholders and staff know what to expect. For more information see JB Were's paper on *Navigating through Rough Seas- for-purpose leadership in times of crisis*.