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The New Giving Landscape



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**To all the nonprofits around
the world,**

In the last two months, you have risen to an unprecedented challenge – with flexibility, resilience, and innovation. Most of all, courage.

Whether a hospital, health center, or social service organization, many of you are on the “frontlines” of this pandemic, heroically keeping our families and communities safe.

Thank you.

To those of you not on the “frontlines” – the theaters, the museums, the churches and synagogues – you’ve provided creativity, art, and faith in unconventional ways at a time when it is needed most.

Thank you.

And to the schools, colleges, and universities – your commitment to students, learning, and research is inspiring.

Thank you.

**YOU’VE MADE US PROUDER THAN EVER TO BE
FUNDRAISERS**



Graham-Pelton

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JAMES IOVINO/EMS FDNY HELP FUND

Giving From Donor-Advised Funds Surge as Pandemic Spreads

BY MICHAEL THEIS

The coronavirus pandemic has touched off an explosion of grant making from donor-advised funds, according to a spot check of the big national donor-advised fund-sponsors and community foundations of all sizes.

Fidelity Charitable, the biggest fund in the United States, reported \$1.7 billion in outgoing grants in the first quarter of 2020. That's a 20 percent increase in awards over the first quarter of 2019. Some \$89 million of those donations was earmarked for

coronavirus pandemic response efforts in March alone.

“We’ve seen a huge uptick in grant making for Covid since the beginning of March,” said Pamela Norley, president of Fidelity Charitable. “We’ve seen more money go out in a single month for this disaster than we saw in 2017 with seven disasters.”

Fidelity also surveyed donors who had given at least \$1,000 to a charity from March 18 to March 30. Some 25 percent plan to increase their giving, while 54 percent plan to maintain their giving levels.

On Tuesday, Fidelity also announced an effort to push its donor-advised-fund holders to channel an additional \$100 million for coronavirus relief efforts by May 5.

As part of the push, Fidelity has launched a coronavirus resource page highlighting local funds and plans to maintain a schedule of webinars and social-media outreach to get attention from donors.

Money is not simply flowing out of the funds. Donors are also contributing to their accounts, even though the slide in the stock market and the tumbling economy might have caused some supporters to pause their giving.

Deanna Spaulding, a spokeswoman at Fidelity Charitable, declined to provide figures for incoming gifts, but she added that the number of new fund accounts opened has also grown since the start of the year.

PROMOTING CHARITIES

Sponsors take different approaches to measuring giving so it is hard to make direct comparisons of how much is flowing out of donor-advised funds to organizations hurt by the pandemic.

Officials at Schwab Charitable, the second-largest commercial donor-advised-fund sponsor, began to track coronavirus giving on February 14 and said from then through March 31, outgoing grants increased 21 percent in value compared with the same period last year.

Schwab Charitable has also actively promoted coronavirus response efforts to its donors. It asked the Center for Disaster Philanthropy for a list of organizations responding to the pandemic globally and highlighted them on its website. Those organizations saw a nearly 450 percent increase in grant dollars from Schwab account holders.

Kim Laughton, president of Schwab Charitable, said the crisis — and the resulting flurry of grant activity from Schwab’s donor-advised funds — shows the value of donor-advised funds, which have been criticized for siphoning money away from cause-oriented charities.

“When you do have needs, people who have a donor-advised fund are really in a position to step up,” said Laughton.

‘BUSIEST MARCH’ IN HISTORY

Eileen Heisman, president of the National Philanthropic Trust, the third-largest donor-advised-fund sponsor in the country, said the number of grants made in March rose 39 percent, and the value increased 120 percent from the same time in 2019. “This has been NPT’s busiest March, as far as grants, in our history,” said Heisman.

“We’ve seen more money go out in a single month for this disaster than we saw in 2017 with seven disasters.”

Donors with accounts at Vanguard Charitable increased the amount they sent to charities by 28 percent in the first quarter of 2020, according to Jane Greenfield, president.

From March 11, when the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic, to March 31, Vanguard donors earmarked \$25 million in grants specifically for coronavirus response efforts. The average grant size has grown to \$14,000, double the average dona-

tion size in prepandemic times.

