



Research Report

Understanding Spontaneous Leaders in COVID-19

Garett Dworman, PhD
Creative Crisis Leadership

Susanne Jul, PhD
Creative Crisis Leadership

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About this Document

Creative Crisis Leadership (CCL) is a non-profit whose mission is to increase social resilience by spreading the skills and mindsets people need to improvise collective action and leadership in a crisis. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, CCL conducted research to understand how they might expand services to support Spontaneous Leaders — people who emerge as leaders in situations of ambiguous leadership — during a crisis.

This document is a comprehensive report of that study. It details the study design, findings, takeaways, and presents a set of recommendations for service offerings and design.

This study is dedicated to the
Spontaneous Leaders who try, including those who fail.

They accomplish more than you think.

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Executive Summary

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, *Creative Crisis Leadership* (CCL), conducted a field study to understand how we can expand our services to support Spontaneous Leaders — people who emerge as leaders in situations of ambiguous leadership — during a crisis. The study comprises qualitative interviews of individuals who had emerged as leaders in a grassroots response to the COVID-19 crisis, and community experts who regularly work with Spontaneous Leaders (SLs).

We sought to answer the following questions:

1. How can CCL help Spontaneous Leaders during the COVID-19 crisis?
2. What support do Spontaneous Leaders need to emerge and be successful in the midst of a crisis?
3. How can CCL services help good ideas become great grassroots efforts?

We interviewed eleven individuals over the course of the summer of 2020. Five were SLs who had started a grassroots effort to address a pandemic-driven need, three were community experts who work with SLs, and three fell into both categories. Interviews were conducted over Zoom and lasted 1-2 hours.

The study confirms that SLs emerged in response to COVID-19 and are likely to do so in other crises. It also affirms that starting a grassroots response is emotionally and logistically difficult, and that SLs would benefit from the kind of training and empowerment support services that align with CCL's mission.

The findings in this study suggest many services of value to SLs that CCL could provide. Most notably,

- Provide moral and motivational support while teaching the skills and mindset needed to start and run a successful grassroots response effort.
- Help SLs develop situational understanding and knowledge, especially understanding crisis response practices and the resources that may be available.
- Help SLs identify and develop connections to their broader community networks.
- Help SLs identify and find the professional services that they might need, e.g., legal, financial, marketing, and personal mental wellness services.

The study revealed a critical need to tailor service delivery to the needs and attentional resources of individual SLs. Even the small number of SLs interviewed exhibited substantial variety in backgrounds, skill sets, and bandwidth for taking in new information.

The study also underscored the difficulty of identifying and reaching SLs in the midst of a crisis. This suggests that spreading awareness of the role and importance of SLs to crisis response, and of resources to support them, *prior* to a crisis is an essential component of successful delivery of prospective CCL services.

Lastly, and fundamentally, the study confirms the need for Creative Crisis Leadership's mission of empowering people and communities to help themselves in crisis by spreading the skills and mindset necessary for collective action and improvised leadership.

Summary of Findings

First and foremost, this research affirms the main tenets behind Creative Crisis Leadership (CCL):

1. Spontaneous Leaders emerged to fill gaps in the institutionalized response to the COVID-19 crisis (*Finding 1*). However, SLs often do not self-identify as leaders or recognize the leadership role they fill. Moreover, SLs are frequently overwhelmed in their efforts, giving them little time to seek out, or respond to, help. This indicates that they can be difficult to find (*Finding 1.2*).

Spontaneous Leaders need support to help them get started, continue, and grow their efforts (*Finding 1.4*). SLs may fail because they don't have the support they need, and even those who succeed would benefit from support. The type and level of support needed varies dramatically depending on individual SLs' circumstances and abilities (*Finding 1.5*).

The rest of the findings describe the support that SLs need:

2. Spontaneous Leaders face significant challenges to success (*Finding 2*). Just getting started can be intimidating, and motivational support can be highly valuable (*Finding 2.1*). Furthermore, developing the necessary mindset and skills would be highly valuable to maintaining motivation and momentum along the SL journey (*Finding 2.2*). Note that the necessary mindset and skills, and the SL journey bear striking similarities with the fundamental principles of Design and Entrepreneurial Thinking (*Finding 2.5*).
3. A Spontaneous Leader's effectiveness is strongly correlated with their situational awareness (*Finding 3*). However, SLs' ability to understand the situation they're in is often limited because they are operating in unfamiliar waters. Many SLs are operating outside their usual sphere of operations, and are navigating the constantly changing context of crisis for the first time.

SLs must develop situational awareness that includes: knowledge about their supply – what funds, resources, and support are available (*Finding 3.2*), their demand – what the people that they want to help actually need (*Finding 3.1*), and their environment – what social, logistical and economic forces are at play (*Finding 3.3*).

4. Many SL efforts are focused on “brokering the last mile” — getting resources from where they have been gathered to individuals that need them (*Finding 4*). This is a key concern in crisis relief, and grassroots efforts are often instrumental in filling local gaps, providing intimate knowledge of and communications with community members in need.
5. Social networks and relationships are critical to a Spontaneous Leader’s success (*Finding 5*). Social connections are invaluable in overcoming issues of awareness (see *Finding 3.4*) and trust (see *Finding 6*). Pre-disaster connections are particularly valuable. During a crisis, social networks may be the primary sources of information available to SLs, especially if communication systems are down.
6. To be effective, SLs must be trusted by the community they serve and by resource providers (*Finding 6*). However, without the legitimacy and credibility imparted by being part of an established organization, SLs may struggle to win trust and build community confidence in their intentions and ability to deliver.
7. Eventually, most SLs need professional advice or help, commonly, legal counsel, accounting and tax support, fundraising and marketing expertise, insurance coverage, and even mental wellness support (*Finding 7*). SLs may not recognize this need (*Finding 7.4*), placing them at personal risk (*Finding 7.3*), and, even if they recognize it, obtaining professional services can be difficult, time-consuming or expensive.

Summary of Takeaways

The research poses several implications for developing and delivering services to support SLs in an actual crisis:

1. There is a need for services to support Spontaneous Leaders in the midst of a crisis, and help good ideas become great grassroots efforts (*Takeaway 1*). The study confirms that SLs emerged in response to COVID-19 and are likely to do so in other crises. It also affirms that Spontaneous Leadership is emotionally and logistically difficult, and that SLs would benefit from the kind of training and empowerment support services that align with CCL’s mission.

2. Finding and connecting with SLs to offer them support in the midst of a crisis poses a substantial challenge (*Takeaway 2*). The research suggests that spreading awareness of the role and importance of SLs to crisis response, and of resources to support them, prior to a crisis arising is an essential component of successful service delivery.
3. Services must be targeted and customizable to the needs of individual SLs (*Takeaway 3*). The research revealed that SLs have very diverse support needs, and limited time and attentional resources. Support needs vary according to prior experience, and specific current circumstances, and range from personal skills development to connecting to needed resources. Attentional resources depend on the requirements of the effort they are supporting, and range from one-time commitment of a few minutes to regular commitment of several hours.

The remaining takeaways detail SL needs for which CCL could develop support services:

4. Even simple encouragement and motivational advice offering moral support, courage, and basic guidance has the potential to inspire SLs to keep going, and prevent them from failing because of basic misconceptions (*Takeaway 4*).
5. SLs need to develop skills and knowledge needed to start and manage a grassroots effort even as they are doing it (*Takeaway 5*). These may include leadership and management skills, Design/Entrepreneurial Thinking, and business planning and management practices, as well as understanding local and national crisis response agencies, practices and resources, and developing situational awareness within the crisis response context.
6. New social connections *during* a crisis may be key for SLs to gain access to needed information and resources (*Takeaway 6*). Success may depend on developing new connections with people and organizations who can provide needed information or resources, and with people who are in need of support.
7. Social connections established *prior* to a crisis may play a significant role in empowering SLs to start a grassroots effort, and may substantially increase the likelihood of success (*Takeaway 7*). Pre-existing social contacts often provide a basis of the effort as well as encouragement and moral support. They may also offer ready access to resources, and provide a path to new connections.
8. By failing to recognize a need for professional support, or failing to secure needed professional services, SLs may jeopardize the success of their efforts or put themselves at personal risk (*Takeaway 8*). This may be due to lack of

understanding of legal requirements, relying on ad hoc solutions where standard solutions exist, or lack of time, money or knowledge to obtain professional services.

Summary of Recommendations

Within the scope of CCL's mission of increasing social resilience, we offer the following recommendations for CCL services:

1. CCL is on the right track, and should continue with its mission!
2. Rather than attempting to market services directly to SLs, it may be more effective to rely on local communities and response organizations for referrals to CCL's materials and services.
3. CCL should leverage its training program to promote awareness of the value of Spontaneous Leaders and grassroots crisis efforts.
4. Offer clear, specific, and actionable materials and services, rather than generalized principles and generic services.
5. Structure access to materials and services to address specific questions and needs, rather than according to general topic areas.
6. Provide materials and services requiring varying levels of commitment.
7. Develop inspirational materials that foster appreciation of SLs, and offer SLs emotional encouragement.
8. Focus materials and services on fostering the skills and knowledge needed by SLs, prioritizing those that are not generally the focus of existing training programs.
9. Develop materials and services to help SLs understand the common journey of a grassroots crisis response — from ideation to stabilization.
10. Create opportunities for people to develop the confidence, skills, and mindsets that will enable them to establish new social connections quickly in a crisis.
11. Develop organizational values and practices of mediating social connections whenever possible.
12. Find ways of leveraging CCL connections to help individual SLs in an actual crisis, e.g., through personal introductions.

13. Support systematic means of providing SLs access to new social connections, e.g., through social platforms or automated brokering software.
14. Create opportunities for people to develop and strengthen their local social networks.
15. Develop organizational values and practices of valuing and strengthening social connections.
16. Leverage CCL activities to strengthen social connections among local response agencies, the communities they serve, and neighboring communities.
17. Develop materials and services to help SLs understand what kinds of professional support they might need, recognize when are likely to need it, and know how they might find it.
18. Support systematic means of providing SLs access to affordable professional services, e.g., through social platforms or automated brokering software.

Introduction

Creative Crisis Leadership (CCL) is a non-profit dedicated to igniting collective action and improvised leadership in crisis. Because people and communities who help themselves in a crisis recover faster and come out better – physically, emotionally and financially.

CCL empowers individuals and communities to take collective action by spreading the confidence, skills, and mindsets of improvised crisis leadership. We create impact by:

1. Providing support and coaching services to Spontaneous Leaders who are trying to lead their community through a crisis.
2. Developing training exercises for micro-communities that reinforce the skills and mindsets of collective action and improvised crisis leadership.
3. Promoting research to understand effective grassroots crisis response, and the means of making it happen.

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, CCL was primarily focused on research and training aimed at understanding improvised leadership and promoting grassroots crisis response. In the face of the pandemic, we realized that we could not sit passive or focus solely on preparedness, but needed to discover our role in crisis response.

This project sprang from our wish to understand how we might expand our services to support Spontaneous Leaders (SLs) — people who emerge as leaders in situations of ambiguous leadership — in actual crisis situations.

The project sought to answer the following questions:

1. How can CCL help people right now during the COVID crisis?
2. What do Spontaneous Leaders (SLs) need in the midst of a crisis?
3. How can CCL help good ideas become great grassroots efforts?

We intend to use the findings and takeaways from this research to:

- Design CCL services and products
- Contribute to research on crisis response and management

Like many in-depth field studies, results and recommendations may contain biases because of the small number of participants. More importantly, however, we recognize that certain characteristics of the crisis itself may affect the applicability to other crises. Notably, compared to other natural hazard events, in the COVID-19 pandemic,

- Physical infrastructures were unaffected

- Social infrastructures were disrupted globally and across all levels of society, but were disruptions were determined more by social characteristics than by geography
- Disruptions have continued long enough for extensive social restructuring and re-normalization to occur, even while in the response phase

Our participants thus had tools, resources, and time that may not be available to SLs in other types of crises.

Study Design

Methodology

This was a qualitative interview study. Recruiting and interviews took place in May and July of 2020.

Participants were individuals who had emerged as SLs in a grassroots response to the COVID-19 crisis, and community experts that regularly work with SLs. The first group shared their personal experiences with starting and leading a grassroots effort. The second group provided their observations on the experiences and challenges SLs face based on having worked with many SLs.

Interviews were conducted remotely, over Zoom, and lasted 1-2 hours. At least two researchers were present for each session, with one serving as primary interviewer and another as note-taker. Two protocols were used: one for SLs¹ and another for community experts².

Both audio and video of each interview were recorded (with participant consent³). Sessions were later transcribed for analysis.

Recruiting

Recruiting participants was particularly challenging. The study employed a two-pronged approach: 1) Identify and contact emergent COVID-19 grassroots efforts directly, and 2) Identify and contact individuals who might be working with community efforts.

To identify emergent COVID-19 grassroots efforts, a group of ten volunteers conducted an extensive search of internet news sources, crowdfunding platforms, and social media to discover grassroots efforts that had emerged in response to the pandemic. They also reached out to their own social networks for possible leads to grassroots efforts. This yielded a list of 85 possibilities.

Two researchers then reviewed these efforts to narrow the list to efforts that were truly emergent, using these criteria:

- Is the effort responding to a need that has come up because of COVID-19?

¹ See *Appendix A: Session protocol for Spontaneous Leaders*

² See *Appendix B: Session protocol for community experts*

³ See *Appendix C: Participant recruiting documents*

- Is it significantly different from what the group was doing before the pandemic?
- Is it being organized by people who had not worked together in any serious way before?

Of the initial 85 possibilities, 42 appeared to qualify as truly emergent responses to COVID-19. These were all contacted through social media platform messaging⁴, or by email, if available.

