

◀ **Insights**

GRANTMAKING LIFECYCLE

The Grants Management Response to COVID-19: Part 1

By Elly Davis

March 25, 2020





None of us planned on a global pandemic.

Yet in this moment of crisis, indeed from the moment it became evident we were facing a crisis, you – our members – began to take action. We saw it in your support of our decision to cancel our conference; in the conversations on CONNECT asking for and sharing ideas on how to adapt quickly and effectively; and in your renewed commitment to leading your organizations' efforts to shift processes, procedures, technology, and communications to be what the moment demands – responsive, agile, compassionate and creative.

PEAK is keeping a finger on the pulse and an ear to the ground to help you stay up to date on developments and trends in the sector that are happening at record speeds. Over the past two weeks, we have been closely monitoring conversations between our members and across the field through fellow philanthropy-serving organizations.



1. Grantmakers are moving operations to a remote environment with an emphasis on avoiding interruptions in grant processing.

Like other businesses and organizations across the country, grantmakers are closing their physical offices and moving their operations remote. A common concern has been about how to make the shift without interrupting or delaying getting grants out the door.

Our members are:

- Conducting site visits remotely through video conferencing software
- Reworking standard grant payment processes to move from paper letters and mailed checks that require printing and signature to paperless communications and ACH payments
- Conducting remote grant review meetings with decision-makers by creating or revamping a scoring framework and building it into existing grants management systems
- Actively revisiting every step in their process to adapt it to a remote environment, and redesigning a grantmaking process on the fly is no small feat. Our friend Lee Kuntz at Innovation Process Design is graciously providing a free webinar on *Best Practices in Process Talk/Walk Through* on March 27 at 11:00am CT. [Register here.](#)

2. Grantmakers are redefining their communication protocols with communities and grantees to emphasize humility, transparency, and listening.

Many of you have shared with us your organization's public statement to your community and grantees about how you are responding to the crisis. These statements evidence a groundswell of organizations using this moment to rethink their communications and reconnect with constituents in newly compassionate, collaborative, and transparent ways.

Common themes and elements include:



- An invitation to grantees to reach out to you and share how the crisis is affecting them and the communities they serve
- A confession that there is no playbook for what we are experiencing, humility in the face of collective uncertainty, and commitment to listening deeply and acting collaboratively
- A clear and detailed explanation of how your grant processes and requirements are changing to better support your grantees and communities. Bonus points awarded to organizations that also include step-by-step instructions on whom grantees should contact and when.

3. Grantmakers are rethinking grant requirements, general operating support, risk, and flexibility.

Grantmakers across the spectrum are considering how they might better support their grantees as they face increased demand, cancelled events, and a shaky fundraising future. Our members are already:

- Converting existing grants to general operating support, especially for organizations on the frontlines of health care or social service response or those that have lost substantial earned revenue
- Offering support for technology or infrastructure so nonprofit staff can continue to work and deliver on their mission remotely
- Adding provisions to grant agreements that increase their grantees' ability to adapt activities, outcomes, or timelines as their situation changes
- Extending grant periods on existing grants and implementing new processes to make grant modifications easier to request and receive
- Streamlining all processes to reduce the burden on grantees managing applications, grant deliverables, reporting, etc.
- Coordinating across multiple funders to streamline communications and grant work
- Moving future-year grant payments to 2020
- Adjusting approved budget allocations to include more indirect costs



business to ensure maximum support.

Many of our member organizations and other philanthropic organizations throughout the country are establishing COVID-19 Response Funds to support nonprofits, individuals, and businesses hardest hit during the crisis. [Candid is tracking them all.](#)

As a key highlight for us, there is also a movement underway to encourage leaders at grantmaking organizations to commit to streamlining or eliminating processes, communicating transparently, and listening and supporting nonprofit partners like never before. We know many of you do these things already, or have already started to make changes. We encourage you to learn more about the Council on Foundation's [COVID-19 Commitment to Action](#) and consider joining the movement. We know our members stand at the ready to support these leadership commitments!

Looking ahead

It is increasingly clear that this crisis will go on for some time and affect many of you in profound ways. PEAK Grantmaking will be there to support you every step of the way, starting with:

Later today, we'll be hosting our first [Community Conversation on Managing Responsive Grantmaking During the COVID-19 Crisis](#) to learn more about what your peers have been doing to support their organizations and their grantees during this international crisis. While the event has reached capacity (500 people have signed up!), we will be sharing notes and resources from the call on [our COVID-19 support page](#) and in next week's communications. Look to our communications for invitations to upcoming events. Please also consider posting your challenges, concerns, and a-ha moments to our [CONNECT discussion form](#), which hosts a dedicated COVID-19 hub.

As has been said everywhere these days – in this time of social distancing, let us keep the physical “distancing,” but defiantly decline to close ourselves off to one another. Not one of us is in this alone, and the greatest weapon we have in this fight is our relationships with one another.

 **Subscribe**

◀ **Weekly Reads – March 20, 2020** **Opening from our Guest Editor: Black Voices in Grants Management** ▶

▶ **MEET THE AUTHORS**

Elly Davis

Elly Davis is programs and knowledge manager at PEAK Grantmaking.

▶ **PRINCIPLES FOR PEAK GRANTMAKING**

Learn more about the Principle behind this insight:

STEWARD RESPONSIVELY ▶

▶ **RELATED ARTICLES**

7 Steps to Rapid-Response Grantmaking

READ

Grantmaking Agility During COVID-19

READ

COVID-19 Grantmaking Survey: How are practices evolving – and what will stick?

READ

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE



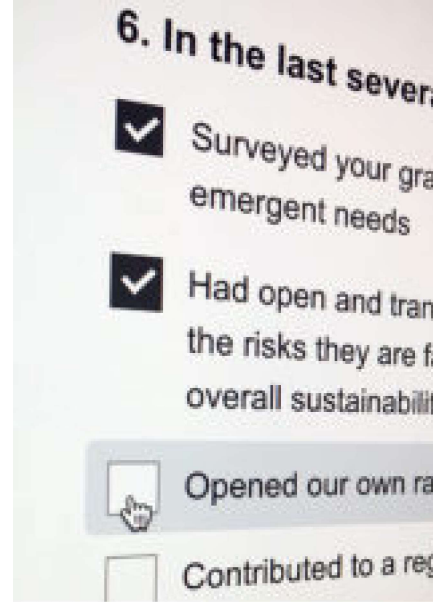
7 Steps to Rapid-Response Grantmaking

JUNE 26, 2020



Grantmaking Agility During COVID-19

JUNE 16, 2020



COVID-19 Grantmaking Survey: How are practices evolving – and what will stick?

MAY 12, 2020



READY TO JOIN?



forum.

JOIN NOW ▶