Vanguard is also working with Charity Navigator to highlight charities directly involved in the effort.

“Donor-advised-fund account holders are uniquely positioned to be a part of the solution here,” said Greenfield. “We sent out an email to our 21,000-plus donors just to remind them that they are uniquely situated and to encourage them to give.”

EMERGENCY FUNDS

Community foundations, also big players in the world of donor-advised funds, report similar sharp increases in grants from those accounts in response to the pandemic. Much of the giving is focused on local coronavirus rapid-response emergency funds that have been established.

Jason Baxendale, chief development officer at the Chicago Community Trust, said his organization has seen a surge in grants released by its donor-advised-fund holders. In the first week after the pandemic was declared in early March, Chicago Community Trust account holders gave 321 grants to charity, worth a total of about \$30 million. For comparison, Baxendale said, in the entire month of March 2019, its account holders granted just under \$18 million.

“At this point, more is going out than is coming in” to the donor-advised funds, Baxendale estimated. “Giving into the donor-advised funds over the past month or two is about the same or lower with all of the market volatility. But the grant making has increased substantially.”

Numbers provided by other community foundations showed similar levels of donor-advised-fund grant-making activity.

The St. Louis Community Foundation reported March 2020 giving of \$4.5 million

from its account holders, up from \$1.2 million last year. The Oregon Community Foundation said account holders increased their giving to charities by 97 percent quarter to quarter, providing \$2.5 million in March alone. The Greater Kansas City Community Foundation’s account holders reported March grants of \$21.5 million. Grants from the last two weeks of the month were up 142 percent from the same period last year.

Even smaller community foundations are seeing unprecedented grant-making activity from its donor-advised-fund accounts. The Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, in Massachusetts, saw grants since March 10 increase to \$1.1 million from \$561,240 in 2019 during the same time period this year. The Erie Community Foundation, in Pennsylvania, reported March grant-making activity from its account holders totaling \$109,600, up from \$45,670 the year before.

Other nonprofits that offer donor-advised funds are also seeing increases.

The Jewish Communal Fund, the seventh-largest donor-advised-fund sponsor in the United States, said its account holders were channeling more money out of their funds than they did at this time last year. However, the group was unable to break that down in detail.

Tamar Snyder, senior director of marketing and communications, said account holders had contributed nearly \$6 million to coronavirus relief efforts by the end of March.

Said Snyder in an email: “What we’re seeing is that fund holders are shifting their grant-making habits and prioritizing their grant-making now to help support the organizations on the front lines of addressing the physical, emotional, and financial needs resulting from the coronavirus outbreak.”

7 Low-Cost Ways to Stay Connected With Donors

By ISA CATTO



There is no doubt that this global pandemic has ushered in an era of turmoil that will affect every one of us. As a steward of a small family foundation, I have been inundated with emails from current and past grantees, as well as many other nonprofits with which we have no relationship.

All of us are worried and in shock. The best way to cut through the chaos is to communicate and to do it well. Here are a few tips from one donor's perspective on how to talk to your donors and strengthen relationships during this crisis.

Check in with donors. If you haven't already done so, craft a newsletter addressing the Covid crisis and conveying the spirit that we are all in this together. Don't ask for money, initially, just check in. For example, here's a note that my husband, chair of the board for a local environmental group, sent to supporters.

One of the best newsletters I received reassured supporters and well-wishers that the organization was shifting to an off-site workspace. Another shared a story about staffers working from home and struggling to remember to dress for Zoom meetings. It's always a good idea to tuck in some inspiration. People are online like never before, and they're reading. This is a time for both organizations and donors to be gracious, to say "I see you," and not to panic.

Next, share stories about how the crisis is affecting those you serve. Don't avoid sharing hard news. The best newsletter I received featured a case study of a single mother whose housekeeping job had vanished. It outlined how the organization could support her and other unemployed undocumented immigrants. Another described the anxiety of an undocumented worker entering a packed bank to withdraw cash. Stories work.

