


Preparing your community organisation for the future: 10 key lessons

This document summarises the 10 key lessons for community organisations from Locality's research into the future of assets and enterprise in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic – '[Navigating the storm](#)' . Organisations which rely on trading have faced huge challenges during the pandemic, particularly due to lockdown restrictions. But many have remained resilient and pivoted to find new ways to sustain their business models. Based on the experiences of Locality members across the country, we've developed these lessons to help you navigate the uncertain times ahead.

For each lesson, we have linked to corresponding guidance and support opportunities to help your organisation embed the learning.



Business model



Organisational development



Strategic opportunities



Lesson		Summary	Category	Where to find support
1	Stay agile and diversify	Being “fleet of foot” is vital to respond to new challenges - remain flexible to pivot business models	Business model	Guide: Preparing your community organisation for the future: A guide to diversification ↗
2	Find strategic space	Time to plan is always scarce, but it is important to find space to focus on longer term sustainability instead of constant firefighting	Organisational development	Networking: As a Locality Essentials member ↗, take part in regional and specialist groups ↗ and funded peer learning ↗
3	Have clear financial systems and manage risk	Pivoting business models in times of uncertainty requires the basics of good financial and risk management	Organisational development	Guide: Financial management guidance and tools for non-profit organisations (myCommunity) ↗ Explanation: How to forecast financial information (myCommunity) ↗ Checklist: Questions to ask at board meetings to monitor financial issues and progress (myCommunity) ↗ Toolkit: How to manage risk (NCVO) ↗
4	Plan for succession	Succession plans for boards and CEOs should be developed early and continually reviewed	Organisational development	Guide: Preparing your community organisation for the future: A guide to succession planning ↗
5	Prioritise staff welfare	All staff have felt the strain of responding to the pandemic - a clear wellbeing offer for them, including CEOs, is important to support their mental health needs	Organisational development	Toolkit: Pathways to good work ↗

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6	Offer good work	Think about your broad employment offer to attract and retain good staff in the face of current recruitment challenges	Organisational development	Toolkit: Pathways to good work ↗
7	Collaborate locally	The pandemic has created challenges that require local collaboration. Consider pooling skills and resources with VCS counterparts	Strategic opportunities	Guide: Preparing your community organisation for the future: A guide to collaborating locally ↗
8	Build partnerships in other sectors	New partnership opportunities can help support a pivot in business model. Seek out ones – e.g., with universities and arts organisations – which serve evolving community need and provide income opportunities	Strategic opportunities	Report: The benefits and challenges of working in partnership with public, private and third sector organisations (Power to Change) ↗
				Guide: How to build and maintain working partnerships (myCommunity) ↗
				Guide: How to find and work effectively with partners (myCommunity) ↗
9	Tell your story	Community organisations have important stories to tell about their role in the pandemic response – use greater digital skills to promote your organisation and develop new audiences	Strategic opportunities	Toolkit: A digital toolkit for communities (myCommunity) ↗
				Guide: How to get started with social media (myCommunity) ↗
				Toolkit: Pressing concerns: securing media coverage ↗
				Networking: Join Locality’s Marketing specialist group ↗
10	Become climate leaders	Covid-19 has sharpened minds to future crises. Consider how to develop climate expertise and practical ways to take local action on climate change	Strategic opportunities	Networking: Join Locality’s Climate Crisis specialist group ↗