

## Leading in a Crisis: Using Strategy to Guide the Affiliate

### Overview

Even as elected Association leaders tend to focus on self-care during the COVID-19 pandemic, the responsibility of their position will demand their time and attention. During this crisis, activists and members will be closely watching the behaviors and actions of elected leaders. There will be no easy choices. For example, many leaders may feel it necessary to play defense, and move to protect the profession and Association members. Other leaders may feel it is necessary to place the needs of students above all else. And, others will see this as an opportunity to do both.

COVID-19 has already, or soon will, impact the Association's strategic plan and financial resources. Now is the time for Association leaders to turn to the strategic plan to remind themselves of the vision, mission, core values, organizational goals and priorities. It may be that goals and priorities will shift. Regardless of direction, every leader will have an opportunity to use or learn the knowledge, skills, and abilities outlined in the Strategy and Fiscal Health competency domain ([www.nea.org/leadershipdevelopment](http://www.nea.org/leadershipdevelopment)). Now is the time for leaders to align the Association's work with member needs, use data and analyses to inform decision-making, as well as supporting the financial health of the enterprise.

### 5 Things You Should Do and Know

- Start by reviewing the Association's strategic plan.
  - IDEA: Convene the Association's leadership team. Use powerful questions to guide the conversation. Some questions to consider (not exhaustive):
    - Are the strategies and tactics we are executing still relevant given the moment? What opportunities exist? How do we continue to work toward our goals? What does the affiliate need to start, stop, or continue doing?
- Assess the strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats of the Association, including the use of an equity audit tool.
- Continue to promote a culture of fiscal responsibility by ensuring Association bylaws and other governing documents and policies support financial health. At the same, what are the levers for change within those documents that will allow the leadership to be nimble and agile, during crises or when new challenges arise? In reviewing the governing documents and bylaws, look for language that signals the organization's 'must-do's' and what is optional. Where are the opportunities for giving elected leadership the flexibility they need, while allowing for various forms of decision-making from stakeholders?
- Adopt financial best practices that support and strengthen the Association's fiscal health. Crises provide an opportunity to review outdated procedures and practices that could lead to mismanagement and a lack of shared accountability.

- Engage with members, often, to build member support for Association strategic goals, as well as communicate the need for change before, during, and after a crisis.

## Additional Resources

To learn more about the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to navigate leadership during COVID-19, review the NEA Leadership Competency Framework and complete self-assessments of your leadership at [www.nea.org/leadershipdevelopment](http://www.nea.org/leadershipdevelopment).

Performing a SWOT analysis? Here's one resource that could be helpful: [https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC\\_05.htm](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_05.htm)).

During this crisis, communicating frequently with activists and members should be a key strategy. If you have never used digital and social media, or want to enhance your engagement, NEA has developed a series of short, informational, online learning modules: [www.learn.nea.org](http://www.learn.nea.org).

