



Friday, March 20, 2020

Dear friends,

Many of you — funders, board members, and other stakeholders — have been asking what we at **Leading Edge** and **JPRO** have been seeing and hearing from nonprofits on the ground as the Jewish community confronts the COVID-19 crisis. Between our two organizations, we've connected with leaders, HR staff (our "people people"), and line staff at hundreds of organizations over the past week, on webinars and in private conversations. We're sending this email to give you — our lay leaders and funders — **a brief snapshot of the prevailing themes that leaders and professionals raised most frequently and urgently this week.**

Please note: The situation we are all in is changing not only day by day, but hour by hour. **This summary provides a "pulse" of what we see at this moment in time. Things will likely shift from week to week, as we experience the swings of our "new normal."**

With those caveats, here is a bird's-eye view of themes the teams at Leading Edge and JPRO saw this week, March 16-20, 2020:

- **Coping with the change in how work happens:**

- While externally focused on meeting the needs of their constituencies, **internally, leaders and managers are focused on creating structures to get the work done.** This is in large part about monitoring each person's bandwidth and the related impact on workload distribution to ensure priorities are achieved.
- With the above in mind, they are **scrambling to establish HR policies and expectations that are meaningful, appropriate and possible for the current situation.** Organizations do not want to limit sick leave if an employee or their loved one becomes ill, however, that may not be feasible operationally or financially.

- **Economic worries:**

- Understandably, there are concerns about immediate financial needs as impacted by the loss of earned revenue as well as longer-term impacts of reduced fundraising both on individual organizations and the broader Jewish community. **Some organizations are at**

imminent risk of furlough/layoffs without immediate intervention. Here too, they are torn between the ethical vs. financially responsible decision.

- Leaders and professionals appreciated the letter from major foundations last week and despite that, some worry that foundations may become less patient over time or will not be with them for the long haul.
- Not surprisingly, employees are worried about their health but existentially worried about their jobs and financial security.

- **Ensuring personal well-being:**

- Leaders and managers are concerned about their team members. They are trying to innovate meaningful mechanisms to support each person's social-emotional wellness and their physical wellbeing while ensuring social distancing does not lead to social isolation. They are also trying to pace themselves for what they know will be a marathon, but for now, most are sprinting.
- Unfortunately, leaders are also being forced to develop contingencies for what happens when employees (and their loved ones) start getting sick.

- **Creativity and resilience:**

- In ways we do not often see, there is an openness and sharing going on throughout the Jewish community. Folks from all quarters are connecting to collaborate and share resources in ways that they never would have contemplated before.
- There is remarkable creativity and resilience across the field. One professional who works at an organization with several hundred employees that are dealing with remote work for the first time spoke about trying to empower decision-making at all levels, "We don't want people to be afraid of breaking things. Everything is already broken."

There are **questions around the short term vs long-term time horizons regarding all of the above.** Leaders are thinking in two-week, two-month and two-year increments, trying to adapt, protect and prepare themselves, their teams and their organizations for what is to come.

Wishing you all a safe, healthy and peaceful Shabbat,
Gali & Ilana

Gali Cooks, President & CEO, Leading Edge

Ilana Aisen, CEO, JPRO Network