



# How to Raise Revenue in response to COVID-19

Health advisories from federal, state and local officials in response to the outbreak of the coronavirus disease [COVID-19] may require cancellation or postponement of special events and other fundraising activities for an undetermined amount of time. The resulting loss of revenue will impact nonprofit organizations.

Here are 10 ways to help your nonprofit maintain relationships with donors and mitigate the impact of any potential loss of revenue.

## **1. Keep donors informed**

Be proactive in personally communicating with donors, sponsors, vendors, and volunteers about current and upcoming events. Send emails, update social media posts, and share any changes to operations or events on your website. Let donors know what your organization is doing to protect the safety of patients, clients, members, employees, animals, and others served by your organization. Thank them for their financial support which is critical to the organization's ability to respond in a timely manner and continue providing services.

## **2. Ask permission**

If you postpone an event where donations have already been received, ask donors and ticket holders for permission to apply these funds to the rescheduled event. If the event is cancelled, ask them for permission to apply their gift directly to services. If donors request a refund, send it promptly and cheerfully. Let donors know you value them and hope they will support a future event.

## **3. Host an online auction**

Consider hosting an on-line auction especially if donated items have already been secured. Choose a vendor. There are several online companies that manage online auctions; do some research to find one that works best for your organization. Take photos of each item, post them online, and invite donors to bid. Pick up of purchased items can be scheduled in accordance with closures impacting access to your facilities.

## **4. Peer to peer fundraising**

Consider asking board members, volunteers, and donors to host an online crowd funding campaign. This enables them to share stories of people you serve and why they give with their networks and invite their friends and family member to make a gift.

## **5. Host a "non-event"**

Consider converting an in-person event to a virtual one. Sometimes referred to as a "non-event", this involves sending a faux invitation to past and prospective event supporters asking for a gift in lieu of

attending the event. Be clever in asking for gifts that may replicate what donors might have spent to attend, such as a babysitter, or would have contributed at the event. Keep the focus on the mission and who will be helped by their generosity.

#### **6. Ask for one-time gifts**

Consider reaching out individually to long-standing donors to ask for a one-time gift to ensure the continuation of services if revenue is lost or delayed due to cancelling or postponing a major fundraising event.

#### **7. Send Donor Love**

Consider using this time to engage board and staff members in thanking donors for their loyalty and wishing them well during the crisis. Calls, personalized letters, hand-written notes, and customized video messages sent via text or email are great ways to let donors know how important their support is to the people you serve, including in times of crisis. While acknowledging the seriousness of this outbreak, don't hesitate to be clever in showering your supporters with some heartfelt donor love.

#### **8. Reach out to lapsed donors**

In lieu of an in-person event, dedicate staff time to determine your lapsed donor rate and develop a plan for re-engaging people who stopped giving. This could include a special letter written to LYBUNT [Last Year But Unfortunately Not This] and SYBUNT [Some year But Unfortunately Not This] year donors. Update them on how their past gifts have been used to change lives and invite them to attend a future event, renew their membership, make a gift, or volunteer.

#### **9. Conduct Research**

Now may be a good time to research new grant opportunities or fundraising strategies board and staff have not had time to pursue. Examples include learning more about generational differences and how they impact giving; best practices for direct mail; and updating the case for support will help your organization raise more money in the future.

#### **10. Clean up the database**

Take time to clean-up donor records, double-check addresses, and remove inactive records to maintain an accurate database of past and present donors, volunteers, sponsors, and the like. Making these improvements now will save time, reduce costs, and improve results from the next invitation list, newsletter mailing, or direct mail request.

#### **10. A word about Capital Campaigns**

If your organization is involved in or about to launch a capital campaign, consider how the coronavirus may impact the campaign plan including the ability of donors to contribute and best time to ask. Consider utilizing an external campaign consultant to provide advice and guidance regarding these decisions including the importance of maintaining donor engagement and campaign momentum.

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