Hi Carol and Jay,

In case it is of interest, I wanted to share some information on behalf of my colleagues at WhatsApp on how they are supporting governments around the word in response to COVID-19. In short, they've started to make available their enterprise product, the WhatsApp Business API, to allow governments to communicate with concerned citizens about coronavirus and potentially other public health emergencies over WhatsApp. This is live today in Singapore, and they are in discussions with health authorities in India, Brazil, Italy and other large WhatsApp countries.

Similar to a Messenger bot, the WhatsApp Business API would allow you to create an official presence on WhatsApp and to deploy a custom bot to automatically respond, at scale, to frequently asked questions regarding COVID-19 and/or other health issues. While WhatsApp is not as prominent in the US as it is in other countries affected by this crisis, it is very popular among the Latino community and other immigrant groups in the US and may be useful as an additional communication channel for the CDC.

I've attached a one-pager on the WhatsApp Business API and how it might be used by government agencies, as well as a short overview presentation on the product.

If there is interest in exploring this further, I'd be happy to arrange a call with the right folks at WhatsApp.

Sincerely,

Payton

WhatsApp Business API for Coronavirus Response

Due to the intensifying global health crisis surrounding Coronavirus, we wanted to tell you more about our enterprise product, the WhatsApp Business API, to understand if it might be a useful tool to communicate with concerned citizens about the Coronavirus and potentially other public health emergencies, and to take you through the process to most expeditiously get up and running.

The WhatsApp Business API is a new product that we started making available in August 2018. It is intended for large enterprise partners who wish to provide customer service or send one-way transactional messages, like a boarding pass or shipping notification. While the API is built with the business user in mind, WhatsApp is currently in the exploratory phase around government use of the API and seeks to understand desired use cases and product fit.

With the WhatsApp Business API, your government agency would have an official presence on WhatsApp and could manage constituent communication at scale with those who have opted in and requested to hear from you over WhatsApp. This would be complementary to your current communication channels and should not serve as a replacement for an emergency response channel.

Based on our early learnings, **the Business API has been most useful for two-way communication to respond to citizen requests for information, following these steps:**

- o Publish WhatsApp hotline number on official website along with instructions on the purpose of the WhatsApp hotline, what information you can provide in response, and the best way to initiate a conversation.
- o Users must send you the first message. For instance, a user might send "update" to your WhatsApp hotline, to which you could respond automatically with a menu of options, e.g., latest Coronavirus updates, safety tips, useful resources, etc.
- o Your government agency will have 24 hours to respond to each incoming request for free, and users can reach out anytime, resetting the free 24-hour messaging window.
- o WhatsApp and our network of business solution providers (BSPs) would support you in creating an effective automated/bot experience to suit your needs.

While the WhatsApp Business API is best-suited for two-way communication, there are circumstances in which you may want to send proactive notifications to users who've requested to hear from you. Unfortunately, this feature for informational notifications is not currently available for government customers at this time. In general, we find that WhatsApp users prefer receiving information on demand and tend to ignore repeated messages. That said, we would be happy to take back specific proposals to our team to see how we might support this capability in a targeted way in the future as we continue to evolve the product.

We are also happy to guide you to other product offerings within the FB Family of Apps to best suit your needs in responding to this crisis in the event WhatsApp is not the best solution.