

# Nonprofit Toolbox

## How Leaders Can Navigate Crisis Without Burning Out Their Teams

*Managing through a crisis requires more than resilience.*

### A Simple Crisis Leadership Framework for Nonprofits

When uncertainty feels overwhelming, leaders benefit from having a simple framework to guide decision-making. An effective nonprofit crisis leadership approach often includes six core steps.

1. **Pause before reacting** to emotionally charged news.
2. **Gather complete information** before making major operational decisions.
3. **Communicate early and honestly** with staff, boards, and stakeholders.
4. **Narrow organizational priorities** to protect essential services and team capacity.
5. **Protect staff wellbeing and leadership sustainability** alongside mission delivery.
6. **Reassess continuously** as conditions evolve rather than treating decisions as permanent.

**Strong crisis leadership is not about pretending everything is fine. It is about helping people move through uncertainty with honesty, steadiness, and trust.**

- Not every crisis requires an immediate reaction.
- Transparent communication reduces organizational anxiety.
- Narrowing priorities creates stability during uncertainty.
- Staff need clarity and realistic workloads more than motivational messaging.
- Sustainable leadership requires leaders to protect their own capacity, too.
- Strong internal trust helps nonprofits navigate crises more effectively than constant urgency.