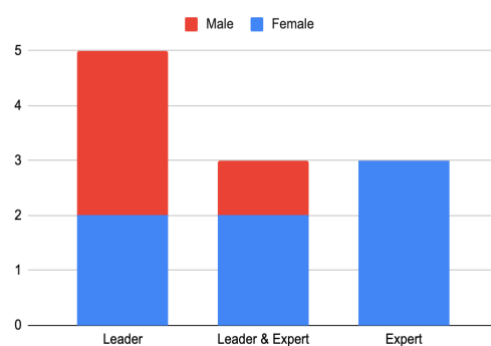
In addition to the direct search for emergent efforts, requests for possible efforts are individuals of interest were circulated through local community agencies such as Red Cross and VOADs⁵, disaster-related social media groups, and personal connections with professional response communities.

Finally, a snowballing strategy was used to add to this list as interviews progressed, and participants suggested other candidates.

124 individuals were invited to participate, and asked to complete a screening questionnaire⁶. The questionnaire was intended to further screen for emergent effort, however, did not disqualify anyone, and everyone who responded to the invitation was interviewed.

Participants

A total of 11 individuals were interviewed:



- 5 SL
 - 3 community expert
 - 3 both SL and community expert
- 5 male⁷
 - 6 female
- 7 American (1 working in Puerto Rico)
 - 2 Canadian
 - 1 Spanish (living in France)
 - 1 Sudanese (living in USA)

⁴ E.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, GoFundMe, and other direct messaging platforms.

⁵ Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster

⁶ See *Appendix C: Participant recruiting documents*

⁷ Gender inferred by researchers

The following table describes demographics of individual participants:

Participant	Role	Gender	Country of origin	Country of operations
P00-EL	SL & Expert	Male	USA	USA
P01-EL	SL & Expert	Female	USA	USA
P02-L	SL	Male	USA	USA
P03-L	SL	Male	Sudan	USA
P04-L	SL	Male	USA	USA
P05-E	Expert	Female	Canada	Canada
P06-E	Expert	Female	Canada	Canada
P07-L	SL	Male	Spain	France
P08-L	SL	Female	USA	USA
P09-EL	SL & Expert	Female	USA	Puerto Rico
P10-E	Expert	Female	USA	USA

The following table describes the organizations and grassroots efforts with which participants were associated:

ID	Population Served	Mission Statement
P00-EL	Inner city, low income population	Directs community engagement of a state university's medical college. Conducts research on the impact of public health on minority communities. Is involved in multiple community efforts, and mediates connections between cash donors and grassroots efforts such as distribution of medical masks to those in need.
P01-EL	Local refugee and immigrant communities	Founder and CEO of a non-profit that runs a series of holistic community and school-based health centers, dental sites, and a mobile medical unit, serving recently settled refugees and immigrants.
P02-L	Inner city, low income population	Created a governmental cross-agency task force to develop workforce development programs ensuring basic living necessities and guide people towards self-sufficiency.
P03-L	Fellow immigrants	Facilitating communication of official COVID-19 information to fellow expat communities across the country.
P04-L	Frontline medical workers	Created a service and platform connecting professional coaching volunteers to COVID-19 frontline medical workers for free emotional and mental health support.
P05-E	Volunteers	Director in charge of partnerships and volunteer management for a volunteer management center.
P06-E	Volunteers	Social researcher for a volunteer management center.
P07-L	COVID-19 researchers	Created a service and platform connecting skilled scientific volunteers with COVID-19 researchers.
P08-L	Local farmers, food trucks,	Purchases produce in quantity direct from local farmers to sell to local community members, then

	and frontline medical workers	uses the proceeds to pay for food trucks to serve meals to frontline medical workers.
P09-EL	Local, mostly rural communities	After studying on-the-ground support for hurricane survivors is creating a non-profit startup to provide data management services for local communities recovering from disaster.
P10-E	Public organizations	Consults to organizations, mostly public, to improve their internal power structures and communications.

See *Finding 4* for additional details about participant activities.

Findings

This section describes the seven main findings of the research. Each main finding is presented as a summary statement followed by a series of related detailed findings and supporting evidence in the form of verbatim quotes from participants.

The first finding offers strong support for CCL's fundamental tenets and mission. The remaining six findings provide insight into what challenges Spontaneous Leaders face, and what support would help them be successful.

FINDING 1 Spontaneous Leaders emerged to fill gaps in the institutionalized response to the COVID-19 crisis, and reported a need to help SLs get started, continue, and grow their efforts.

FINDING 1.1 Spontaneous Leaders responding to COVID-19, and other crises, are out there and contribute to their communities' resilience.

SLs are out there! In addition to the eight individuals leading responses to COVID-19 we were able to talk to, we heard about many others during our discussions with expert participants:

P00-EL

- “If you were to look at 20 different news reports about this kind of thing, you would probably see sets of keywords that describe ... this hometown hero emergent leader role.”
- “Emergent leadership is happening all over the place.”
- “And then she comes up on text and says, Okay, go talk to my assistant who's in the building. And she'll get it to the right people. ... I mean, her assistant has never thought about a disaster before. Right? ... and she tells me ‘I'm gonna get it where it needs to go.’ ... And then checking with them a week later, ‘I have this type of asset. Do you want it?’ And so, was that operations manager a disaster manager? No, but she turned into one.”
- “...a community health worker that's been doing these foods and monetary distributions doesn't have a particular organization. She's basically doing this out of her house.”
- “[There are] community artists [willing to] to handle some of the public service announcements instead of having it being done from an advertising agency, for example. A lot of community artists are not affiliated with an institution or an agency. They're just doing their thing.”

P01-EL

- "... and then give back, [people they have helped] really identified a marker, a measure of quality of life, by how much they are reciprocating, how much they are volunteering, how much they are involved. And at the beginning, it's just, you know, within their circle, and then that circle expands and pretty soon they're doing advocacy, big time, outside of the community."
- "... it's such a testament to the strength of the human character, the resilience. Coping skills are also one of the benefits from this repeated interaction, the relationship building, the supportive system, the network with the resources. They feel like they have more coping skills, and therefore their resilience builds. And, to the point where, when things happen, as they usually do in life, continue to happen, they have a better mechanism, a better skill set to apply to dealing with these, you know, constant challenges. Mm hmm. And, and that is, I think, really empowering for them too, because they're like, wow, you know, this happened and, gosh, I was able to move through that pretty well and that, you know, that really sucked for a while, but, you know, here I am, and, and it didn't, it didn't derail me, like you know, before."
- "That hope theory is awesome. And it, right away, it instills this incredible drive, this energy to live this positivity. It's incredible."

P05-E, P06-E

- "There are some grassroots groups that you can just tell right away that they are very professionalized. ...Whereas there's another group out there that does not have as much of this professional persona and it's more just, we're neighbors helping neighbors, we're moms helping moms. We're kids helping kids."
- "there's about 100,000 volunteers we've tracked in [our city] during the COVID-19 pandemic as being active. And half of those being a part of grassroots groups. A lot of those groups are social media groups as well. ... we're seeing a huge surge in caremongering social media groups."

P07-L

- "...people are happy to help, and maybe in cases of crisis like this one, we can go all the way to [accept all volunteer requests], because people are willing to help. ... So ... depending on the situation, we can motivate and when there is a crisis, we can jump."

P09-EL

- During both the COVID-19 and Hurricane Maria disasters, "mutual aid groups of ... grassroots community-based organizations popped up."

- “A lot of these leaders, ... they're teachers, they ... own their own ... they have another life and they ... kind of stepped up to meet the challenge. So, there's definitely some kind of a gap between managing organizations and all that.”
- ‘I think a lot of the organizations, bigger organizations, ... they also start to realize the importance of local communities.”

Sometimes, SLs become leaders by initiating action. Often, such action is necessitated because there is no other source of help, and the community needs to manage its own response and recovery:

P00-EL

- Points out that socioeconomics produces a differential impact of disasters and communities by class and race, “The initial [COVID-19] deaths were all black.”

P09-EL

- Discussed several reasons why local communities must rise up to help themselves, including:
 - Entrenched social and economic inequalities may prevent them from getting aid
 - Established institutions, with limited resources or insight, may concentrate on a limited number of communities: “The officials like to ... focus on the quick fixes.”
 - Established institutions may be unaware of local needs, and the local communities must stand up and speak for themselves
 - Remote communities may be out of the reach of established institutions
 - Established institutions may need better ways to channel resources the last mile to people and communities

As an example, described one community she worked with that saw no government aid for months after Hurricane Maria:

- Cleaned up everything themselves
- Removed trees
- Cooked for each other from communal kitchens
- Rebuilt agriculture
- Established communal phone and power centers

- Established health clinics

FINDING 1.2 Spontaneous Leaders are difficult to find

During our recruiting process, we issued more than 120 direct invitations to participate. Ultimately, we were able to schedule only 11 individuals. We find there are two primary reasons for this difficulty.

First, SLs often do not always identify themselves as “leaders” (See *Finding 2.4*). Not only do they not seek leadership help, they may not even recognize that they are engaging in leadership activities.

Second, SLs are frequently overwhelmed by the demands of the activity they have undertaken, and their inexperience with it. They typically lack the time and attentional resources to actively seek help from organizations such as CCL.

P00-EL

- “For this funded project that I have on COVID-19 rapid response, we're trying to develop ... customized public service announcements [PSA] for minority communities. ... By the time you're designing a PSA for that community and translating it into Spanish and back, translating it to make sure it's right, getting all the artwork right, all these different components, the fundamental message about what you should do has already changed. It's the rapidness of the crisis. It's also the contours of the crisis changing...”
- “We were not able to get the operations manager on the phone, which is when we started worrying actually. She's too busy to deal with anything. And so you know, I'm literally sitting in her parking lot with PPE in the back of the car, and I'm texting her.”

P07-L

- “So you can give a little chunk to each person and then even if they cannot dedicate a lot of time or they cannot have the commitment to work for a few weeks then they can do one thing and then they can be done with it until they have time to help again.”
- “We were working 14 hours a day just to survive, right? We did not have time to, to learn or to write in. I think it would have been very difficult to... Yeah. ... To invest in this kind of thing.”

P08-L

- “I'm starting to ... feel a little bit of this, especially after this week because the cherries farmer really... stressed me during the week. It's hard to have the conversation with [the farmer] and then still do my normal job. ... I felt

exhausted, I think talking to her. ... I'm kind of balancing, ... the high school and college volunteers and expectations of the farmers.”

FINDING 1.3 Spontaneous Leaders and grassroots response efforts fill the gaps that inevitably open during a major crisis

In all cases, participants acted because they saw a need in their community that was not met by existing services or disaster relief agencies. Participants cited different challenges that prevent existing institutions from addressing crisis-induced needs.

Institutions may not have the capacity to help all communities,

P05-E, P06-E

Feel that there are too many gaps in services offered by institutions, and that “volunteerism” is essential to fill in those gaps.

- “[Our volunteer center] was founded as a result of the Great Depression in the 1930s. And we've never found our organization has been quite as relevant. ... generally the response to COVID-19 has been comparable to our founding in the Great Depression. So it's a very, very relevant time for us as an organization.”
- “50% of the volunteering in [our international city] that we've tracked during this time has been from grassroots organization. So comparatively to 18% of nonprofits. We know the grassroots were able to respond way faster than organizations. And so we saw that need.

P09-EL

- “... we've also learned that with the growing severity and frequency of disasters, no government or any entity or jurisdiction will have the resources or capacity to deal with all the needs. ... what emerged from my findings and spending time on the island is that citizens and grassroots organizations were the backbones of disaster relief and recovery.”

Institutions may be hampered by regulations that SLs and local communities can avoid,

P00-EL

- “There's so much regulation sometimes that it's hard to get things done quickly. And so, you know, that's, that's one of the constraints that you'd have to face too, is there are rules about how things can be done can't be done. And those rules can sometimes impede quick response.”

- “If a contract is above \$500, we have to go through some sort of contract review process and the rapid response Grant has a window of six months. ... And, across that time, thousands of new cases may have occurred, and maybe 100 and more deaths. ... Does that all the way make sense? It certainly makes sense on a regular day. Does it make sense to the context of an emergency event? I'm not sure.”

P07-L

- “At the beginning, we were surprised that the governments or the institutions wouldn't set up something like this. Then we understood ... they are basically not flexible enough. ... They cannot take the risk, for example of doing something illegal or slightly illegal. For them, this is a huge risk, while for us. Okay, we do something wrong then we'll abort it.”

Institutions may not be able to adapt quickly enough to changing circumstances,

P00-EL

- “... we're trying to improvise around and with some of those regulations. But, you know, there's some tension there in terms of how quickly we can respond and still kind of hold to the standards that those regulations suggest.”

P05-E, P06-E

- “... [many of the c19 volunteer groups] are either going to convert into something real or they're going to dismantle and for one of them, there's 25,000 members. So where are those 25,000 volunteers going to go? And that's the question. We hope to help the admins of those groups make the decisions to move forward.”

P07-L

- “... from the very first thing we had to adapt. Like once per day, we had to change something big in the organization. And we were able to do that because ... we were small, we had no oversight from anyone. So we could just make decisions very fast.”
- “And then it needs to be some small organization that can take the risk and then try something and go ahead.”

P09-EL

- “The emergent volunteer work is agile, responsive, it doesn't have ..., all the burdens of institutions..., so they can ... act quickly and respond to different

needs... There's so much benefit to that kind of spontaneous thing happening.”

FINDING 1.4 Spontaneous Leaders and grassroots response efforts have a very real need for support

Many participants (**P02-L, P03-L, P04-L, P07-E, P09-EL, P10-E**) indicated that they and other SLs could use the type of support that CCL is proposing. **P02-L** was emphatic that SLs must either already understand leadership or get help. **P03-L** and **P08-L** evinced a need for support, but didn't recognize their own need (see *Finding 7.4*).

