

# BUCKETS TO EXPLORE: A SIX-STEP APPROACH TO BRIDGING YOUR BUSINESS TO 2021

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One thing is certain: the 2020 camp season will look different than years past. This document is intended to support camps in developing their bridge to 2021 through the creation of a 12- to 18-month business continuity plan. *This is an overview to connect a camp's short-term, crisis critical decisions to the long-term success of the organization.*



## 1. Develop Your Decision-Making Strategy — Prioritize defining your organization's decision-making process.

- Describe, in one sentence, what “camp success” meant for you in 2019. Now, keep that lens in mind as you move forward in your evaluation process. Ask yourself if that definition only works for traditional camp, or if you have an opportunity to expand your definition of success.
- Who will serve on the decision-making team? Who has ultimate authority?
- Who are the stakeholders you must include during this process?
- What are the safety considerations relevant to your camp?
- What is the appropriate timing for making decisions?



## 2. Maintain and Grow Your Community — Camps are built on the idea of community. How you maintain your community, continue engagement, sustain relationships, and maintain connections is a vital part of contingency planning. If your summer is partially or fully compromised, you may want to consider each existing camper, parent/guardian, staff member, and donor as a prospect. Do not take anyone for granted as you move toward 2021.

- Take stock in what moves and activates your community. Use this as a baseline during your evaluation process.
- Lean on your camp community to keep them engaged.
  - Stay relevant to your community.
  - Remain top of mind to stakeholders, including your camper families.
  - Remember that camper, staff, and volunteer recruitment never end.
  - Philanthropy grows during difficult times; how can your community support your camp's sustainability?
  - Assess who your ambassadors may be — people who will help spread the word about new approaches to camp this summer and encourage others to come back next summer. These may be local camp families, volunteers, staff, donors, or community members.
- Assess alternative programming options.
  - Host reunions
  - Send newsletters
  - Explore virtual or online options
  - Reduce group size
  - Adjust your calendar
  - Change/modify activities offered to support health practices, such as wearing a mask
  - Look for new partnering opportunities including out-of-school time, educators, etc.
- Research promising practices around new safety and risk considerations. (i.e., online child safety, equipment needs).
- Assess unique opportunities for growth.
  - Alternative programming may allow for camp community growth.
  - New programming may allow for an increased number of touchpoints throughout the year or increased camper numbers by program.
  - Virtual camp may reduce some barriers and open doors for new campers.
  - Explore funding opportunities to include new communities of campers, who historically have been vulnerable and missed out, in your camp.
  - Consider new partnerships with like-minded organizations or entities connected to you and those you serve.
- Develop a transition plan — assess sustainability of alternative programming options.
  - What is the phase-out strategy?
  - How will you track engagement?
  - How do you track the current needs of your community?
  - Consider short- and long-term impacts.

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**3. Ensure Coordination and Collaboration** — *You are not alone. You are a part of a community that excels in togetherness, idea sharing, and partnership. Begin to prepare and plan for 2021. Although this shall pass, it will change how we move forward. Make sure to update policies and procedures.*

- Coordinate and collaborate with experts to ensure receipt of the most up-to-date information and to ensure you have a seat at the table. Organizations to follow:
  - Regulatory agencies
  - State and county resources
  - American Camp Association
  - Local healthcare providers
  - Affiliated organizations
- Lean on your current policies and procedures while developing a process to update standard operating procedures and policies as best practices and resources become available.
- Involve stakeholders where appropriate to assess their highest needs, priorities, and concerns. This involvement will support strengthening your community in addition to informing decisions. Stakeholders may be leveraged as collaborative partners.
- Engage with peers within the camp community who are facing similar challenges and opportunities.



**4. Prioritize Financial Planning and Sustainability** — *Assess finances and develop options for sustaining your organization financially through the summer of 2021 and beyond.*

- Assess financial strength, liquidity, and reserves.
- Look into loan, assistance, and grant options.
- Assess income/revenue sources — fees, funders, donors, rentals.
- Find a balance between short-term cash flow needs of the organization and long-term relationship needs with camp families. Maximizing refund policies and creating multiple options will support families as they manage their own crisis. This family support will help build sustainable relationships with families.
- Explore alternative revenue options.
- Create a contingency budget process — assess new revenue and current expense projections.
- Explore possible partnership(s) with like-minded organizations where sharing resources can reduce overhead and/or more efficiently serve your stakeholders.
- Philanthropy often grows during difficult times; ask funders and stakeholders to support camp's sustainability.

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**5. Address Psychological Impact and Care Plan** — *Camps play an important role in the emotional and physical development of people. Your camp community is your mission. This community needs you now more than ever. Consider the psychological state of stakeholders, from campers to donors, and develop an intentional plan to steward and support them through thoughtful mission-focused care.*

- What is the psychological state of stakeholders?
  - Who is your audience?
    - ◊ Campers
    - ◊ Camper parents/families/caregivers
    - ◊ Year-round staff
    - ◊ Seasonal staff
    - ◊ Volunteers
    - ◊ Donors
    - ◊ Vendors
    - ◊ Community members
    - ◊ Partnering organizations
  - What are the audience's needs?
  - How may those needs evolve over time? How will you continue to evaluate those needs?
- Recognize that stakeholders will need time to grieve the loss of camp if programs are canceled or modified. People love camp and change is hard. Be attentive to the need to grieve the loss and support families through this process.
- Assess future mental health needs of campers, camper families, staff, and volunteers.
- Define your camp's roll in addressing psychological needs and future healing. Assess local mental health resources to support your camp's community.
  - What resources are available in your community for your campers?
  - What resources are available for your employees through your insurance plans?



**6. Develop a Communication and Marketing Plan** — *Lead with your mission. Always. Speak from the position that you are building a bridge to 2021 and beyond for, and with, your community.*

- Questions to think about as you develop a communication strategy:
  - Who are you going to communicate with?
  - When and how frequently will you communicate?
  - What is your goal, message, or why?
  - What methods will be most effective for communication?
  - Do you need different messages for each audience?
- Consider a phased communication strategy.
  - Phase 1: Exploration — Survey existing camp families on interest in alternative camp; make decision to commit
  - Phase 2: Invitation — Solicit interest and attendance for summer 2020
  - Phase 3: Participation — Summer 2020, with multiple touchpoints
  - Phase 4: Connection — Connect with stakeholders to evaluate summer 2020
  - Phase 5: Illustration — Demonstrate how your camp is acting on lessons learned
  - Phase 6: Reconnection — Look ahead to 2021 and reconnect, especially with those who “sat out” 2020
- Prior to communication, assess the psychological state of receivers.
- Continuously maintain engagement with your stakeholders. Proactively engage and communicate to ensure continued commitment over the next 12 to 18 months, through next season.
- Evolve how you connect with your audience. Look for creative new ways to leverage the high levels of virtual connection that now exist for campers and their families. Consider social media platforms you have not previously utilized.
- Create continuous touchpoints for campers, seasonal staff, and volunteers. Never stop recruiting, communicating, and offering support.