



DETERMINED TO SURVIVE: FACTORS TO CONSIDER

AMBASSADOR INSIGHTS
June 2020

Developed collaboratively by the
**LEAP OF REASON
AMBASSADORS COMMUNITY**

DETERMINED TO SURVIVE



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“How do we continue our programs, when funding is cut, using digital platforms with participants is new, and our services are in even greater demand?” We know this question is keeping many nonprofit executives up at night.

Leap Ambassador **Kylie Hutchinson**, Principal Consultant with [Community Solutions Planning & Evaluation](#), recently shared her work in program sustainability research, which identifies [28 factors](#) that influence a nonprofit’s ability to survive. Acknowledging that many of the 28 factors are connected to long-term goals, she highlighted some immediate strategies to consider.

SUSTAINABILITY AND WORST-CASE SCENARIO PLANNING

Most nonprofits have a strategic plan, but few have considered the need for a sustainability plan. A sustainability plan is associated with greater sustainability, perhaps because it means you’ve thought through and prepared for both best- and worst-case scenarios. The first one is easy: Imagine money is flowing, programs are flourishing, program participants are receiving critical services, technology is working flawlessly, the team is embracing change, and whatever else may be on your wish list. (We see your eye-roll, “I wish” smirk.) That’s the best-case scenario, but the worst-case scenario is hard to think about, yet critical to planning and preparation for surviving the pandemic and ensuring sustainability. Sometimes, being forced to make decisions and changes helps leaders and teams to become even more creative with solutions. In this short [video clip](#), Kylie offers a simple activity to spark a discussion that helps a leader and their team make decisions about how to move forward in a crisis.

STRONG LEADERSHIP

Strong leadership is always a given for an effective organization; yet leaders facing difficult decisions now need to be even more adaptive and courageous. Pillar 1 of the [Performance Imperative](#), collaboratively developed by the Leap Ambassadors Community, crystallizes the importance of leadership and can help identify specific actions executive and board members need to take. Another great resource is the May 2020 Candid webinar about [strengthening boards](#). Leap Ambassadors **Sam Cobbs**, **Alexa Cortes Culwell**, **Beth Kanter**, and **Amy Sample Ward** shared insights about how boards can strengthen their governance and help their organizations through this crisis.



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DIVERSIFIED FUNDING

Research shows that diversified funding promotes greater nonprofit sustainability, which is why leaders are always thinking about who and where they might turn for additional support. Many local foundations are offering funds with few or no strings attached to help keep your programs running. The U.S. Small Business Administration is offering loans to nonprofits with an option of forgiveness through the [Paycheck Protection Program](#). And don't forget to reach out to donors who are passionate about your mission and invested in seeing your work continue. [Pillar 4: Financial Health and Sustainability](#) in the Performance Imperative offers other helpful principles that Chief Financial Officers and CEOs can adapt for their own organizations.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND VISIBILITY

This is definitely a time to rally your community for support! Yes, even while every other nonprofit is doing the same thing. Community support, program champions, and volunteers are identified in the research as strong influencers of survival and sustainability. Ask: "Who are the specific people among our constituents who are champions for our cause? What connections might they have to support us now?" Identify those in the community who feel ownership or have helped to create and mold what your organization is today. Can they help others see the critical need for your services? Are there creative ways to use volunteers to help your organization stay afloat now? Although volunteer management requires an investment of time, it's often worth the time and energy when you're clear about responsibilities. Read more about specific ways you can work with your stakeholders in [COVID-19 Resources: How to Reach Your Donors and Volunteers](#).

DOCUMENTED WORTH AND VALUE

Greater confidence in an organization's ability to produce results is associated with sustainability. Pillar 7 of the [Performance Imperative](#) underscores the importance of external evaluation of your impact. If your organization has done an evaluation of outcomes, this is the time to highlight positive results. In the absence of an outcome evaluation, highlighting your use of evidence-informed practices, identifying any studies of similar programs with positive results you could use as proxy evidence from the research literature, or results from your own internal monitoring efforts can serve as alternatives.



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HELPFUL TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Here are resources that we hope are helpful for the survival and sustainability of organizations.

- [28 Factors](#) – Factors that influence the sustainability of programs
- [Performance Imperative](#) – Helps nonprofits and public agencies understand and assess performance by sharing a common definition of high performance and providing a framework of seven organizational disciplines to achieve it
- [Paycheck Protection Program](#) – Loans offered to nonprofits with forgiveness options by the U.S. Small Business Loan Administration
- [Sustaintool.org](#) – An online sustainability assessment tool that shows your organization’s immediate strengths and weaknesses with respect to sustainability.
- [Survive and Thrive: Three Steps to Securing Your Program’s Sustainability](#) – step-by-step guidance on how to develop a sustainability plan by Kylie Hutchinson
- [Should You Sow What You Know](#) – Key questions to ask when scaling up initiatives for maximum sustainability.
- [Pinterest Page of Nonprofit Sustainability Planning](#) – A collection of research, resources, and tools for increasing the long-term sustainability of community programs from www.communitysolutions.ca
- [Beyond Survival: Five Keys to Unlock Social Innovation Amid the COVID-19 Crisis](#) – Offers five concrete steps nonprofits can take immediately during the coronavirus outbreak to build up the new muscles that will unleash their latent capacity to innovate.