This is a time for both organizations and donors to be gracious, to say "I see you," and not to panic.

Look for off-mission giving. As donors, many of us are moving away from our stated missions to address the fallout from the crisis in our communities. For example, we live in a high alpine valley of Colorado that has a very fragile infrastructure and a large immigrant work force that is economically vulnerable and

underserved in terms of health care. Addressing some of these needs is a priority for us right now even though it is not part of our mission. I know we are not alone. It's a good idea to look for donors who might be one-time givers to your organization because of the unprecedented circumstances. If you aren't sure of their interest, just ask.

And don't forget to harness the energy of your trustees by asking them to identify more potential donors. Finally, this crisis might be an opportunity for potential donors to support and learn more about an issue, community, or population.

Some foundations may be anxious about their bottom line. Foundations don't always have a lot of leeway: I know one family foundation that is low on cash and another that is laden with multiyear commitments. Unfortunately, many other foundation stewards are loath to grant beyond the required minimum 5 percent of their assets each year, even during a crisis. I have hope that most grant makers will shift away from that mind-set, but it's difficult when market fluctuations look like the flight pattern of a drunk honeybee.

So when engaging with potential new donors, avoid the big ask. Everyone is edgy about the markets, so it would be wise to ask for smaller incremental donations, like a steady drip from a faucet, especially with a new donor. The idea is to get money flowing right away. Be persuasive and calm, and think small and often.

The exception to this case is with your core existing donors. They already know your good work and should be inclined to give more.

Ask for help, but don't sound panicked.

When you communicate, pay close attention to tone. Run the newsletter or a conversation script by someone outside your organization or by a board member to be sure there is no hint of shaming or doomsday language.

Return emails, answer phones, and don't abandon protocols. We recently added a

new organization to our grantee family. Right before the pandemic overtook us, the “newish” director and I had lunch. I didn’t receive a follow-up from that meeting or a thank-you for our donation. Naturally, I know the whole world is catawampus, yet I wondered if he was OK, so I emailed again. I never heard back. Most of us are overwhelmed with many added responsibilities on the home front, so I understand the need for elasticity when it comes to expectations. Still, a lack of response does not inspire confidence. Communication should be a priority.

Email, pick up the phone, or send a note. We received the loveliest thank-you from a nonprofit leader who asked me to call back simply because she wanted “as much human connection as possible these days” and to hear how we were doing as a family with two teenagers. Her graciousness made my day.

If a gift is in the works, ask donors to consider sending it by wire. Many of our checks and letters either haven’t made it or can’t be picked up from shuttered offices. So we have shifted to making phone calls and then wiring funds. Look to the future. Craft your communi-

cations to help donors envision how their dollars can help you — not only to weather this crisis but also to come out stronger

When engaging with potential new donors, avoid the big ask. Everyone is edgy about the markets, so it would be wise to ask for smaller incremental donations, like a steady drip from a faucet.

on the other side. Give your supporters hope, and inspire their imaginations.

We all must lead with kindness and stay patient. We cannot see the horizon yet, but we will.

Isa Catto Shaw is an artist and executive director of the Catto Shaw Foundation.

How 4 Nonprofits That Aren't on the Front Lines Are Raising Money During the Crisis

By **EMILY HAYNES, MARIA DI MENTO, and EDEN STIFFMAN**

As the Covid-19 pandemic spreads, nonprofits are navigating uncharted territory. Fundraisers at organizations that aren't responding to the pandemic directly are scrambling to communicate with supporters and raise money during the economic tsunami touched off by the health crisis.

Honest communication with supporters is central to their efforts as they seek to keep their organizations viable. Some are even taking on new roles as they seek to deepen ties with supporters.

We spoke with fundraising leaders at four nonprofits around the country about what they're doing to stay connected with supporters during the pandemic — and how donors are responding.

KNOXVILLE HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

A development director delivers groceries to supporters.

Knoxville Habitat for Humanity is not on the front lines of dealing with the coronavirus, but its revenue streams went dry as the virus spread. By mid-March, the affordable-housing charity had halted home construction, closed its used home-goods store, and asked main office employees to work from home.