P02-L

- "You got to understand leadership. You've got to find the right folks to lead. ... You've got to get everybody to agree to paddle in the same direction together in the same boat."
- See also *Finding 7*.

P03-L

- “Any help I could get, to be frank with you. I'm not selective, to which help I need the most. Which one I do not need the most. No, any help, could be technical. It could be finance. It could be connecting wise. It could be somebody willing to go along with me, willing to do what I do.”
- “Man, on top of my head, I will tell you ‘give me financial support. fund me.’ ... That financial support you give me... will address some issues. Number one, well, it will reverse my equipment issue. I will I will buy a good laptop. That will let me run my show effectively. Number two, it will give me an opportunity to travel if I do need to visit people somewhere else. Number three, I'm not going to keep all these medical professional doing this with along with me ... I would invest their time.”

P04-L

- “... first and foremost, knowing that there's an organization out there like [Creative Crisis Leadership] is awesome. There are people that you can talk to and say, Hey, I'm thinking about this thing, I see a need. I don't know what to do. And so even just knowing that you're out there is a big boost and saying I can have support, right? Because I'm not gonna lie. It's felt lonely at times, right? You feel like you're kind of carrying this thing on your back.”
- “There's something about the confidence, the sort of reassurance in what I was doing, having received yeses from the organization. As someone who's thinking about a grassroots project, ... you don't know if anyone's going to help you out. So I think getting each Yes, from a coach from ... these

companies helped me to say, ..., there's something here. Keep going. Keep going.”

P05-E, P06-E

Discuss that some of the SLs they help are in need of help with basic management skills,

- “[some grassroots efforts have] challenges around becoming professionalized. So like building a website, managing how they do their work, developing processes, governance, having meetings. So, some groups really just don't have that baseline of organizational function essentially.”

P07-L

Feels one of the strongest services that anyone can provide an emergent leader is to help the SL overcome his/her inevitable insecurity,

- “Encouragement is probably the most... important [service to provide a brand new effort]. ... Just a pat in the back can make all the difference. ... because even though we were successful, there are many insecurities, even for us. You don't know if you are doing right, and you don't know how you are perceived from the outside.”
- “... something you can do to encourage people to try things. And ... decrease the cost of failure, ... for us, the main cost, the thing that was in the point of making us not do it was the reputation cost, because people would feel that we were amateurs doing this, which we were, and this at least for scientists is very costly. So yeah, it's a kind of insecurity ... if there's a way of overcoming it.”
- “So this kind of insecurity of doing something that should be done by a team of 50 people and you are doing it alone. And I think it's probably preventing many people from trying things.”

P09-EL

Emphasized the importance of boosting SLs and communities' confidence,

- “One of the most important things that a community needs to do is to just have the confidence to be able to stand up for what they need and to and to ask for what they need.”
- “A sense of hope and empowerment is so important for longer term engagement for places like Puerto Rico.”

FINDING 1.5 Support for SLs must be tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of Spontaneous Leaders and grassroots response efforts

Participants described differing types and levels of support services that they would like to see. The support needed depends on a variety of factors, the most important being participants' own experience, cultural background, and available attentional resources,

P04-L

Described three levels of support based on the amount of time he has available, and the depth of information he is looking for.

First, he wants motivational and reference materials that can be absorbed in minutes,

- “people would want to see some kind of reference material that they can immediately derive value from, and go 'Oh, this is a really cool model, I'm gonna try it.”
- “... just having a loose framework or a visual diagram that says, here's a path. it's a loose path about how to get from zero to two, and then to five, and then to ten.”

Second, he wants in-depth materials that can be reviewed at leisure,

- “... some kind of reference material that I could read on my own asynchronously, where there's a website with resources, and I can scan it and go, 'Alright, this seems helpful. I'm gonna keep it.', 'Okay, this is cool,' or 'I can use this.’”
- “I never decided ahead of time, how much time I wanted to spend on learning what I needed to know. For me, it was 'I need to make this work. I'm gonna put in the time.' ... if [reference material] was relevant and helpful to my mission, and it could get me there sooner. I will spend the time.”

Third, he wants interactive and/or long-term on-going support (such as general coaching and references to consulting services for professional support, see *Finding 7.1*),

- “Having some kind of personalized support, like a conversation with someone, even just around what the options are and how you can help would be a great next step.”
- “‘Wait, I'm kind of stuck here. ... oh, you know, there's a way that I can chat with someone for 20 minutes on this. Awesome.’ ”

P07-L

Offers a description of his own need for support that fits quite well with P04-L's three-level model.

In his first few weeks he couldn't have taken any time to get managerial training, despite his acknowledgement that his own "poor skills of management" were an impediment,

- "It would be also helpful that you have predefined tools. Like what you were saying that, 'Oh, we have these thing [sic] that tells you the three things that you are missing.'"

Once his effort stabilized and his core group of people had grown, he was ready to take time for managerial training,

- "And today, you know, for example, I'm reading now a book about management. It's called The Toyota Way. And he's blowing my mind. And now I'm reorganizing the whole organization in view of this."

If he couldn't get formal training, then P07-L wanted access to expert advice or mentoring,

- "If there was someone who ... has a lot of experience in management then ... if I had an advisor of this kind, and I trusted them very much, that might be useful for many things.... an advisor on ... even more than five minutes calls ... someone who sits with us and tells you can improve this process in that way."

P05-E, P06-E

Identify two types of SLs with differing skills and needs,

- "Professionals" who have business management experience, and who "don't see themselves as grassroots leaders... they just see themselves as 'I'm an executive doing good things.' ... Their challenges tend to be more around growing. They really want to grow rapidly, and they want to serve as many people as possible."
- "Non-professionals" who lack formal management experience, who think "'we're neighbors helping neighbors, we're moms helping moms. We're kids helping kids.'" They need more help around basic managerial tasks, "like building a website, managing how they do their work, like developing processes, governance, having meetings."

FINDING 1.6 Planning ahead during a crisis is important

Several participants (P00-EL, P02-L, P04-L, P05-E, P06-E, P07-L) discussed planning ahead, and anticipating contingencies to try and stay ahead of an ever changing environment.

P00-EL

- “I've asked our teams ... to think about the future of this disaster, not as a linear future, but as a set of scenarios that could unfold. ... think about three endpoints as possible outcomes and plan for those three, and then there is an 80% chance that you're covering what the what the endpoint actually looks like.”

P02-L

- Recognized, when COVID-19 hit, that “we are going to have an economic disaster that was bigger than anything we had seen in our lives.” Knowing that the public workforce development system is “broken,” he determined **that this** was the time to seek systemic change.

P04-L

- Is only thinking tactically about the future, but knows he needs help to think strategically, “There's so many questions that are going through my mind. We have until the end of June with the Calendly sponsorship. So you know, I have three options just in terms of that.”

P05-E, P06-E

- “Who do you have in your network? What are your main goals? How long do you want to be doing this? Do you see yourself doing this? a year from now? Do you see yourself doing this five years from now? Or is it just like nope, I want to I want to get started and get out. ... I don't necessarily know if all founders ask themselves that question.”

P07-L

- P07-L's platform is dedicated to the COVID-19 response. However, he is planning now how the platform can exist after the COVID-19 crisis is over, in order to support other efforts. “So we can, depending on the situation, we can motivate and when there is a crisis, we can jump in, we have all the infrastructure ready to work efficiently.”

P08-L

- “So everything is more of a reactive kind of mode. So I think as we move forward, ... and since we have several weeks of data, ... we can look at the data and see ... if our buying trend is actually going up? ... I wanted to see ...

is spending per person going up or down? ... is ... the number of people buying every week... increasing or decreasing? How many repeat buyers do we have? ... what's the percentage of the repeat buyers week after week? ...so kind of look at that trend.”

FINDING 2 Spontaneous Leaders face significant challenges to getting started, maintaining motivation, and keeping momentum going forward.

All participants suggested that simple advice on how to start and keep going would go a long way to helping SLs. The SLs themselves (**P04-L, P07-L, P08-L**) reported significant challenges in getting started, maintaining motivation, and sustaining momentum. Experts (**P00-EL, P01-EL, P05-E, P06-E, P09-EL**) discussed similar difficulties faced by the SLs they knew.

FINDING 2.1 SLs face tremendous difficulties just getting started

Several participants (**P01-EL, P03-L, P04-L, P07-L, P09-EL**) talked about the need to just start. Beginning a grassroots effort is daunting – lack of confidence, overwhelming challenges, poor information, and no authority are some of the feelings that can deter potential SLs from getting started.

P01-EL

- "To continue moving forward, okay, you had to stop what you were doing yesterday. So it's all about pivoting, and how well you can pivot ... Okay, this is a little challenge, but you know what, spin around man and see what's in front of you, and how do you move forward? And how does it fit and how can we make it better?"

P03-L

- “Well, my primary motivation was to help my community. I don't want to see deaths, a lot of death in our community. We came from a traumatized nation. ... I was born in Civil War, and raised in Civil War, that what made me come to this country. ... Now COVID-19 is gonna kill more people. I don't want to see more deaths in my community. I said, let me do something. I may not prevent it from happening. But at least I try.”

P04-L

- “Act is my advice. If you feel a calling, a nudge, a pulling, don't let not knowing stop you. Not knowing how, not knowing who you're going to involve, Start. Because when you start, you will attract people who believe in the mission, and will want to help you.”

- "'You don't have to be great to start. But you have to start to be great.' (from Zig Ziglar)"

P07-L

- "We were absolutely sure that it was not going to work. ... Because we knew that we were not the people who should be implementing this idea, ... we are in [a different field]. So all our contacts were in different fields. But it was something that was relatively low cost. So we said okay. ... And then what happened was that it was super successful. We had thousands of volunteers very fast. And what was even more success, more surprising for us, we had hundreds of requests."

P09-EL

- One of the most important things that a community needs to do is "to just have the confidence to be able to stand up for what they need and to and to ask for what they need."

FINDING 2.2 Getting help is critical to maintaining momentum

Most participants (**P00-EL, P01-EL, P02-L, P03-L, P04-L, P05-E, P06-E, P10-E**) emphasized that SLs must get help to succeed. Without help there is too much burden on an SL. SLs need to bring others in to help, starting with those they already know. In addition to getting partners to help with their effort, most participants stressed the value of strong relationships, outside of their effort, through an extensive social network (see *Finding 5*).

P00-EL

- "Emergent leadership does not occur in a vacuum!"
- "If there's a relationship that's even modestly working, that can be leveraged in that event, to connect that emergent leader to a little bit more infrastructure... That can be super important."

P01-EL

- "There's always a place for people to become part of the bigger picture."

P02-L

- Stresses the importance of working with individuals at all levels, "both horizontally and vertically. So you've got to have people up and down. The kind of executive ..., from line staff to manager to middle manager...."
- "And so I got buy-in from everybody to go create something. And so I started the thing off with these one on one meetings with everybody participating."

P03-L

Is running his effort alone, despite the threat of burning out. He feels he needs better leadership skills to bring people in,

- “I may get burnt out. If I don't know, if I don't have leadership skills, to be able to pull in other people to help me, I may not be effective as well.”

P04-L

- “The collective wisdom of the people that you're working with, ... is larger and will provide more than you could ever imagine alone. ... the collective wisdom of the group is so much greater than what one person can think of.”
- “I was introduced to one of the residential faculty directors at the [name withheld] ... and ... she had a bunch of networks too where she could email. And when she did that, we saw a spike [in participation].”
- Contacts you know... That goes a long way. And I think if I could have done something differently, it would be to hop on that train sooner.”
- “There's a lot of value in partnering with organizations who have access to the communities you want to help,

P05-E, P06-E

- “Do it together and not alone, which could be the best slogan for volunteerism ever.”
- “Go together, not alone. Don't try to figure everything out yourself because ... it's not gonna be healthy.”

P10-E

- “When I think about an earthquake. I don't want people doing some complex, multi-layer paradigm. ... I want them to use the good sense that their loving relationships have given them.”

FINDING 2.3 Fear is a major hurdle to beginning and continuing a grassroots effort

Several SLs participants (**P04-L, P07-L, P08-L**) discussed that fear almost prevented them from starting or continuing. There was fear that they were not doing the correct thing, that they couldn't do everything, that they weren't the “right” people to do it. Each said that they nearly didn't succeed by giving into their fears, and imagined that others may have been intimidated into non-action.

P04-L

- “You don't have to have it all figured out. In fact, what you want to do is to let it figure out itself, because you get inputs along the way.”

P07-L

- Talked about the importance of moving forward even when insecure, “fake it until you make it.”
- “For us, the main cost, the thing that was in the point of making us not do it was the reputation cost, because people would feel that we were amateurs doing this, which we were, and this at least for scientists is very costly. So yeah, it's a kind of insecurity ... if there's a way of overcoming it.”
- “So this kind of insecurity of doing something that should be done by a team of 50 people and you are doing it alone. And I think it's probably preventing many people from trying things.”

P08-L

- “And then at the end of the day after I posted it, I have almost like 100 responses saying I want one. ... well, it's good that there's a lot of people interested, ... but 100 people! ... So, I kind of attacked that – oh, this is a cool puzzle. ... How do I figure this out? How do I deliver 100 boxes contactless?”

FINDING 2.4 *SL participants did not speak of themselves as leaders*

Although all of the SLs had initiated their grassroots effort and were directing the activities of others, only one, **P07-L**, talked about themselves as a “leader.” We posit that participants perceive “leader” and “leadership” as appointed positional roles that they do not hold. This perception is in contrast to their actual behaviors in forming and driving their grassroots efforts.

Even **P07-L** said he reluctantly took on the role of “general manager,” and that his lack of leadership skills impeded project progress.

P07-L

- “We were extremely overworked because of my inability to grow the organization faster. And this was a struggle. And maybe someone with more management skills, they would have grown it faster. ...I have always known that my people skills are not great. And my management skills are not great. ... I don't manage people really well. So I already knew that. And now I know that, yeah, this is limiting.”

