



## BEST PRACTICES GUIDELINES - COVID-19 RESPONSE

### Dependence is Just Another Word for Power

In a matter of days and on what seems to be on the receiving end of a fire hose, our homes, our work, our understanding of what to expect has pivoted, ricocheting into uncharted territory.

Children are at home, parents trying to homeschool. Jobs are evaporating in a matter of days. Other workers deemed essential are overtaxed, unclear about their responsibilities and overwhelmed. Normally active people are told to stay home, sequester, trying to learn normalcy in a confined space. Loved ones are becoming ill and some perish.

The magnitude of what we are taking in is overwhelming. We grieve for what we have lost. We lose patience and are frustrated by obstacles that restrict or prohibit us from getting what we need. We are frightened and unsure about what is to happen next. Will there be a 2020 fair season? Is our community going to want to come to our fair and events once “shelter-in-place” has been lifted? Will our fair be able to weather this financial crisis?

We are truly working in darkness and we have been stripped of all that we have taken for granted.

There is a truth and a light in our darkness. All that we hear from mental health workers, pastors, our leaders is that paying attention to one another, helping others work in their darkness will move us forward.

The good news is we remain a network of Fairs. We are a network! We are a circuit! We are linked, connected and dependent upon one another by the very nature of who we are. Our network includes fairgrounds, committed and dedicated staff and board members, vendors, concessionaires, carnivals, exhibitors, service providers, and entertainers. We cannot exist without one another. The circuit, the network is necessary, essential, and crucial. If one of us goes down, we all are diminished.

An inherent and natural best practice in the fair industry is our propensity to share. We openly and freely share brilliant ideas, technical assistance, resources, opportunities, wisdom and heritage. It is how we learn, how innovation and improvement occurs, how we withstand challenges and crises. We share. We help each other. We connect and lift each other up.

This past week we have called upon fair CEOs and asked how they were doing. In doing so we learned so much from them:

- ★ What their communities are asking of the fairgrounds in terms of emergency response;
- ★ How fairs CEOs strive to keep staff employed, motivated and cared for as they move into a new working paradigm - working from home;

- ★ How fair maintenance staff remain in place, making necessary and needed repairs, improvements, attending to deferred maintenance;
- ★ How fair CEOs are keeping their staff engaged in creative planning for contingencies;
- ★ How fair CEOs are planning ways they can reach out and help the people most vulnerable in their communities with drive-by food drives;
- ★ How fair CEOs are making the decision to postpone their fair.

This past week we have learned how the fair industry service members are coping:

- ★ Serious business planning, cutting overhead as much as possible and going into survival mode;
- ★ Concessionaires sharing food already purchased and prepared with food banks and nonprofits serving the hungry in communities;

### What is the best practice learned from this past week?

***We are a network. We are connected.*** We need to do all that we can to stay connected. Draw upon the sub-groups within WFA to connect and learn from each other. Establish regular virtual meetings with each other to discuss what we've learned in dealing with the constantly pivoting role we are to play in our community. Let neighboring fair CEOs sit in on your planning meetings (virtually). Check in with one another and lend support, resources, and technical assistance. We organically know how to network with one another. Increase your networking efforts, using technology that is easy to use and free.

- ★ If your fairgrounds is asked to serve as a field hospital in your community, reach out to another fair CEO who has already been activated as such. Share best practices.
- ★ If you believe you may have to postpone your 2020 fair, reach out to another fair CEO who has already made that decision. Share best practices.
- ★ If you want to provide entertainment, learning, and fun to your community, establish a think tank of Fair CEOs, entertainers, service members to brainstorm, get creative and figure out how to have a virtual fair. Share best practices.
- ★ If you want to make sure the messaging and communications about what is happening at your fairgrounds, the future of events on your grounds and the future of the annual fair, reach out to fair CEOs who have the luxury of employing marketing and communications staff. Ask for help. Share best practices.
- ★ If you want to help ensure that people in your community have access to food, reach out to concessionaires and think creatively. Share.

Western Fairs Association can help by posting best practices and brilliant ideas as they are shared. Fair CEOs and service members with experiences and ideas to share can submit them to WFA in order to create a resource list.

We are a network. We are connected. We are dependent upon each other. ***Dependence is just another word for power.*** Take hold of this power with courage and caring as onward we go, working in the darkness.