"On March 18 everything stopped, and we didn't get any donations for a week," said Angie Sledge, the Knoxville affiliate's chief development officer.

What's more, the nonprofit had to postpone its spring fundraising events, and corporate sponsors quickly started calling to withdraw their support for upcoming builds. The group lost \$225,000 in sponsorships in one week. "We're a small organization," said Sledge. "That's huge." With help from employees from the charity's shuttered stores, Sledge and her six-person team responded to the deficit by calling past volunteers and donors, including those who had given as little as \$5. Board members and the chief executive pitched in to make video calls to major donors.

Callers didn't request a donation, rather they asked supporters how they were holding up and offered to deliver groceries or medicine to those whose health was compromised. To date, they have called more than 2,000 donors and volunteers.

"People were saying, 'You're the first person to check on me,'" Sledge recalled. If a donor or volunteer mentioned an upcoming doctor's appointment, the caller made a note of it in the nonprofit's content management system and followed up with the supporter after that date. Sledge said she has delivered groceries to three supporters and dropped off medicine for another.

Knoxville Habitat also altered its planned April direct-mail campaign. Fundraisers revised the letter to highlight the new challenges its clients face because of the public-health crisis. In a change from its typical strategy, the group teased the letter with social-media posts and an email and sent text messages to

volunteers asking for a donation.

“Pre-empting our direct-mail drop certainly caused a boost” in giving, Sledge said. Despite the high volume of calls her staff is making, most donations are coming in on-line or via direct mail.

As the letters went out, Knoxville Habitat staff continued calling supporters. More of them began to ask how the nonprofit was weathering the storm. “That led to larger conversations,” which included how supporters could donate, Sledge said.

Callers explained how the pandemic was affecting the group’s work and jeopardizing families who expected to move into new homes in the coming months.

Supporters responded: Individuals gave 24 percent more gifts in March than they did during that same month last year. Nineteen of those donations were explicitly made to address Covid-related needs. Despite the halt in giving at the start of March, Knoxville Habitat raised 9 percent more that month than it did in March of last year.

One in five gifts over the last month was a first-time donation from a former volunteer — including a \$1,000-gift from a first-time donor who had only volunteered with the

charity once.

“The value of those conversations has been priceless,” Sledge said. “When else can you say that in four weeks you’ve reached 1,800 people?”

SHAKESPEARE THEATRE COMPANY

The group works hard to keep donors informed, especially those who care most about its work.

Regular and honest communications with donors and creative new online offerings have been key to the Shakespeare Theatre Company’s fundraising success during the crisis. The Washington performing-arts group has also reassigned some staff members to focus on tasks that will strengthen its fundraising efforts far into the future.

Since the organization launched the Phoenix Fund, an emergency drive to raise \$1 million, it has collected more than \$735,000. About 15 percent of that came from people who donated what they had paid for tickets to now canceled performances or tuition for shuttered classes, and the rest came from outright cash gifts. The nonprofit raised more than \$500,000 in the first two weeks of the fundraising effort,



SHAKESPEARE THEATRE COMPANY

Simon Godwin, artistic director, Shakespeare Theatre Company

and a board member is matching gifts from others up to \$1 million.

The group's artistic director Simon Godwin named the fund after the mythical bird that is a symbol of renewal in Greek mythology as "a testament to the reality of how serious this is but also to be aspirational and hopeful." that the nonprofit will eventually revive live performances and other programs, said Laura Willumsen, the theater's senior director of development.

One way the nonprofit has been communicating with donors is Godwin's weekly home videos. The director updates supporters on how much the group has raised and talks about the organization's new online programming. "Shakespeare Everywhere," for example, offers streaming performances and classes as well as a weekly live discussion where Godwin and other Shakespeare experts examine the Bard's works.

"We hear a lot from people about how it's very uplifting to hear from Simon," said Willumsen. "He's funny, he's down to earth, he's real, and he's catching you up on this thing that you care about, and therefore you kind of care about it more."