P03-L

- “I think it's been well over 15 years that I have been [serving my community] in a very, very low skill. Where I read books very much I kind of... self train my own self, myself without taking it seriously like, okay, now, I need to be a leader. Like this man or that. No, I've been kidding myself, you know, in a very low key, doing that long alongside my day job for a bit for 15 years.”

P05-E, P06-E

Affirmed that the SLs they encounter do not self-identify as leaders,

- “So from the more professionalized people ... So they don't see themselves as grassroots leaders, volunteer managers, leaders, volunteers, they just see themselves as, ‘I'm an executive doing good things.’”
- “With the other end of the spectrum, with ... the moms helping moms, kids helping kids, ... you'll see them identify themselves as ‘I'm a single mom living with a disability. And when nobody would help me, I decided to do this because I want to help others.’”

And found that language can prevent self-identity,

- “... it's very personalized. And they might resonate with ‘grassroots’, they might resonate with ‘volunteering’, but not in the same way. I don't think it'll be easy to find a definition that everybody can rally towards. I think there's going to be a spectrum of definitions.”
- “It's more around the title of grassroots leader like, what is grassroots that's not always necessarily defined. And then, in terms of like doing volunteer management, right. I don't necessarily think that these people see themselves as volunteer managers, sometimes.”

FINDING 2.5 The behaviors participants cited as key to their success bear striking resemblance to Design and Entrepreneurial Thinking practices

When reflecting on what helped them to succeed, and when making recommendations for other SLs, many participants (**P00-EL, P03-L, P04-L, P07-L, P08-L, P10-E**) described mindsets and practices that are fundamental to both Design and Entrepreneurial Thinking. None of the participants mentioned experience with either of these philosophies, although **P04-L** had a background that is likely to have exposed him to Design Thinking practices.

The Design and Entrepreneurial Thinking behaviors that participants cited were related to an ability to accept imperfection and uncertainty, deliberate experimentation, and rapid iteration. SLs discussed the importance of moving

forward with imperfect solutions, and gathering feedback quickly — “Fail early, fail fast,” in Design and Entrepreneurial Thinking parlance,

P04-L

- “You don't have to have it all figured out. In fact, what you want to do is to let it figure out itself, because you get inputs along the way.”

P07-L

- Talked about the importance of moving forward even when insecure, “fake it until you make it.”
- “So this kind of insecurity of doing something that should be done by a team of 50 people and you are doing it alone. And I think it's probably preventing many people from trying things.”

P10-E

- “In the middle of a crisis, you don't build a massive plan with tons of resources. You get low to the ground, you do iteration, rapid response, talking to lots of people.”

They pointed to the value of starting simple, and focusing on something manageable — “Minimum Viable Product (MVP),” in Design and Entrepreneurial Thinking parlance,

P03-L

- “Well, the advice I would give myself a few years back would be, ... You may not be able to address all the issues going on in the community, you may not be able to help everyone in the community. Be mindful that you may have shortcomings tomorrow. You may just come in tomorrow, do not kind of burn yourself out.
- “You know, I would give myself that advice. ... all you can only do you know, very limited. Think as a person, don't, don't, don't even think about changing the whole world of [his community].”

P04-L

- “... it's not about scale, man, it's not about getting to 1000, 10,000 people. The next person that walks in the door – build an experience that's going to be great for him. And if you can do one of those, two of those, like focus on that. Quality, not quantity. That's what I was telling myself to help me to kind of weather, weather the storm.”
- “Pilot it, and then you can start to grow past that.”

- “Don't polish it too much, get it out there because you need to learn, build in learning.”

P07-L

- “It was a good idea to, to say, ‘Okay, this is what we want to do this is what we do’, then see that there was demand and then adapt to it. And this focusing on the demand and adapting very fast. I think it was what made it work.”

They stressed the critical need to iterate and evolve their efforts, adapting to changing situations — “Iterate, iterate, iterate,” in Design and Entrepreneurial Thinking parlance,

P00-EL

- “I think we felt like if a disaster happened, we would know exactly who to call. And the reality was the pandemic changed so many things that the assumptions that we held were violated in that situation. And so we were having to scramble to actually to connect with different groups that we maybe hadn't talked to in five or 10 years”
- “Well, the dynamics of the crisis change over time. Right. So I mean, just like for [his home state], we initially had a stay at home order from the governor. And that was basically the law of the land and in some senses for eight weeks or whatever, until the Supreme Court of the state, turned it. And then all of a sudden, you have a very different picture in terms of what people are allowed to do.”
- “I think in a perfect situation, some of these types of things will evolve. So there's more structure. ... knowing when one structure has kind of served its purpose and moving on to a different structure. With some, of the PPE related stuff, we realized at some point that we had kind of done as much as we could do, ... like the scale at which we were operating was probably maxed out. And so we reached out to a different set of partners and ... backbone institutions or agencies in the community stepped up to the plate and took over some logistics.”

P01-EL

- "that adaptive form of leadership is required. And how do you do that? You, you achieve that by having leaders that have been through challenges, and they have been through crisis, personal and otherwise."

P02-L

- "I have made my mistakes. That you fix them along the way is okay, I thought that was gonna work, that didn't work. Let's try that again, and, there will be

more. You know, you're not, you don't get it perfect, you just ... and you feed the winners, you know, you feed the strong areas as much as you can."

- "You have to be open to doing things in new ways, the old systems aren't going to work. So you have to adapt and create and ... iterate ..., you know, put something out there and then evolve it."

P04-L

- "... part of your direction and how you grow won't just be from the wisdom and knowledge of the people involved. It's from your people you're serving, they're going to tell you what they need, oh, I need to do more over here, oh, we need to add this little thing. And then it starts to expand based on what you're learning. So that I think is kind of a valuable tip is sort of, let the process evolve."
- "Trying to prove a model is wise is in most cases. You build a prototype, you get it out there, you get feedback. We had a shoddy website, I had to kind of manage this stuff on the back end for the first few days."

P07-L

- "... from the very first thing we had to adapt. Like once per day, we had to change something big in the organization."

P08-L

- "And then at the end of the day after I posted it, I have almost like 100 responses saying I want one. And then I'm like, oh-oh, okay, ... well, it's good that there's a lot of people interested, ... but 100 people! I don't want to invite COVID into my house with 100 people coming in. So, I kind of attacked that – oh, this is a cool puzzle. ... How do I figure this out? How do I deliver 100 boxes contactless?"

FINDING 3 Spontaneous Leader effectiveness is strongly correlated with their situational awareness.

SLs (P00-EL, P04-L, P07-L, P09-EL) as well as Experts (P00-EL, P01-EL, P05-E, P06-E, P09-EL) stressed the importance of good information to the success of any grassroots effort, and the challenges of obtaining and understanding it.

The information needs mentioned most were key to developing Level 1 and 2 situational awareness — perceiving relevant aspects of the environment, and relating them to one's goals and objectives. They centered on understanding demand (what do people need?), supply (what funds, resources, and support are

available?), operating environment (what social, economic, and logistical forces are at play?).

SLs may find themselves in unfamiliar waters, either because they are operating outside their normal sphere of operation, or because crisis creates new needs and a new context for meeting them.

FINDING 3.1 SLs need to understand demand – what do people need?

Several participants (**P00-EL, P01-EL, P04-L, P07-L, P09-EL**) talked about the importance for SLs to clearly identify services or products to meet the needs of the people they are serving. They emphasized getting this information directly from those they wished to help.

P00-EL

P00-EL's institution had operated as a source of general health information for its communities. However, when COVID hit, his group found that communities' needs had changed,

- "This is a situation where we kind of rapidly changed footing. Rather than us pushing to the community health worker, this is what we need you to do for us. To really asking the community health worker, what do you need from us in this context, to help with what's going on around. ... it's usually a push, bringing a sense from us to the community health worker to the community about information about things that we think are important for them to pay attention to. ... In this situation, we've actually reversed the flow of information and the flow of goods if you will. So the community health workers told us, 'what we need basically are small dollar donations and cash that we can put in people's hands that are suffering economically, we need food. And we need PPE. And if possible information, public health information, public service announcement type information that is simple written, preferably in Spanish.'"

P01-EL

- "We came up with this cultural liaison model where we work with the ethnic-based organizations in the community. Those emerging leaders and included them into figuring out strategies moving forward, you know, what is it your community needs? What do you need?" ... Liaisons are "representative of the ethnicities in the neighborhood, but more so in terms of background. Shared similar backgrounds." ... "culture is more about shared experiences, prior challenges, prior traumas that people have experienced."

P04-L

Emphasized the need for feedback loops, so that SLs can learn what is needed from those they serve,

- “We really wanted to test, is there a need? Is this valuable? And what are some of the pain points and the kinks to work out?”
- “You want to have loops of feedback so that you can continually learn and continually iterate. Because part of your direction ... won't just be from the wisdom and knowledge of the people involved. It's from your people you're serving, they're going to tell you what they need.”

P07-L

Did much due diligence research to see if people needed their proposed service,

- “Now I understand that the most difficult thing... in your business, in addressing this kind of situation is to identify the demand. ... if there is no demand, there is nothing to do.”
- “We saw other platforms that ... have many problems because they did not find requesters. They said, ' Okay, I know how to do this. So I'm gonna do it for the community. Maybe it was not needed at that point, right? We did the opposite. Even though we don't know how to do this, we are gonna do what we think is needed, right? ... we're very user oriented. And we said, okay, well, there is a need. We do this even if we don't know how to do it.”
- “I think what worked well was the identification of the problem and in finding a good model.”
- “I think it was a good idea to, to say, Okay, this is what we want to do, this is what we do, then see that there was demand and then adapt to it. And this, this focusing on the demand and adapting very fast. I think it was what made it work.”

P09-EL

Observed that communities benefited from having good understanding of the needs of its members,

- “Once you can better manage or know what your community needs are. It's easier for you to speak up for your organization and ask for help and support.”

FINDING 3.2 *SLs need to know supply – what funds, resources, and support are available?*

Participants (P00-EL, P04-L, P05-E, P06-E, P07-L, P09-EL) also talked about the importance of knowing what help and resources are available, mentioning materials, services, volunteers, as well as money.

P00-EL

- “We have, you know, pictures of a community health worker handing out, you know, important donations to families that are suffering very rapidly, with very little straight overhead. And that’s, again, comes down to the right kind of knowing who the players are in the situation, and not acting ourselves - simply connecting them rapidly. You know, kind of where’s the request and who can fill that request.”

P04-L

- “I was introduced to one of the residential faculty directors at the [name withheld] ... and she was able to A) give me some insight into the offering, kind of improving it. B) she had a bunch of networks too where she could email. And when she did that, we saw a spike [in participation].”
- “There’s a lot of value in partnering with organizations who have access to the communities you want to help, who potentially have resources which doesn’t have to be money.”

P05-E, P06-E

- “... go to ... groups that are nonprofit advisory organizations or even like ... a pro bono legal line just to get some information. ... tapping into resources that are available to you and utilize them as much as possible.”

P09-EL

- “Moving forward, ... I need to slowly sit down and also ask the farmers what would be you know, what would be still beneficial to them? You know, that might be you know, how can we adjust it because right now they’re all just catering because I requested like weekly delivery, right? So everything is like more of a reactive kind of mode. So I think as we move forward, I wanted to kind of check back with the farmers.”

P09-EL

- Organizations with funds and resources, for example the [name withheld], rely on “community organizations, ... to come to them and tell them, this is the amount of whatever we need.”

- “So, [institution withheld], they have a huge donation, ... they have like five, six people working in their [main] office, they're not going to be able to deliver to like every household. So, what they rely on, are these community organizations, a lot of them were their past grantees, to come to them and tell them, ‘this is the amount of whatever we need’. ... So, what if I never heard of [the institution] before? What if I didn't get the call that they were distributing this?”

FINDING 3.3 SLs need to know their operating environment – what social, economic, and logistical forces are at play?

Participants (P00-EL, P02-L, P03-L, P04-L, P05-E, P06-E, P07-L) talked about informational needs beyond supply and demand. They emphasized the need for due diligence on various factors: Is anyone else already providing the SL’s proposed product or service? What social networks exist that can support the SL? What communications channels should the SL monitor? What are the relevant regulations and laws?

P00-EL

Is especially emphatic that SLs need strong relationships with groups external to their own effort in order to access a wider and richer network of resources, volunteers, funding, and customers,

- “I am paying attention to ... the usual contacts, but my contacts are also connecting me dynamically to other people. ... this person is connected to these steps in the kind of social network. And this is kind of how we need to think about responding to their needs based on those relationships. So just the communication channels are also a huge, huge piece of this.”
- “If there's a relationship that's even modestly working, that can be leveraged in that event, to connect that emergent leader to a little bit more infrastructure... That can be super important.”
- “... knowing what our boundaries are in the space has been important as well.”
- “I think any major disaster is going to have regulatory implications for all different types of groups, right? I mean, if you think about immigrants, so when we're talking about the undocumented status, there's regulatory considerations around that. Right. So it's just a very practical consideration for that community. There's regulatory considerations for the universities. There's regulatory considerations for the businesses. There's regulatory considerations for government.”

P02-L

- "... you got to understand how government ticks, how the nonprofit sector ticks, how the for-profit sector ticks ..."

P03-L

Relied heavily on networking to find people in need and people with resources,

- "First of all, ... people who have connections wherever they are. To help... and people who knows people ... not only tell me, John, I know you're doing a good job, I think you can get help from this area, oh, John, I there are people here that need help and you can help them there"
- "I can, you know, try to find resources ... It could work both way somebody would tell me, John, there are resources here. Okay, where is it? Here and you can benefit from this."

