

Tips for NPOs to curb impact of Covid-19

Their role in assisting communities more important than ever, but many are struggling to stay afloat

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HEAD of Social Impact at the University of Stellenbosch Business School, Dr Armand Bam, says that non-profit organisations (NPOs) play an important role in society because they act in communities where government and businesses are not able to reach.

Facing the same challenges as many businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic, some NPOs may have to resort to downsizing and retrenching staff to simply stay afloat, while the need for their services increases.

There are over 220 000 NPOs registered with the Department of Social Development in South Africa.

"NPOs are accessible and agile to

attend to the current crises and need our support. While government can rely on our taxes to stay operational and well-resourced businesses tap into financial reserves, NPOs primarily rely on donations and personal fund-raising to ensure service delivery," he said.

"Although many leaders in the sector are used to working in under-resourced scenarios, the impact of social distancing will affect service delivery and the ability to relate in person with donors. Along with beneficiaries and donors, employees will be operating with some level of uncertainty as job security is affected."

Bam shared five tips NPOs can follow to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Communicate with clarity

NPOs are funded by a range of stakeholders so remain in contact with the relevant board members, volunteers, employees and donors. Maintain your digital presence to keep communication with a large audience. There's a global shift to transacting this way and fund-raising can now occur in the palm of a smartphone user.

Re-evaluate operations and budget

With the prospect of a reduction in donations, immediate attention should be given to prioritising how finances are managed. The continuity of your services needs to be maintained and this means revisiting your

business plan. Have a plan B and C.

Actively search for donor and funding opportunities

Funding remains the lifeblood of any NPO and should form part of the core operations while under lockdown. South Africa has a range of crowd-funding platforms available for use. With the increased reliance on digital technology post Covid-19, it would be beneficial to visit one of the following: BackaBuddy; Brownie points; Click 'n Donate; Different.org; Doit4Charity; ForGood; GivenGain; Jumpstarter; MySchool MyVillage MyPlanet; Pledge-a-Portion; WeBenefit.

Collaborate for impact

The global impact of the coronavirus could also allow for opportunities for local and international non-profits to find solutions in combating Covid-19. Sharing common challenges and adopting approaches could be transferable between organisations.

Working from home

During this time, many businesses have found innovative ways of working from home and maintaining certain services. Remember that not all staff have the same access to resources, so make sure you can support their needs. Assess everyone's job requirements and responsibilities on their own merits. Keep your staff connected with online group meetings or discussions.