

3 Strategic Questions for Adapting During COVID

There are so many organizational changes and choices to be making right now. Conditions, operating context, and the needs of key constituents like local communities have changed. These changes require organizations operate with unprecedented agility- changing and refining plans on the fly. But when adapting it is still critical that organizations make their choices in a strategic way- thinking and responding quickly but still evaluating your priorities and keeping the long-term impact in mind. After securing your immediate organizational needs (we have guidance for you on how to do that [here](#)), you can use the following set of questions to help you adapt strategically during the time of COVID.

1.

As we navigate through the uncertainties of COVID, what does success look like for our organization? What are we okay with letting go of? What is essential we hold onto?

Example: At Maliasili, our ultimate goal during this time is: *Community conservation in Africa remains resilient and flourishes into the future.*

This isn't all that different from our actual strategic goal, but right now instead of focusing on growing and expanding, we're focused on survival: ensuring the great efforts of our partners and the communities they work with don't collapse.

- Think about what losses your work can take, what losses aren't ideal but that you can recover from, e.g. livestock grazing in places not usually allowed as this will help ensure food security for communities.
- And then, what losses are simply not acceptable, as they would set your work and efforts back too much, e.g. losing conservation land permanently to agriculture conversion.

Answering these questions will help you identify an ultimate goal - your COVID north star - and then other supporting goals to help guide your efforts.

2.

To achieve our goals, how should we use our time and money? What type of work and activities will we do? What is the most essential work to deliver on?

Example: At Maliasili, we've specifically identified that we will help our partners with their COVID response plans and challenges, as we believe doing so will help them survive this period. It's not work we've planned and some of this support is not the type of thing we'd usually do. But by being clear that during this period we will do these things because in support of our ultimate goal, it gives all members of our team guidance on what to do.

- Identify work that's simply not possible right now and think creatively about alternative ways to keep it going, or let it go for now. Alternatives won't be perfect, but right now is a time where perfectionism isn't helpful.
- Discuss what help you're being asked for by communities, partners or others. If this help aligns with your goals above, then include it.

3.

What does our team need to be successful and feel supported during this time?

Example: At Maliasili, we've increased the number of Zoom calls we have as a team, checking in more frequently than normal. We are also constantly reviewing our team's different workloads and discussing coping mechanisms and well-being with them openly.

- Ask your team what support they need. Listen, and find ways that you can realistically support them to deliver under challenging circumstances.
- Keep track of different team member's workloads, helping them to avoid burn-out or to find relevant, valuable - and possibly new - ways of using their time if they are feeling under-employed.