P04-L

- "For the pilot, what I did was I reached out to a whole bunch of my friends and colleagues. I know an ER doctor, I know a PA, right. And so just trying to leverage our networks to say if you know anyone who could either A) actually benefit from this, or B) know someone who has access to these communities to share the word, please help, please help spread the word."
- "I ran this by all of my mentors who have acted as advisors for me. And they've all given me valuable input, they've helped to share this with their networks, they've helped me with it. So, seek mentorship,"

P05-E, P06-E

Are particularly concerned that SLs could waste their time "recreating the wheel", and that their time would be better spent helping an already established effort. (Part of their own effort is to connect volunteers to such efforts.)

- "One of the main things that we really put out to people was, do an *environmental scan*. ... You have a great idea but ... you don't want to create an organization that already exists."

P07-L

- "... we didn't see any platform like ours. ... if we and our contacts don't know about such a platform, it means that there is no such a platform that is very successful, because otherwise we would have read about it"

FINDING 3.4 *SLs lack situational awareness because they are operating in unfamiliar situations.*

Several SL participants (**P00-EL**, **P07-L**, **P08-L**) were engaging in efforts that require skills and knowledge outside their normal purview, and so lacked a mental framework upon which to develop situational awareness.

P00-EL

- “So the community health workers told us, ‘what we need basically are small dollar donations and cash that we can put in people's hands that are suffering economically, we need food.’ [Our institution] can't hold donor dollars in this way, at least not simply and quickly. For us that turnaround time on something like that might be 90 days to set up an account and to go through all the regulatory - those kinds of things. But, we did want to help.”

P07-L

- “Even though we don't know how to do this, we are gonna do what we think is needed, right?”
- “we knew that we were not the people who should be implementing this idea, ... we are in [a different field]. So all our contacts were in different fields.”

P08-L

Is an IT manager, but was running a relief effort to provide frontline medical workers with free meals by selling fruit directly from farmers to community members, and then using the profits to pay for meals from food trucks,

- “Actually [my background] has nothing to do with disaster relief or COVID-19. ... My background is in software engineering. ... currently, I am managing a team at Stanford. My team is responsible for data reporting and management for the enterprise systems at Stanford. So you know, we're IT and when COVID hit, we did have a group of IT people who started a Slack channel. ...the thought on the channel was to have everybody say ‘yes, I can help those people who are immunocompromised’”

P00-EL and **P08-L** discussed that crises, particularly COVID-19, creates new needs and a new context for meeting those needs.

P00-EL

- “For us, you know, because we do so much work with nonprofits... we felt like if a disaster happened, we would know exactly who to call. And the reality was the pandemic changed so many things that the assumptions that we held were violated in that situation. And so we were having to scramble

to actually to connect with different groups that we maybe hadn't talked to in five or 10 years. Because their doors were open when some other agencies wasn't."

P08-L

- "I think it's important that we evolve as our needs are evolving because I really feel with this pandemic that our basic norm is actually changing."

FINDING 4 Many SL efforts are focused on “brokering the last mile,” and are instrumental in filling local gaps, providing intimate knowledge of and communications with community members in need.

All of the SLs and most Experts were engaged in “brokering the last mile” — getting resources from where they had been gathered to individuals that need them (see the table below). This is a common challenge in crisis relief, and grassroots efforts are often instrumental in filling local gaps, providing intimate knowledge of and communications with community members in need.

The following table lists participant efforts that brokered the last mile:

Participant	Helped	Get	From
P00-EL	Low income, inner city residents	Face masks, cash donations	Local business community
P01-EL	Recent immigrants	Healthcare	Health and wellness specialists
P03-L	Sudanese expat community	Culturally translated information	Public health authorities
P04-L	Emergency medical workers	Mental wellness support	Professional coaches
P05-E P06-E	Non-profits and grassroots efforts	Volunteers	Local general public
P07-L	COVID-19 research scientists	Skilled volunteers	International research community

P08-L	Local residents in neighborhood	Contact-free access to fresh produce	Local farmers
P08-L	Frontline medical workers	Meals	Food trucks
P09-EL	Local communities world-wide	Data and mapping services	Local communities world-wide

P00-EL talked about the “classic broker situation or boundary spanning agents situation” that arises during a crisis. **P09-EL** found that local grassroots efforts were essential to the Puerto Rican hurricane relief efforts (see *Finding 1.3*). Both emphasized that a key contribution of the local grassroots efforts is their knowledge of who needs what (see also *Finding 3*),

P00-EL

- “The donor may not know how to get something into the hands of the community member walking into different worlds. And so really being kind of a brokering agent is one of the key points.”
- “So the community health workers told us, ‘what we need basically are small dollar donations and cash that we can put in people's hands that are suffering economically, we need food. ...[our institution] can't hold donor dollars in this way, at least not simply and quickly. For us that turnaround time on something like that might be 90 days to set up an account and to go through all the regulatory - those kinds of things. But, we did want to help. And so what we did, ... is basically just connect ... small donors with a community health worker and say, you know, if you have cash that you want to donate, we don't want to hold the money and give it to the community health worker, but we'll connect you directly to somebody who can deliver those dollars on the ground. And as a result, we have, you know, pictures of a community health worker handing out, you know, important donations to families that are suffering very rapidly, with very little straight overhead.”
- “... the grassroots model I think really has empathy already in its core”

P09-EL

- After Hurricane Maria, “big organizations ... didn't really know where to go and where the donation or the supplies should go. A lot of it will have to rely on community organizations to deliver the last mile to the households.”

P03-L

Demonstrates the value of understanding cultural norms and language that grassroots efforts can bring to crisis situations,

- “My goal is to help my community receive firsthand information from us. I realized that people [in my cultural community] were not following the CDC recommendation or guidelines at all, or the local, local, you know, city council or local governments information Then my goal was to give them an alternative, you know, a view that can come to them from their people.”
- “We are a social, ... a cohesive social group where we we want to see people face to face we want to hook one another we want to gather and just talk nothing but you know, you know, normal activities. So covering the mouths, observing six feet is not working in our culture. People are saying no, no, no, no, no, no, no. We've been living this life for decades and we are here. So we don't, forget it, you know, COVID-19, what is it? ... You see. So it is rooted within the culture. Yeah. Is it hard now to deactivate that.”
- "One direction I took was to tell them, look, ... I understand. I come from the same culture. I have the same feeling you do. But ... if you go outside there, ... then chances are you going to bring on COVID-19 and it will affect someone who is related to you. Unfortunately, that person might die. Who killed that person? COVID-19. Yes. Who brought that COVID-19 to those people.”
- “So I think the message was received and it works because people tune in and they say yes. You know, we did not know how serious it is. Yes. Now we know and we want you to [provide information] in weekly basis. And that's why I do a weekly basis Otherwise, I will not continue doing it if it is not working”
- “So I created a very nice poster. Very colorful poster ... the CDC information and the government information here in a very simple language for [his community] to understand.”
- “A lot of my community people, the lay people there who speak no other languages, but their own dialect, communicate with me that they're actually learning now and they're protecting themselves.”

FINDING 5 Personal relationships and social networks are critical to a Spontaneous Leader's success.

Several participants (**P01-EL, P04-L, P07-L, P09-EL**) emphasized the critical importance of social networks and personal relationships. Social connections were

essential to these participants to overcome many of their difficulties, especially issues of awareness (see *Finding 3.3*) and trust (see *Finding 6*). Those who successfully got their products, resources, and services to their target audience generally did so through social networking – either via word-of-mouth, or getting established institutions to spread the word for them, or both.

P01-EL

- included “connectedness” as an essential ingredient to their support services.
- "First, get to a point of healing, ... and getting some of these ... survival needs taken care of. And at the same time feel supported, feel connected, because social connectedness is super important."
- "There's a support system, and network is extremely important."

P02-L

- “... the organizational structure ... has to be much more relational and less hierarchical. It's our human connections that are going to transform things. It's not the organizational hierarchies that's going to do that.”

P04-L

- “The biggest challenge in all of this is awareness. getting the word out, it is still something that we struggle with. And I think that there are two pieces, there's awareness of the offering. And then there's trust building.”
- “For the pilot, what I did was I reached out to a whole bunch of my friends and colleagues. I know an ER doctor, I know a PA, right. And so just trying to leverage our networks to say if you know anyone who could either A) actually benefit from this, or B) know someone who has access to these communities to share the word, please help, please help spread the word.”
- “I actually wrote an email to my University's list service, which was, I don't know 10,000 people. That was a scary email to write. there was a huge spike in the number of people who saw the website and then who also signed up.”
- “How could you help? It would be that if you knew people that can spread the word. That is the biggest thing that this project needs.”

P07-L

- “I wrote to my boss, telling him that we were launching this initiative. And then I drafted an email in which I said, I'm involved in this initiative. And I sent him the link to the web that we were preparing that was as professional looking as we could.”

P08-L

- "... there's two college students who are actually friends with my kids, cause also of course, I jam my teenager into this work. So my youngest, who is an incoming senior, so he is taken over accounting and then processing the orders. ... two of their friends who are now incoming sophomore in college in their home, ... volunteered to take orders in Portola Valley. ... and then my friend's daughter who are incoming sophomore in high school in Amador Valley in Pleasanton also volunteered and they wanted to try to do this in Pleasanton."

P09-EL

- "So, [institution name withheld], they have a huge donation, ... they have like five, six people working in their [main] office, they're not going to be able to deliver to like every household. So, what they rely on, are these community organizations, a lot of them were their past grantees, to come to them and tell them, 'this is the amount of whatever we need'. But, that is very much based on trust and relationship instead of data or like what's the actual need?"

FINDING 5.1 Pre-disaster social networks and relationships are particularly valuable to Spontaneous Leaders

All Expert participants (**P00-EL, P01-EL, P05-E, P06-E, P09-EL**) emphasized that the social networks and relationships that communities have established prior to the crisis provide key support in the event,

P00-EL

- "Emergent leadership does not occur in a vacuum!"
- "Almost all community leaders are embedded in some way in pre-existing structures. ... there is some infrastructure there that's allowing them to emerge into that space. Before the event."
- "... it's actually about relationships that predate the disaster. That there's a trust from this."
- "... If there's a relationship that's even modestly working, that can be leveraged in that event, to connect that emergent leader to a little bit more infrastructure... That can be super important."

P01-EL

Intentionally cultivates an extensive collaborative community network to ensure that clients have access to a wide array of opportunities and resources. Network

engagement and growth is fueled by nurturing clients to transition from being a passive service recipient (client) to being an active service delivery participant (community representative and/or leader). This helps to create and maintain links to resources beyond the local community,

- "Because we have those collaborative partnerships, we're able to steer [clients] to those opportunities, and then they bring those skills back in [to her community centers' collaborative network]. "
- "There's a support system, and network is extremely important."

P02-L

- "[Start with] a place-based initiative, or you can call it, where the trusted existing relationships already occur."

P05-E, P06-E

- "It depends on you the resources and the access that you have, ... the tiers of what you come to it with and what you can leverage. ... people will look within their own networks to make that a reality as it is."

P09-EL

- "After a disaster happens, everything's down and that's just extra extra challenging to set anything up after."
- One group, [name withheld], "would organize kind of daily routes to drop things off, like either food or supplies or whatever, because they know where these people are."
- She gave the example of an institution that, through a huge donation, had many funds to distribute. Most of those that they subsequently supported after Hurricane Maria were past grantees that the institution already knew about. "They also wanted better information distribution, so they know where they need to go beforehand and plan all these kinds of things."
- "There's definitely a lot of trial and error and I feel like some kind of training or preparation beforehand is going to be very key. And so that on an organizational level, ...a lot of them are encouraging people to do the CERT program. CERT, it's kind of a kind of individual, they can get a certification on maybe disaster response and recovery."

FINDING 6 Without the legitimacy and credibility imparted by being part of an established organization, SLs may struggle to win trust and build community confidence in their intentions and ability to deliver.

Both SLs and Experts (**P00-EL, P01-EL, P04-L, P07-L, P08-L, P09-EL**) talked about the importance and difficulty of obtaining legitimacy and credibility. This can have a very real effect on an SL's ability to deliver their services. The affected activities mentioned most commonly were the ability to

- Attract volunteers and workers
- Get funds and other resources (see also *Finding 4*):
- Obtain pro bono professional services
- Secure relations with both donors and donees

As can be seen in the quotes below, participants found and discussed several roads to legitimacy.

P00-EL

Describes his institution's efforts to lend legitimacy to SLs they know, including,

- "One of the things that they're looking for is legitimacy."
- "A grassroots health worker that needed to "... have a stamp of approval of a large institution that would allow her to... be more respected in the community organizing that she's doing. ... she needs affiliation with a large institution ... at the most practical level, having a name tag that identifies her as an arm, if you will, of The Medical College is something that she's asked for from us."

P01-EL

Enlists prior clients — often as staff or volunteers — to gain credibility and trust with local communities,

- "And the staff, because they're there, they share the mission, the purpose of the organization ... Right away, it establishes this bond. And, it's like that relationship then, right away, you your [client] have a sense of hope. Because you see that, wow, that person was in my same situation, had the same challenges, and they've been able to overcome those and how did they do that?"

P04-L

Develops partnerships with other organizations to increase exposure and demonstrate legitimacy,

- “The biggest challenge in all of this is awareness. ... I think that there are two pieces, there's awareness of the offering. And then there's trust building. So once someone finds you, and they go, Hey, this is a cool thing. How do you get them to actually sign up? ... How do you build credibility for something where you don't have a company, you don't have backing. You just have an idea and you're putting it out there.”
- “Partnering with organizations that are more established that can help you is a huge key. ... The trust through partner organizations. It's huge. It's huge. [For example], doctors are usually kind of skeptical about stuff like this. So how do you establish more trust? So I'm thinking, ... I could put some logos up on the website to say, ‘We partner with A, B, & C.’”