While Godwin's weekly videos reach donors and the broader public, Willumsen's development team and Godwin's artistic staff are staying in close touch with major donors through one-on-one phone calls and written communications to provide updates, thank them for past support, and simply check in.

"We have people on our staff from the artistic department calling donors and board members or writing to them just to say, 'How are you doing?' " said Willumsen. "That's been such a wonderful enhancement of our relationship with people that we've never had time — or taken time — to do before."

Willumsen's and Godwin's teams also provide straightforward updates describing exactly where the theater's finances and fundraising stand. The calls have reaped benefits. One major donor who in August pledged \$1 million over five years, decided to give the gift all at once when the theater had to cancel performances in March. And after hearing what it was doing to keep things going, the donor — who wants to remain anonymous — decided to give an extra \$100,000.

"The last thing we felt comfortable doing was asking for another [gift], so the communication we had with them was, here's where we are, here's what's happening, here's what we're doing," said Willumsen. "We didn't ask for it at all. We simply caught them up as a close invested friend."

The group views the involuntary downtime as a chance to build deeper personalized relationships with donors, which can be hard to develop when leaders have to focus their time on event and performance logistics.

Willumsen said nonprofits should view donors in concentric circles and first approach board members and major donors, then annual-fund donors and subscribers, and then single-ticket buyers, foundations, and corporate donors.

"The pitch is we want to be there when this passes, and if people care about you, they want that, too, so it's very much about the people who already care," Willumsen said. "We're not asking everyone out there who's never come to a play or who happen to live in D.C."

"We have people on our staff from the artistic department calling donors and board members or writing to them just to say, 'How are you doing?' "

If there is an operational silver lining in the shutdown, it's that the organization has redirected some staff to other projects. For example, the theater's events manager has been temporarily reassigned to lead an online project-management system, a digital nerve center to organize new projects and teams and keep them working and communicating with each other.

One project has reassigned staff to comb through the organization's database to correct old or inaccurate donor information; another new project is managing

emergency funding grants.

“In my development department, we’ve really become like a military unit. It is highly organized, and we’re looking under every rock and making sure that our systems are really at top form,” said Willumsen. “We’re going to invest as much as we can in doing the things that will make us better when we come out of this.”

GRAND RAPIDS ART MUSEUM

Being thoughtful about an institution's needs in relation to the needs of other community nonprofits.

The museum in western Michigan was on strong financial footing before closing its doors to the public on March 13. Fundraisers have not rushed to make any broad appeals for support, but donors have stepped up nonetheless.

The first thing director of advancement Elly Barnette-Dawson did when she got home that evening was contact sponsors for the museum’s gala, which was scheduled for May 2.

“To a person so far, all of our gala supporters have elected to redirect their funds to general operating support,” she said. One of the museum’s largest donors contacted the museum director the day it closed to offer her support. Since then, other donors have offered to pay pledges early to help with cash flow. Several local foundations to which the museum had submitted proposals said they would fast-track everything.

Making sure that key supporters know what the museum is doing has been critical. A virtual board meeting the Tuesday after the museum closed let fundraising leaders inform generous museum supporters of what was going on. The board continues to have informal Zoom gatherings to get updates. At the same time, the fundraising team has been calling and emailing other donors to check in. “So far, the response has been incredibly supportive,” Barnette-Dawson says. “People are thanking us a lot.”

But the museum did not rush to make outright requests for support or send a broad appeal to its donors. Instead, fundraisers sent an email that included an impact report. “We wanted our donors to really see

the impact their support has on the museum,” she says. “We want to take the opportunity to thank them and show them how vital their support is.”

“We project numbers, and we can’t do that right now. We’re recalibrating to think about it a week at a time versus six months at a time.”

Much of the communication initially focused on informing the public about how they could continue to engage with the museum. Before the building closed, staff recorded a few virtual tours with the museum’s curator and a video message with the executive director, which was sent out with the member newsletter. The tour is featured on the institution’s “museum from home page,” which also includes interviews with artists, lesson plans for parents, and even yoga classes.

