

PLANNING FOR YOUR CHOIR IN UNCERTAIN TIMES – A FRAMEWORK

STEP ONE – RECENTER YOURSELF

- If you're in panic mode, try to take a step back. Aim to make the shift from reacting to responding.
- Review your framework policies – your mission, core values, vision, and positioning statements.
- Review your strategic plan.
- Review your goals and plans for the season.
- Think through the kind of experience you want your stakeholders to have.

STEP TWO – TAKE INVENTORY

Make a list of your choir's assets, including such things as human resources (paid or unpaid), recordings (audio or video), photos, special skills within your choir's ranks, prospective funding, cash on hand, section leads, communication tools, and promotional items.

STEP THREE – ESTABLISH PRIORITIES

- Think short term – 6-7 week blocks of time are often effective.
- Avoid getting too specific at this stage. Priorities might include such things as chorister engagement/retention, audience retention/development, fundraising, creating an artistic product, chorister skill development, building/strengthening community, or listening skills.
- If you create a long-list of priorities, it is imperative that you narrow it down so as to not exceed resource availability (as established in your inventory).
- If you're struggling, consult other members of your team and/or some of your choristers.

STEP FOUR – SET YOUR EXPECTATIONS

- Keep in mind that, while valuable, many current activities are a temporary measure.
- You may find that you're not feeling gratified by the experience with your choir the way you usually do, but that doesn't mean your singers aren't enjoying and thankful for what you're doing.
- Not everyone will take part. There are many reasons for that, and it doesn't mean they won't return at some point.
- Recognize that choir in the context of COVID-19 is a learning experience for everyone.
- The bottom line is partially about essential things like preserving what you've built, continuing to nurture relationships, and giving people hope through music and their choir community.

STEP FIVE – CREATE A PLAN

- Set goals and indicators of success.
- Develop your strategy – take your inventory into account and put it to use (ex. can you leverage prospective funding for tech support and/or software upgrades?).
- Establish a timeline.
- Think outside the box, but remember you don't need to reinvent the wheel for everything you do – look to your colleagues for input and ideas!

STEP SIX – GO!

- Implement your plan.
- Utilize your team and lean on your support network as much as you need to.
- Strive to create the same calibre experience you would in rehearsal/performance, even though the experience itself will be very different.
- Evaluate the extent to which you've achieved your goals, making special note of things that worked particularly well.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Put a support group in place, and don't be afraid to ask for help.
- Be continually mindful of your own mental health.
- Join a few groups on Facebook and use social media for ideas and inspiration.
- Remember that you won't be able to try every idea you'll think of!

PREPARING FOR RELAUNCH

The work of preparing for the relaunch of regular rehearsals and concerts is essential, and the time to do that work is now!

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Ensure the members of your artistic team are engaged and committed.
- Complete policy revisions pertaining to chorister and audience safety (ex. physical distancing, hand hygiene, attendance at rehearsal when sick, PPE, facility cleaning, etc.).
- Develop a plan that details the steps that will be taken should a choir member/an individual in the immediate circle of a choir member be diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Make relevant updates to volunteer training procedures.
- Publicize the safety measures you're adopting for choristers, audiences, and volunteers.
- Develop a number of prospective relaunch plans in the context of a variety of permissible scenarios (ex. groups of 50 are allowed but no singing, groups of 25 and singing are allowed, etc.).
- Prepare chorister recruiting materials.
- Develop concert programming ideas.
- Set aside or make a plan for the funds required for your first post-COVID-19 concert.
- Consider changes to fees/fee structures in the context of extremely challenging economic circumstances.
- Prepare yourself emotionally that not everyone will be back and that some singers might feel scared about returning to choir.

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