P07-L

At first, relied on appearances unintentionally,

- “When you read the webpage that we set up at the beginning. We looked like a big organization, ...basically saying that we could provide everything that we wanted to provide. but at that point, we were three people. ... 'fake it until you make it'.”

This raised concerns about risking their professional reputations,

- “... the thing that was in the point of making us not do it was the reputation cost, because people would feel that we were amateurs doing this, which we were, and this at least for scientists is very costly.”
- “At the beginning, something we were very worried about was to be confused with a scam or something like that. So for example, we tended not to take any donations or anything. Actually, people were writing asking us to take their money. And we said ‘no’”.
- “... not only from the legal point of view, but also from the image point of view, ... we were very, very worried of, and we are still, of putting a donate link in the webpage.”

Then solidified legitimacy by delivering on promises made by appearances,

- “... the early requests we did manage them well, for the first two days, these chaotic two days, we were clearly not prepared for it. ...this focusing on the demand and adapting very fast. I think it was what made it work.”

- "... we started, we did not expect the level of demand that we have. So actually, about 48 hours after launching the platform, we had to close it for another 48 hours because we couldn't cope with the demand. So we actually put a counter in the webpage. A countdown saying we will reopen in 48 hours. And then in this 48 hours, we change the whole system. ... And then we'll reopen with this new system."

P08-L

Verified her own legitimacy,

- "So I called the Palo Alto police department and I said, 'Okay, this is happening.' ... I explained the whole thing and they said, 'Okay, that sounds good. As long as there's no more than ten people standing outside and you know, everybody needs to be six feet apart,' and I said, 'Okay,' so they said they're okay with that."

And then demonstrated trustworthiness and dependability to the community of service,

- "I think the draw happened when they saw how I planned the whole delivery system. I think when they saw that everybody was like, 'Wow, this is fascinating.' ... I got their attention because ... they felt safe. They felt I thought about the whole process that ... that it's being handled... very well."
- "... transparency I think is key. ... Especially with bad news, I would rather deliver it as soon as possible. I don't like to sit on bad news just because I feel like if you sit on bad news, they grow, they grow bigger. And so ... if there's bad news to me, it's like disclose it as soon as possible. ... For example, with the price change that happened this week. ... the minute I heard it from the farmer, ... I was able to explain that to the group as well and say, 'Hey, you know, this situation happened'. ... and the group was very, very understanding."

FINDING 7 Many Spontaneous Leaders eventually have need of professional advice or help, but may not recognize it, and often have difficulty in obtaining affordable services when they do.

All SL participants (P00-EL, P01-EL, P02-L, P03-L, P04-L, P07-L, P08-L, P09-EL) expressed or revealed a need for professional advice or help, and all Expert participants (P00-EL, P01-EL, P05-E, P06-E, P09-EL, P10-E) described SLs needing such services.

P02-L, an experienced grassroots entrepreneur, neatly sums up many of the professional skills required to succeed,

- "You got to understand leadership. You've got to find the right folks to lead. ... You've got to get everybody to agree to paddle in the same direction together in the same boat.
- "You got to understand people. You gotta have a sense of your values, you got to understand how government ticks, how the nonprofit sector ticks, how the for profit sector ticks, you got to not tick people off. A lot of people that you can upset and so you have to do your best not to alienate people along the way. While at the same time, you got to exert pressure [There is an] Interesting balance between appeasing people, and then, a lot of people say they want change, but they don't realize that they're the ones who represent the change that needs to happen.
- "... understand how to raise money, because if you don't have money, none of it's real.
- "... understand politics really well.
- "... understand program design, programs, services.
- "... be able to learn ... or ... Let's get someone who knows about that to help us out."

The table below lists the professional service needs mentioned or exhibited by participants:

Professional Services	Participants indicating a need
Leadership development	P02-L, P03-L, P04-L, P07-L, P08-L, P10-E
Mental wellness support	P03-L, P04-L, P05-E, P06-E, P07-L, P08-L, P09-EL
Fundraising support	P04-L, P05-E, P06-E, P07-L, P09-EL
Legal and tax support	P00-EL, P05-E, P06-E, P07-L, P08-L, P09-EL
Marketing and advertising support	P04-L, P08-L, P09-EL
Data management and dissemination	P08-L, P09-EL
Accounting and administrative support	P04-L, P07-L, P08-L, P09-EL

FINDING 7.1 *The professional services that SLs typically need are leadership development, mental wellness support, marketing and fundraising expertise, and legal and tax advice.*

Leadership development

Many participants recognized the key role of leadership to successful efforts. Most SLs expressed doubts about some aspect of their own leadership skills, and indicated that they would welcome support for personal development or help with professionalizing their efforts. A number of participants mentioned or suggested that lack of leadership and managerial skills can lead to overload and burnout (see *Finding 7.1*).

P02-L

- "You got to understand leadership. You've got to find the right folks to lead. ... You've got to get everybody to agree to paddle in the same direction together in the same boat."
- "You got to understand people. You gotta have a sense of your values."

P03-L

Does significant amounts of coordination and administration by himself, but recognizes the importance of leadership,

- "Leadership skill, anything needs leadership. Without leadership ability, I may not be able to run things effectively. If I don't know how to manage my time wisely. If I don't know how to regulate ... my own self, I may not be able to. I may, I may get burnt out. ... some training that will help me elevate some skill that I have and promote them to a higher level that will be more effective than than I am now. Entirely welcome."

P04-L

Has not yet considered recruiting a support team, but knows that he will need help if he chooses to scale his effort,

- "I'm sure that there's value in getting some guidance around how to structure. ... I haven't managed a team outside of a professional setting. ... All of my management experience has been in corporate or in startups. How much of that is transferable? Probably some, probably not all of it. I don't know."

P07-L

Recognized early that he did not have the leadership skills he thought he should have, but didn't feel that he had time to get them. The effort is now at a transition point, where he feels that he can and should take the time to get managerial advice and training,

- “This is one of the main needs and I really think it will be in many similar organizations, the ability to manage people.”
- “... if there was someone who ... has a lot of experience in management then ... if I had an advisor of this kind, and I trusted them very much, that might be useful for many things.”
- “... an advisor on ... even more than five minutes calls ... someone who sits with us and tells you can improve this process in that way.”
- [Referring to checklists or cheatsheets:] “... it would be also helpful that you have like predefined tools. Like what you were saying that oh, we have these thing that tells you the three things that you are missing.”

P08-L

- “I'm not a business person also to begin with, so, ...[I could use] help in more of the business management side on how to run this more efficiently and possibly, you know, on the accounting if we do become a... corporation and apply for the nonprofit status. And ... if there's any advice coming from like other nonprofit Organizations on how they have manage a nonprofit because I've never done this before”

Mental wellness support

SLs as well as Experts (**P03-L, P04-L, P05-E, P06-E, P07-L, P08-L, P09-EL**) mentioned the risk of burnout, and the need for encouragement and mental wellness support.

P03-L

- "... do not kind of burn yourself out. So at some point, I find myself get burned out. Because when I see the media, there, ... I want to be there. Even in Canada I traveled to Canada one point Calgary, well, a huge community this they organize an event and I've been to Calgary on my own expenses. For me to pick up. Should I be everywhere at the same time now?"

P04-L

- “So I think looking for mentorship, I ran this by all of my mentors who have acted as advisors for me. And they've all given me valuable input, they've helped to share this with their networks, they've helped me with it. So, seek

mentorship, and it can be in the form of, you know, Person A has done something like this before, you can learn from them. Or it can be this is sort of a life mentor. Hey, this is something I'm thinking about, what do you think right? I also got some guidance around you know, how to take care of myself and how to how to balance this with other priorities in life. All of it was helpful that has sort of also contributed to the final product.”

- “Because I'm not gonna lie. It's felt lonely at times, right? You feel like you're kind of carrying this thing on your back.”

P05-E, P06-E

- “... the biggest challenge is with burnout, because these founders seem to take everything on themselves. So, bit of understanding around self care.”

P07-L

- “At the beginning, when we were three people, ... we were extremely overworked because of my inability to grow the organization faster.”

P08-L

- “I'm starting to ... feel a little bit of [a need to get my life back], especially after this week because the cherries farmer really... stressed me during the week.”
- “I felt exhausted, ... I'm kind of balancing, ... the high school and college volunteers and expectations of the farmers.”

P09-EL

- Said that mental wellness issues are common after disasters. “No surprise here.”

Fundraising support

Grassroot efforts often need help with fundraising to get money for the work they are doing (**P04-L, P05-E, P06-E, P07-L, P09-EL**). While many grassroots efforts are initially self-funded and rely on volunteers, to become sustainable, they often need additional funds and donations to cover operating expenses, obtain necessary materials, and even pay for staff.

Fundraising frequently raises legal issues (see *Legal Support*), for example, presenting a need to register a formal business entity.

P04-L

- “So far, I've just been kind of self-funding. It hasn't been a lot of money, ... I thought about putting a donation box on the website, but a lot of them need you to be a nonprofit. So I just sort of said, ‘it's not worth the time.’”

P05-E, P06-E

Reported that many SLs lack understanding of charitable fundraising,

- “... you can only officially call yourself a nonprofit if you're a registered not-for-profit. So here you can register as a nonprofit and you can register for as a charity. these groups, they start up, and then they go, ‘Oh, we're charity. We're not for profit’, but they do. ... they can't legally issue tax receipts. ... there's many things that they can't do. But they're going out there and using terms that they can't necessarily use.”

P07-L

- “At the beginning, something we were very worried about was to be confused with a scam or something like that. So for example, we tended not to take any donations or anything. Actually, people were writing asking us to take their money. And we said ‘no’. ... Yeah, an advisor could have told us ‘No, no, don't worry, this is’, or whatever. I think this kind of advice of how to handle the funding maybe can be very useful.

P09-EL

- “... their ability to deal with administrative stuff ... And like to know how to fundraise to get money for the kind of work they're doing. You're also creating economic opportunities for people, they're getting paid for this. And that's like for young people especially to be around and, and like for them to have to want to have ... the drive or even motivation to stay instead of just going to the mainland is that they need to feel they're connected to. there's a point of being connected to the community.”

Legal and tax advice

As grassroot efforts grow, or the circumstances under which they operate becomes more stable, SLs may need to address legal and tax-related issues with which they are unfamiliar (**P00-EL, P05-E, P06-E, P07-L, P08-L, P09-EL**),

P00-EL

Was both leading and supporting community-led responses, but was operating within a medical institutional context that imposed professional regulations and restrictions,

- "... there's so much regulation sometimes ... and that's one of the constraints that you'd have to face. ... there are rules about how things can be done and how they can't be done."
- "I think we're trying to improvise around and with some of those regulations. But, you know, there's some tension there in terms of how quickly we can respond and still kind of hold to the standards that those regulations suggest."
- "Well, the dynamics of the crisis change over time. Right. So I mean, just like for [state], we initially had a stay at home order from the governor. And that was, you know, that was basically the law of the land and in some senses for eight weeks or whatever, until the Supreme Court of the state, turned it. And then all of a sudden, you have, you know, a very different picture in terms of what people are allowed to do. And you have different municipalities responding to that in different ways. So for example, there are several cities that are concerned enough where the mayor of the city has basically put into effect a stay at home order in the absence of the state-wide order. But as soon as you step outside of the city boundaries, you have a very different enforcement policy. And so, you know, that's created a fair amount of confusion."

In most cases, concerns were related to understanding the tax implications of conducting business, or obtaining legal standing as a charitable organization,

P05-E, P06-E

Reported their frustrations that many SLs lack understanding of the legal requirements for charitable fundraising,

- "... you can only officially call yourself a nonprofit if you're a registered not-for-profit. So here you can register as a nonprofit and you can register for as a charity. these groups, they start up, and then they go, 'Oh, we're charity. We're not for profit', but they do. ... they can't legally issue tax receipts. ... there's many things that they can't do. But they're going out there and using terms that they can't necessarily use. So that's kind of like the language alignment piece again."

P07-L

- "So we started with no legal status whatsoever."
- "We asked to be registered as a nonprofit in Spain. And the process is ongoing. ... And they, we needed to correct the bylaws and everything. So it's in the process. We already have our tax identification number, ... because the thing is that we got some funding from the European Union, ... and to receive this funding, we needed to have this legal figure."

- “So it was hard to find [legal help]. But in the end, yeah, we have a person who's helping us for free in writing our legal conditions and all that.”
- They found legal help “through another platform called COVID Warriors. I think it's a Spanish platform, whose aim was to help any other platform who was trying to do something related to COVID. ... and the Spanish Privacy Association, which is like a an association of lawyers... they form like this professional association. And they partner with this COVID Warriors and they sent someone who could help.”

P08-L

- “... the way it works is the profit that we've made from the fruit and veggie sales, I use that money to donate to meals for front liners. Now, the meals are prepared by the food truck. So we give the food trucks business, because the hospitals have ... standards, you know, they have restriction on what we can donate. So, you know, it needs to be like prepared in a commercial kitchen, it has to be individually packed, it has to be a certain temperature, you know, so all of those guidelines, you know, we give to the food trucks which you know, it's part of their normal process as a restaurant, right, as a commercial kitchen.”
- “... the funny thing is one of my friends who is a corporate lawyer, working in a firm, ... he reached out to me, and he's like, ‘I think my, my firm is going to be willing to take you pro bono to create, I guess a corporation and apply for the nonprofit status.’ I'm talking to him right now to do that process because, you know, I kind of just did this as a personal thing.”
- “So my youngest, who is an incoming senior, so he is taken over accounting and then processing the orders.”
- “The cherries farmer ... changed prices on me this week, like two times already in the middle of the week. ... that was personally challenging because ... I've never really negotiated on prices in my life. Not even in my profession.”

P09-EL

- “... for example, when [Hurricane] Maria hit, a huge problem for these organization, two huge problems. ... And second is to obtain a 501(c)3 status ... some sort of nonprofit status for donations or to or to form an organization.”

