



Fundraising in Challenging Times

The Coronavirus and Philanthropy

Concerns about the impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) underscore the nonprofit sector's vital leadership role in the welfare of our communities. At CCS Fundraising, our primary concern lies with the health and safety of our people, our nonprofit partners, and those in our communities at greatest risk.

We understand that many nonprofit organizations are seeking guidance on how to proceed during this time of uncertainty. CCS has extensive experience over the past 70 years in times of crisis, economic stress, and natural disasters. There are several lessons we have garnered through these experiences.

These lessons focus on the importance of continuous communication and engagement with stakeholders, prudent adjustments to short-term fundraising activities, and a focused commitment to staying the course of an organization's overall fundraising plans. Strong leadership and resilience have helped charitable organizations persevere through challenging times. Nonprofit organizations have achieved success through flexibility, creativity, and resolve.

In light of the current and rapidly evolving circumstances, CCS offers the following general principles and specific guidelines around fundraising efforts:

- **Increase communication:** Keep your stakeholders fully informed and deeply engaged at this time. Donors and stakeholders are interested in how organizations are affected by the current situation, and what actions are being taken.
- **Avoid wholesale cancellation of fundraising plans:** Adhere to your overall fundraising plans and strategies, with reasonable adjustments to your day-to-day meetings, events, and activities, depending on your local circumstances.
- **Reaffirm your mission and impact:** Reaffirm your organization's mission and continuously remind donors of the impact of your work. If you have a special role to play in the current public health issue, explain it.
- **Develop a short-term action plan:** Develop a plan of action, including a communications plan over the next several weeks, featuring an outreach initiative of personal calls and emails to key donors and friends.
- **Leverage technology:** Find ways to more effectively incorporate video conferencing, podcasts, or virtual briefings that make meetings more dynamic and create more personal experiences regardless of distance. Consider how social media or other virtual platforms can serve as temporary alternatives to in-person convenings.
- **Motivate:** Redouble efforts to help motivate development staff, administrative leadership, and trustees by reminding them of the resilience of philanthropy in difficult times. Donors who feel engaged and connected will continue to support their beloved institutions, especially in times of crisis.



- **Share philanthropic information:** Share the latest philanthropic information to both motivate leadership and temper expectations.
- **Consider special briefings:** Consider hosting a series of teleconference briefings with stakeholders on issues pertinent to the current situation. Donors and constituents are interested in knowing how a nonprofit is responding to the current situation: whether classes, events, services, or performances are being altered or canceled; how employees are being cared-for; how operations are affected; if any new services or programs are being initiated in response to current circumstances.
- **Show empathy and concern for your stakeholders:** We are all impacted at this time. Giving is a two-way street and donors want to know that you value them and are concerned about their welfare. Offer any resources that might be helpful to your stakeholders at this time.

In challenging times, those nonprofit organizations that stay the course and engage extensively with their stakeholders emerge successfully. Challenging times offer an opportunity for nonprofits to demonstrate their relevance and cement their relationships with their donors and friends. Donors look to these organizations as vital resources. In the past, those donors who stopped supporting specific nonprofits during or after a crisis did so primarily because they no longer felt connected to them.

The last point is particularly important, as it may feel like now is a moment to pause or delay your activity. It is very important to note that in previous downturns, those who continued to push forward in their efforts ultimately succeeded, and those who took a step back lost ground.

Thank you for all that you do to strengthen our communities and improve our world. We hope these basic principles, gleaned through many years of experience and periods of uncertainty, are helpful as you carefully navigate your development and fundraising efforts in the coming months.