



# ALLIANCE

FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN PRISON

## Informal Panel Discussion on Fundraising in Times of Crisis

Call Notes

March 26, 2020

### Panelists:

Juliet Page, Principal, Julep Consulting

Juliet worked in post-Katrina New Orleans capitalizing a fund for affordable housing. She also served as an external advisor to the [Rockefeller Foundation](#) and [Environmental Defense Fund](#) for their respective work in the region.

Rosalind Hinton, PhD, Julep Consulting

Rosalind is a development professional, oral historian, and independent scholar with three decades of experience in community and educational settings. She has worked primarily in New Orleans post-Katrina and has taught religious studies at DePaul, Tulane and Loyola New Orleans Universities.

Robin Barnes, Principal, Resilience Resolutions

Robin Barnes is an economic recovery and resilience expert with experience helping cities, small businesses, and nonprofits recover from – and prepare for – natural, manmade, economic, and climate-based disasters. In these moments, individuals, organizations, and communities face both great challenge and great opportunity to move beyond the status quo and embrace the potential of what could be. Robin has worked closely with and within organizations on strategy, performance measurement & management, resource development, and nonprofit management.

Rick Little, Julep Consulting

Rick is a specialist in organizational growth and management, who advises for-profit and non-profit companies in the areas of organizational and staff structure, finance, strategic planning, human resources, risk mitigation, and communications, with a particular focus on organizations looking to scale.

Jeanie Kirk, Julep Consulting

Jeanie Kirk is a grant writer and project manager working to support the environment, education, human rights, justice reform, racial reconciliation, data literacy, and social justice. Most recently, Jeanie served as the grants officer for the [Prison University Project](#).

## CALL NOTES

### Introduction:

- During this crisis, programs and practitioners are important to funders. Practitioners and programs: you will need to focus on your individual narratives (your impact in this moment of systems disruption), to help your funders make the case for continued funding. Focus on understanding your funders' needs and effectively communicating how you are responding to this new reality.

### Panelists' Lessons Learned:

#### Juliet Page

- You cannot proceed with business as usual, and your readiness to not want business as usual will be your biggest advantage
- Network providers are well positioned to embrace this disruption and tell their story of quality
- Long term fundraising, esp from private fundraising, be very direct now about systems change will be to your benefit

#### Rosalind Hinton

- After Hurricane Katrina, people who saw the crisis as opportunity were successful, and found ways to grow
- There is an awful lot of grace in asking for help. Resilience often comes from networks (support groups that help you to do your work), where you ask for help outside of your small community,
- 20% of everything you do yields 80% of your work: this can be a good thing to remember when you feel overwhelmed.

#### Robin Barnes

- After a disaster there are no clear guidelines. Focus on data, and timely information is key. Funders are looking to practitioners, because you are on the front line, are the experts, and you understand the need(s).
  - How you package your info is critical. Does not have to be fancy.
  - Data can be simple FACTS, anecdotes. Even a simple email or one page summary.
- Don't be afraid or shy about asking for help. Be ready to document what the need is. You don't have to have all the answers. Think of funders as partners.
- **Do not waste this disaster**

- Disasters present us with opportunities, to pivot, often in ways you were already planning to improve. This is often the time.
- Pay close attention to the resources that are coming down the pike, pay attention to summaries re: how and when the pots of money from DC will come, and who will be eligible.

## Q&A

### **Q1: What is the best way to communicate with donors right now? What's the medium and the content?**

**A1:** The more personal the communication can be with your largest funders, the better. Phone calls, emails, video chats! Provide complete clarity on where their money will go.

- If emailing, provide a data point, a nugget of information, something that will capture their attention and be compelling. Something to encourage the reader to return the email.

In every communication you make with donors: Notice, pay attention to people, and steward them. It's very difficult to say no to someone who works so hard and with such compassion.

- If your program is dependent on an event, the only option right now is to reach out to the minority of people who would have comprised a majority of the event's fundraising success. Special events do not make money alone, they are a vehicle for surfacing and stewarding major donors.
  - Remember why you do events in the first place — *it's a way to communicate.*

### **Q2: How to pursue grant funding for new programming?**

**A2:** Provide excellent, needed information in this shifting landscape. Being a source of good, reliable information is invaluable. For example: "Here's what we're doing in the next three months. We would like to talk about a discretionary grant."

- This might also be a time during which your program does some profound introspection and to best understand whether you are positioned to be effective in this time.
- It will behoove you to be honest about what you can and cannot do in this crisis.

Remember:

- Every foundation has discretionary income.
- Candor is valued.
- Most funders are likely trying to help their current grantees.

- For new funder relationships: really focus on their mission and how your work can support their passions. Create a narrative that makes them feel like they are participating in transforming a systemic problem.

### **Q3: Is now a good time to think about board growth?**

**A3: Use this disaster as an opportunity!!** While board growth seems challenging right now, this is an excellent time for a TASK FORCE.

- Task forces can be composed of a mixture of people, for example: current supporters, folks who were previously involved in the organization, individuals you want to court as board members, and subject matter experts.
- A task force is a short-term commitment, asking individuals to create agency by coming together to answer a question, like “how to retool,” “how to think creatively about fundraising.”
- By asking for thought leadership, you’re hoping for a donation or an ask from a friend down the line.

An interesting task force might be focused on how to educate voter bases about the importance of HEP programs. Build advocacy for these programs within your city council, state legislators, governors. Note how the far right is using this crisis to their advantage.

- Remember to be aware of the difference between 501c3 and 501c4, and what is permissible re: political advocacy.

### **Q4: How to appropriately message at this time?**

**A4: BE HONEST:** about who you are and what you do.

- But, do not diminish your role or move away from the importance of your mission.
  - Incarcerated people should not be marginalized in this crisis. Underline that HEP is more committed than ever to providing hope and opportunity.
  - HEP programming is not competing with funding for basic human needs, your work is about recovery.

Something to think about: there may also be some new ways that your work will proceed:

- Post-incarceration after COVID-19 may be different than before.
  - Likely to be constraints on types of jobs available. Pay attention over next weeks and months.
  - It’s very clear that the post-COVID-19 world will look different than the world looked a month ago.

Right to equal access to healthcare can be very powerful messaging right now.

**Q5: For programs that are kicked out of the prisons temporarily, what will it look like when we go back?**

**A5:** For particularly vulnerable programs, share your fears of exclusion from prison programming with your existing champions, communicate what money could buy to prevent program destruction.

Your programs provide hope, not only for incarcerated people, but their families, and often the staff at the prison.

**Q6: How best to manage the “3 year fundraising fall out”?**

- Year 1: individual giving impacted by stock market
- Year 2: government funding impacted
- Year 3: foundations impacted

**A6:** Be strategic: can you ask about a longer term funding strategy from foundations now? Or ask for bridge funding now to help meet/plan for your long term needs?

Work to diversify your funding base. Make sure you have robust individual donations as well as foundation support. Look at the federal resources. Now is the time to develop a relationship with your state and municipal entities, particularly re: community development block grants. They will be most relevant to this work.