FINDING 7.2 SLs expressed needs for other professional services such as marketing and advertising, data management, and administrative help.

Participants (P04-L, P07-L, P08-L, P09-EL) listed other professional services as expressed in the following quotes.

P04-L

- “I think there's definitely room for people, you know, to come on board. I think I have my own thing around like, how can I bring someone in to say, Hey, you know, can you dedicate, you know, three hours a week doing marketing or you know, to do social media, something I have not done a social media, that can be a huge thing.”

P07-L

- “Administrative support, I think, is something that would have been very helpful. Again, the problem is trust and training, I guess, but very often I felt that we needed a secretary or two to handle all the email and handle all the data. And someone not only to actually do it, but someone who knows how to do it right. Organizing helping the organization.”
- “Or I could have, I don't know, a secretary who's the person scheduling the meetings. Right, and then I don't need to, because I feel very bad when I write an email saying, Hey, we meet tomorrow at six because I don't feel like bothering everyone. If someone did that for me maybe that would help so like a buffer or something.”

P08-L

- “I personally haven't done any advertising. ... I just posted on next door, and I have my simple website with the link to the Whatsapp group and Facebook group. And pretty much that's all I've done.”
- “We have several weeks of data, ... we can look at the data and see ... if our buying trend is actually going up? ... I don't know the answer to this question, because I haven't done the data crunching yet. But I have the data.”

P09-EL

Describes how data can be critical to assess needs and communicate these needs. Local communities often must collect this data and share it with larger institutions in order to obtain support and aid. P09-EL's own startup is dedicated to this type of support.

- “Once you can better manage or know what your community needs are. It's easier for you to speak up for your organization and ask for help and support.”
- Local communities often need a “better dialog around data collection and management.” They need to understand which data to collect, and the analysis and delivery of data to the larger institutions from whom they want support.
- “Even, maybe especially, communities that are receiving support need administrative support.”
- She described one town with a very strong leader who received support, but money was poorly managed. “They have so many projects and ... quite a bit of money actually, but it's really hard for them to manage what's going on.”
- “... their ability to deal with administrative stuff as an organization or like to get over like local politics and kind of even to just have the confidence to be able to stand up for what they need and to and to ask for what they need.”

FINDING 7.3 SLs may lack the time or skills to find the professional support they need, and often lack the time or funds to work with them.

SLs (P03-L, P07-L, P08-L) described several challenges to getting the professional services they need, including

P03-L

- “This could benefit from more people helping with the organization. Up till today, it's been mostly me, for better or worse. ... I think that there was part of me that was saying, we have enough of a supply and this thing can sort of run itself. And I can do some of the emails — help keep people up to date. But until this requires much more help. I don't want to put too many cooks in the kitchen who are responsible for managing it.”
- “... so far, I've just been kind of self funding. ... I thought about putting a donation box on the website, but a lot of them need you to be a nonprofit, as you mentioned. So I just sort of said, it's not worth the time.”

P07-L

- “At the beginning, when we were three people, ... we were extremely overworked because of my inability to grow the organization faster. ... maybe someone with more management skills, they will have grown it faster. ... [managerial coaching or training] would have been extremely useful. But I don't know how it could be done. ... We were working 14 hours

a day just to survive, right? We did not have time to ... invest in this kind of thing. “

- “... at the beginning. I think it was too difficult to incorporate any external advice. But now, yeah, now it could be very useful.”
- “So it was hard to find [legal help]. ... “[found it through another platform called COVID Warriors. I think it's a Spanish platform, whose aim was to help any other platform who was trying to do something related to COVID. ... and the Spanish Privacy Association, which is like a an association of lawyers... they form like this professional association. And they partner with this COVID Warriors and they sent someone who could help.”

P08-L

Is feeling overwhelmed with her workload. She is considering cutting back on the services she provides. She doesn't know how to go about getting the help she needs to sustain or even grow her services.

- “Yes, [getting management help] is a great idea. I had just, you know, haven't... nobody has come forward yet. And I guess, you know, I need to, you know, probably, you know, ask if, so, the, the other you know, so I guess, kind of, I've been focused on just trying to run this thing. And I think one of the things that I'm considering is maybe eventually moving it to every two weeks.”

FINDING 7.4 SLs may not recognize that they are in need of professional help

Some SLs (**P03-L, P08-L**) clearly evinced a need for professional services, but were unaware of this need. Several Experts (**P05-E, P06-E**) mentioned having observed this in other SLs,

P03-L

P03-L is going it alone with no thought of creating a team to increase his scope and reach

- “Yes, it is a one man job now because whenever you do something for free, it is hard to bring people on board. To to have them spend their own resources to be with you. You know, where you're going, they may not see where they're going. They will depend on you. But yet, they're using their own resources. So that that makes it very difficult. ... Now, they're not going to do it, because they don't see what I'm seeing. It's very much a one person job.”

P05-E, P06-E

Discussed the need for many SLs to develop leadership and management skills,

- “[They need to learn] a little bit of the delegation, letting go, allowing the volunteers you bring on to fail, and allowing them to do things potentially differently from the way that you've done them. ... 'it's really hard sometimes for people to give up their idea and hand it over to someone and trust them. It's like handing over your baby.”
- “These groups, they start up, and then they go, ‘Oh, we're charity. We're not for profit’, but they do. ... they can't legally issue tax receipts. ... there's many things that they can't do. But they're going out there and using terms that they can't necessarily use.”

P08-L

At the time of our interview, P08-L was effectively operating a business with no legal standing, and no regard for legal or tax consequences, potentially putting herself at financial risk,

- “... the way it works is the profit that we've made from the fruit and veggie sales, I use that money to donate to meals for front liners.”
- “... the funny thing is one of my friends who is a corporate lawyer, working in a firm, ... he reached out to me, and he's like, ‘I think my, my firm is going to be willing to take you pro bono to create, I guess a corporation and apply for the nonprofit status.’ I'm talking to him right now to do that process because, you know, I kind of just did this as a personal thing. ... I'm kind of just going with the flow.”

Takeaways & Recommendations

This section translates study results into actionable recommendations for prospective CCL services to support Spontaneous Leaders in the midst of a crisis.

TAKEAWAY 1 There is a need for services to support Spontaneous Leaders in the midst of a crisis, and help good ideas become great grassroots efforts.

The study confirms that SLs emerged in response to COVID-19 and are likely to do so in other crises (*Finding 1, Finding 4*). It also affirms that Spontaneous Leadership is emotionally and logistically difficult, and that SLs would benefit from the kind of training and empowerment support services that align with CCL's mission (*Finding 1.4*).

Recommendation

1. CCL is on the right track, and should continue with its mission!

TAKEAWAY 2 Finding and connecting with SLs to offer them support in the midst of a crisis poses a substantial challenge.

Finding and connecting with SLs to offer them support in the midst of a crisis poses a substantial challenge (*Finding 1.2*). They seldom self-identify as leaders (*Finding 2.4*), and are usually too overwhelmed running their efforts to seek out help (*Finding 1.4, Finding 2.1, Finding 7.3*). The research suggests that spreading awareness of the role and importance of SLs to crisis response, and of resources to support them, *prior* to a crisis is an essential component of successful service delivery.

Recommendation

2. Rather than attempting to market services directly to SLs, it may be more effective to rely on local communities and response organizations for referrals to CCL's materials and services.
3. CCL should leverage its training program to promote awareness of the value of Spontaneous Leaders and grassroots crisis efforts.

TAKEAWAY 3 Services must be targeted and customizable to the needs and attentional resources of individual SLs.

Services must be targeted and customizable to the needs of individual SLs (*Finding 1.5*). The research revealed that SLs have very diverse support needs, and limited time and attentional resources. Support needs vary according to prior experience, and specific current circumstances, and range from personal skills development to connecting to needed resources. Attentional resources depend on the requirements of the effort they are supporting, and range from one-time commitment of a few minutes to regular commitment of several hours.

Recommendations

Insofar as possible,

4. Offer clear, specific, and actionable materials and services, rather than generalized principles and generic services.
5. Structure access to materials and services to address specific questions and needs, rather than according to general topic areas.
6. Provide materials and services requiring varying levels of commitment.

For instance,

	Quick hit	In-depth	On-going
Description	Quick guidance that SLs can consume in minutes	Reference materials that can be used and referenced in sporadic bursts	Self-study materials or on-going coaching/mentoring support from experts or other SLs
Example	Simple one-page infographics and checklists	Highly curated and quickly navigable library of resources and references	Peer support groups, expert mentoring or coaching

TAKEAWAY 4 Even simple encouragement and motivational advice offering moral support, courage, and basic guidance has the potential to inspire SLs to keep going, and prevent them from failing because of basic misconceptions.

SLs operate outside institutional structures, and are working to fill gaps not perceived (or prioritized) by others (*Finding 1.3*). As a consequence, they often don't enjoy the emotional support and encouragement needed to persevere on what is often a lonely journey (*Finding 1.4, Finding 2*).

Recommendation

7. Develop inspirational materials that foster appreciation of SLs, and offer SLs emotional encouragement.

Specifically, the research identified⁸ the following simple advice as key to SL success,

1. **Just start.** Take a step. Take another. Keep going. Don't let not knowing hold you back.
2. **Don't be afraid to fail.** If you do something, you may succeed. If you do nothing, you've already failed.
3. **Don't go it alone.** Get others to help. Collaboration will make it easier, and help you do more.
4. **Build on what you have.** Use the skills, resources, and relationships that are available to you. Develop new ones as you go along.
5. **Focus.** Tackle one problem at a time. Don't try to do everything at once.
6. **Iterate.** Get it out there. Get feedback. Adapt. Don't polish it too much.
7. **Don't be afraid to lead.** Leadership is about helping the group to succeed. You don't have to be a boss to lead.

⁸ While identified by the study, this advice directly reflects principles of Design and Entrepreneurial Thinking.

TAKEAWAY 5 SLs need to develop skills and knowledge needed to start and manage a grassroots effort even as they are doing it.

Starting and managing a grassroots crisis effort — particularly, in a long-term crisis such as COVID-19 — is, in many ways, similar to commercial entrepreneurialism (*Finding 2.5, Finding 3*). However, many SLs — driven by an urge to help others rather than by their skills — lack entrepreneurial experience or background. They must develop the necessary expertise and knowledge as they go, in an environment of rapid action that is not conducive to such learning (*Finding 1.4, Finding 3.4*).

The skills and knowledge they often need include

- Leadership and management skills
- Design Thinking
- Entrepreneurial Thinking
- Business planning and management practices
- Understanding local and national crisis response agencies, practices and resources
- Situational awareness

Recommendations

Within the scope of CCL’s mission of increasing social resilience,

8. Focus materials and services on fostering the skills and knowledge needed by SLs, prioritizing those that are not generally the focus of existing training programs.

These include,

- Self-organizing leadership skills
 - The experimental and iterative aspects of Design and Entrepreneurial Thinking
 - Understanding of local and national crisis response agencies, practices and resources
 - Situational awareness habits and practices
9. Develop materials and services to help SLs understand the common journey of a grassroots crisis response — from ideation to stabilization.

The recommended priorities are to help SLs to

- Recognize their current stage in the journey
- Understand what concerns they should consider prioritizing
- Understand what challenges they can anticipate facing
- Discover what types of resources might be available to them at different phases of a crisis
- Understand that they are not alone in their experience

TAKEAWAY 6 New social connections *during* a crisis may be key for SLs to gain access to needed information and resources.

Grassroots efforts often get started through the aid of a small core group of individuals who already know each other (*Finding 2.2*). However, success may depend on developing new connections with people and organizations who can provide needed information or resources, and with people who are in need of support (*Finding 3.3, Finding 5*).

Recommendations

Within the scope of CCL's mission of increasing social resilience,

10. Create opportunities for people to develop the confidence, skills, and mindsets that will enable them to establish new social connections quickly in a crisis.
11. Develop organizational values and practices of mediating social connections whenever possible.
12. Find ways of leveraging CCL connections to help individual SLs in an actual crisis, e.g., through personal introductions.
13. Support systematic means of providing SLs access to new social connections, e.g., through social platforms or automated brokering software.

TAKEAWAY 7 Social connections established *prior* to a crisis may play a significant role in the likelihood of success.

Social connections established prior to a crisis may play a significant role in the likelihood of success (*Finding 5.1*). Pre-existing social contacts often provide a basis of the effort as well as encouragement and moral support. They may also offer ready access to resources, and provide a path to new connections.

Recommendations

Within the scope of CCL's mission of increasing social resilience,

14. Create opportunities for people to develop and strengthen their local social networks.
15. Develop organizational values and practices of valuing and strengthening social connections.
16. Leverage CCL activities to strengthen social connections among local response agencies, the communities they serve, and neighboring communities.

TAKEAWAY 8 By failing to recognize a need for professional support, or failing to secure needed professional services, SLs may jeopardize the success of their efforts or put themselves at personal risk.

SLs operate outside established organizations, and often engage in unfamiliar activities (*Finding 1.3, Finding 3.4*). While they act with the best of intentions and for the good of others, their activities may nonetheless be subject to legal requirements, for instance, managing finances. Failure to recognize or comply with such requirements may put the SL at personal risk (*Finding 7*).

In other cases, SLs may simply not recognize that the challenges they face have well-understood solutions, e.g., accounting or volunteer management, and impede their own efforts by creating and relying on ad hoc solutions.

Recommendations

Within the scope of CCL's mission of increasing social resilience,

17. Develop materials and services to help SLs understand what kinds of professional support they might need, recognize when are likely to need it, and know how they might find it.
18. Support systematic means of providing SLs access to affordable professional services, e.g., through social platforms or automated brokering software.

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Finally, our heartfelt gratitude to our **study participants** for giving us their time, and for giving of themselves to help others get through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Appendix A: Session protocol for Spontaneous Leaders

PARTICIPANT:

SESSION DATE AND TIME:

INTERVIEWERS:

NOTE TAKER:

Pre-interview checklist

Each day before the sessions start, the researcher will:

- Sign into Zoom and test the room
- Prepare a copy of the notetaking protocol for each participant for that day.
- Confirm the network connection.

About 10 minutes before each session, the researcher will:

- Exit all nonessential applications on the computer.
- Start the Zoom recording, and then pause it.
- Review the participant's background information.

About 5 minutes before each session, the researcher will:

- Call into the conference line
- Help the participant join the Zoom session, if needed.
- Prepare the timer

Post-interview checklist

- Send Thank You note

Interview Guide

Unpause the recording at start time

Start the timer

Small talk/icebreaker

Preamble (3 mins, 3 mins total)

First, thank you so much for your time.

I am [name, role] volunteering with Creative Crisis Leadership (CCL).

CCL is a nonprofit that empowers grassroots crisis response by changing how people think about crisis response, because people who help themselves in a crisis recover faster and come out better. The goal of this research is to understand how CCL can help emerging efforts to successfully cope with the impacts of COVID-19 and other crises.

We have asked you to join us on this conference call due to your work with ____ . We would like to learn more about the needs of people who are stepping up and organizing responses in their communities. We are especially interested in understanding what individuals and groups who “come out of the woodwork” in crisis situations to take action need to succeed. Your experiences and insights will be very valuable to us in understanding how we can find and support these people.

This interview should take about an hour. Do you have a hard stop on or before [scheduled end time]?

Your comments are very important, so we’ll be taking notes as well as recording the session. We are already recording: Do we have your permission to continue recording?

Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Introductions/About them (7 mins, 10 mins total)

- First, I'd like to ask a few questions about you:
 - What is your background? Your "normal" career?
 - Where are you located?

NOTES

About their grassroots effort (10 mins, 20 mins total)

- So, let's dig into your own grassroots effort.
 - Please describe the goals of your effort?
 - Please describe what you and your group are doing to attain those goals?
 - What's your own role in this effort?
 - Is this work being performed within a prior-existing organization? If so, which?
 - What other prior-existing organizations are important to your getting this work done?

NOTES

History of their grassroots effort (10 mins, 30 mins total)

- I'd like to get an understanding of how this effort began.
 - What motivated you to act?
 - What sparked the inspiration to take the actions you are taking?
 - What prior-existing organizations helped you get started?

- Are those the same organizations that you are working with now?
- Let's discuss what challenges you faced when you first began this effort.
 - What were your greatest challenges to success?
 - How did you address those challenges?
 - How have those challenges changed your effort?
- I'd like to now understand how the effort has evolved over time.
 - What has changed since you began?
 - What motivated these changes?
 - If, when you began this effort, you knew then what you know now, what would you have done differently?
- Let's look at what worked and didn't work for your effort.
 - What do you think worked well?
 - What do you think did not work well?
 - How do you feel about the effort, now? Is that different from how you felt then?
 - How have your feelings about this effort changed over time?
 - What would you do differently if you were to do it again?

NOTES

Support for their grassroots effort (15 mins, 45 mins total)

- We'd like to understand what external support has, or could have, aided you in your effort.
 - What outside help, if any, did you get to start and continue your effort?
 - What outside help, if any, do you wish you had to help you start and continue your effort?

- What outside help, if any, do you wish you had **before** the crisis even began?

NOTES

Supporting other grassroots efforts (10 mins, 55 mins total)

- What advice would you give to someone who sees something they think needs to be done in a crisis, but doesn't know how to get something started?
- What would help such potential efforts go from a good idea to an active response to a crisis?
- What advice would you give to someone who is already actively trying to start a grassroots effort in response to a crisis situation?
- What support could be provided to such emerging efforts to help them be successful?
- How might such support be provided (downloadable checklists, phone calls, text messages, etc.)?

NOTES

Wrapup (5 mins, 60 mins total)

- Is there anything you'd like to bring up, anything that we haven't talked about
- Do you have suggestions for others who might be able to provide us with interesting insights? Can you make introductions?
- An outcome of our research may be a service model to support grassroots organizations. Would you be willing to help to evaluate materials for a service as we develop them?

- [Profuse thanks]

NOTES

Appendix B: Session protocol for community experts

PARTICIPANT:

SESSION DATE AND TIME:

INTERVIEWERS:

NOTE TAKER:

Pre-interview checklist

Each day before the sessions start, the researcher will:

- Sign into Zoom and test the room
- Prepare a copy of the notetaking protocol for each participant for that day.
- Confirm the network connection.

About 10 minutes before each session, the researcher will:

- Exit all nonessential applications on the computer.
- Start the Zoom recording, and then pause it.
- Review the participant's background information.

About 5 minutes before each session, the researcher will:

- Call into the conference line
- Help the participant join the Zoom session, if needed.
- Prepare the timer

Post-interview checklist

- Send Thank You note

Interview Guide

Unpause the recording at start time

Start the timer

Small talk/icebreaker

Preamble (3 mins, 3 mins total)

First, thank you so much for your time.

I am [name, role] volunteering with Creative Crisis Leadership (CCL).

CCL is a nonprofit that empowers grassroots crisis response by changing how people think about crisis leadership, because people who help themselves in a crisis recover faster and come out better. The goal of this research is to understand how CCL can help emerging efforts to cope with the impacts of COVID-19 be successful.

We have asked you to join us on this conference call due to your expertise in ____ . We would like to learn more about the needs of people who are stepping up and organizing responses in their communities. We are especially interested in understanding Spontaneous Leaders—people who “come out of the woodwork,” and become leaders in crisis situations—and newly formed groups, where there was no prior leadership structure. Your experiences and insights will be very valuable to us in understanding how we can find and support these people.

Because our goal is to better understand how to support emerging leadership, we are more interested in discussing *how* grassroots efforts get organized and *how* leadership emerges than in the specifics of *what* they are doing.

Do you have any questions about this topic—grassroots organizing, Spontaneous Leaders, and improvised leadership? Do you have any questions about anything else before we begin?

This interview should take about an hour. Do you have a hard stop on or before [scheduled end time]?

Your comments are very important, so we'll be taking notes as well as recording the session. We are already recording: Do we have your permission to continue recording?

Introductions/About them (17 mins, 20 mins total)

- First, I'd like to ask a few questions about you:
 - What's your organization? What do they do?
 - What's your role?
 - What experience do you have with grassroots organizing?
 - Where are you located?
 - What's your COVID-19 situation?
 - What's your background?

NOTES

- What grassroots efforts, if any, have you yourself participated in?
 - Please describe one of these grassroots efforts.
 - Please tell us about your involvement and role with this effort.
 - How did it get started?
 - How did it end/is it going?
 - What obstacles did you encounter?
 - What do you think worked well?
 - What do you think did not work well?
 - How do you feel about the effort, now? Is that different from how you felt then?

- How have your feelings about this effort changed over time?
- What would you do differently if you were to do it again?
- What kinds of support do you think might have helped the group?

NOTES

Experiences/insights on grassroots organizing (15 mins, 35 mins total)

- What grassroots efforts do you know about that you have not been a part of?
 - Please describe one of these grassroots efforts.
 - Please tell us about your relationship with those involved in this effort.
 - What obstacles did you see them encounter?
 - Did you do anything to help them overcome these obstacles? ?
 - What do you feel could help them overcome these obstacles?
 - What do you think this grassroots effort has done that has worked well?
 - What kinds of support do you think this grassroots effort could use that would help them succeed with their goals?

NOTES

- Do you think those [obstacles, successes, support needs] are common across grassroots efforts?
 - Differences, similarities...

NOTES

- Are you seeing grassroots efforts emerging in response to COVID-19?
 - Do you think COVID-19 efforts differ from grassroots responses to other crises.?
 - What COVID-19 efforts that you know about would you recommend we interview?
 - Can you make introductions?

NOTES

Supporting grassroots efforts (15 mins, 50 mins total)

- What advice would you give to someone who sees something they think needs to be done in a crisis, but doesn't know how to get something started?
- What would help such potential leaders go from a good idea to an active response to a crisis?
- What advice would you give to someone who is actively trying to start a grassroots effort in response to a crisis situation?
- What support could be provided to such emerging leaders to help them be successful?

NOTES

Advice for CCL/Lead generation (5 mins, 55 mins total)

- How might Creative Crisis Leadership have found out about the COVID-19 efforts you're seeing, besides asking you directly?
 - Are there any sources of information that might have led us to them?
 - Are there any people we might talk to who are well connected with grassroots efforts?

- Do you have any other suggestions for how we might find emerging efforts who could use support?

NOTES

Wrapup (5 mins, 60 mins total)

- Is there anything you'd like to bring up, anything that we haven't talked about
- Do you have suggestions for others who might be able to provide us with interesting insights? Can you make introductions?
- An outcome of our research may be a service model where we offer leadership resources to grassroots organizations. Would you be willing to help to evaluate materials for a service as we develop them?
- [Profuse thanks]

NOTES

Appendix C: Participant recruiting documents

Invitation text

We want to hear your grassroots organizing story!

[Screeener landing page](#)

Are you part of a new grassroots effort to help your community cope with the social and financial impacts of COVID-19? If so, the Creative Crisis Leadership/Tableau User Research team wants to talk to you! We are trying to learn how [Creative Crisis Leadership](#) can help good ideas grow into great grassroots efforts.

Who are we?

[Creative Crisis Leadership](#) (CCL): We are non-profit organization whose mission is to train people to improvise leadership and grassroots response in crisis. Normally, we focus on preparing people in advance. But we know that many people are doing what needs to be done, **right now**, to help their communities recover faster and better from the COVID-19 pandemic. We want to help them to succeed!

[Tableau](#) User Research: Normally, we are a team of researchers who work with the Tableau Dev Team to build the tools you use to work with data. But these aren't normal times, so we're lending our research skills to help CCL conduct this incredibly important research.

We would like to hear from ordinary people with different backgrounds and experience who are getting a new group together in response to COVID-19. It could be a group of neighbors coordinating safe places for kids, or town residents organizing testing for all. You might just be getting started, or you might feel that you've already failed:

Did you try something and it didn't work as you expected? We'd love to hear about it!

Did you start something and now you're overwhelmed? We're so proud of you and we want to hear more (and perhaps see if we can help)!

Are you just starting and can't tell if this is going to work? Keep going and let us know if we can get a bit of your time!

If you think you can help us, please sign up for our study. If you know someone else who can, please forward the link to them.

Screening questionnaire

HELP US SUPPORT EMERGING GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP!

Creative Crisis Leadership is a non-profit organization whose mission is to empower Spontaneous Leaders in crisis. We are seeking to understand the challenges in leading grassroots community efforts in times of crisis. Our goal is to build resources to help emerging leaders working outside established organizations during the COVID-19 crisis.

If you have insights on the needs of grassroots organizers, or are involved in a community effort to help address the social or financial impacts of COVID-19, we want to hear from you! If you are willing to participate in a 60-minute phone interview with a member of our team, please fill out this short form. Your information will not be shared outside the research team.

Thank you for your time, and for your efforts to help your community. We look forward to hearing about them!

-The Creative Crisis Leadership Team (supported by Tableau User Research)

www.CreativeCrisisLeadership.org

* Required fields

ABOUT YOU

1. What is your name? *
First and Last Name:
[Text Field]
2. What is your email address? *
[Text Field]

3. What is your phone number?
[Text Field]
4. What is your preferred contact method? *
Mark only one.
- Email
 - Phone call
 - Text message
 - No preference
5. Where are you currently located? *
If you are in the U.S., please include city and state. If you are outside the U.S., please include your city and country.
[Text Field]
6. Which languages are you comfortable using when communicating with our team? *
- English
 - Spanish
 - Other: [Text Field]

ABOUT YOUR WORK

7. What is the work you are doing with communities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic? *
[Text Field]
8. Is this a COVID-19 grassroots effort or part of the work of an existing organization?
Mark only one.
- Grassroots effort [*skip to question 9*]
 - Work of an existing organization [*skip to question 12*]
9. What is your role in this grassroots effort? *
[Text Field]
10. How many people are involved at this time?

- Just me
- Less than 10 people
- 10-50 people
- More than 50 people

11. Please share the names of any organizations that this grassroots effort is affiliated with.

If the effort is not affiliated with any organizations, please enter "N/A."

[Text Field]

ORGANIZATION DETAILS

12. Which organization is your Covid-19 work affiliated with? *

[Text Field]

13. What is your role in this organization? *

[Text Field]

THANK YOU!

14. Please share any additional information you'd like us to have.

[Text Field]

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this form!

By clicking submit below, you are giving Creative Crisis Leadership the permission to have a member of their research team contact you.

Consent form for audio and video recording

With your permission, we would like to use the information we learn from you—through verbal comments, written communications, or recordings—to further our research and development efforts.

In the immediate future, we will be using the data we collect to provide the most needed services to grassroots organizers responding to COVID-19 and other active crises. To gain a deeper understanding of how we can empower improvised crisis leadership, this data will also be used for academic research.

Creative Crisis Leadership would love to include you in sharing our research findings with a wider audience. Please let us know if we have your permission to share quotes

from you with our community. Personally or professionally sensitive information will be eliminated or anonymized.

I hereby allow Creative Crisis Leadership to:

- Record this interview for note-taking purposes

and use the following:

- Quotes (verbal or written) for:
- Research purposes
- Reporting and fundraising purposes

Audio or video clips for:

- Research purposes
- Reporting and fundraising purposes

I grant Creative Crisis Leadership full rights to words and images, and understand that these may be copied and used by Creative Crisis Leadership without further permission.

Thank you for supporting grassroots leaders!

- I have read and agree to the terms above