The museum hosted a virtual conversation with the chief curator this week. “We want to give an opportunity for conversation and for them to learn something about a piece of art or an exhibition,” Barnette-Dawson said. The virtual event was also an opportunity to support local small businesses. Staff worked with one of the museum’s corporate partners to offer a selection of wines attendees could purchase and pick up curbside to enjoy during the event.

The pandemic is forcing Barnette-Dawson and the fundraising team to re-evaluate how they raise money and consider how they might adapt in the future. One of the biggest challenges is the inability to plan ahead. That’s what fundraisers do, Barnette-Dawson said. “We project numbers, and we can’t do that right now. We’re recalibrating to think about it a week at a time versus six months at a time.”

At the same time, she says, the museum is trying to be thoughtful about both its needs



RONALD REAGAN PRESIDENTIAL FOUNDATION & INSTITUTE

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

and the many other community needs created by the public-health crisis.

“We recognize that there are limited resources,” she says. “We want to be really careful about what we need, when we need it, and how we communicate that and not just rush out there into the marketplace.”

The next step will be an annual-fund mailing sent to all donors and members. In addition to the appeal for general support, it will include a card printed with a blank gallery wall and a sheet of stickers with small reproductions of works from the museum. The goal was to do something special to both set the institution apart and give people a little of break with something fun to do at home.

The museum has extended current memberships by two months at this point, and Barnette-Dawson is not concerned that donors will hold back when the time comes. “We believe our donors are going to be there for us.”

The museum is in the quiet phase of a \$20 million campaign. It has already raised nearly half of its goal, and the planning work continues, she said. “The needs of the institution haven’t changed dramatically from what they were on March 12.”

RONALD REAGAN PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

The group’s top fundraiser stresses the importance of employee well-being.

The Simi Valley, Calif., organization was direct when it announced to donors it was closing to the public because of Covid-19. The message reminded donors that the organization does not receive government funding and explained that the museum and library would lose about \$150,000 a week. The organization asked donors to give if they could — and included a link to its emergency fund — but ended the communication by urging supporters to follow public-health experts’ guidelines and said the institution would reopen when the crisis has passed.

The gentle but straightforward approach was meant to update donors and remind them of the nonprofit’s financial needs without a lot of histrionics or desperate-sounding appeals for donations, said Michelle Powers Keegan, the group’s chief development officer.

The organization also called major and midlevel donors in what Keegan described

as a “massive thankathon” to update donors on the closure, thank them for past support, and make sure they and their families were well. Keegan said staff made a point not to ask for money on the calls.

With about 30,000 donors in total, the calls have required a lot of employee help. Since the museum and library was closed Keegan was able to corral employees in other areas of the nonprofit to help make the calls.

“We needed to repurpose about 15 or 20 full-time staff from different departments,” Keegan said.

She and her team have also made soft appeals for gifts and for membership renewals through direct-mail, and those efforts have been going well, she said.

“We have seen an uptick in total donations in comparison to this time last year,” she said. “We haven’t been asking for a lot of major gifts, but we are in the process of teeing up some major-donor Zoom calls where we may be asking them to help support us.”

Since the shutdown, Keegan’s team has raised roughly \$1.3 million, with about \$300,000 coming from direct mail, online giving, and membership renewals. The rest came primarily from corporate and major donors, many of whom had been in discussions about gifts well before the shutdown.

The organization has started to hold online events for donors. The first was a video call where more than 30 of the group’s major donors listened to former U.S. Sen. Jim Talent speak about the pandemic and had a chance to ask him questions. The organization also moved its Great Communicator debate series — an annual competition for high-school students — online; it’s inviting donors to view the final debates next month.

Keegan stressed that while fundraising during the crisis is a must, chief development officers also need to keep their staff members’ health and well-being top of mind.

She encourages her team to take time off to deal with family issues or to take care of themselves if they need to and to take some time for webinars or other online professional development courses to take their mind off of day-to-day stressors. She is also staying in touch with them.

“I hold the Zoom calls with my team every other day just to see their faces and check in with them and talk to them about what they’re doing,” Keegan said. “It’s important that you’ve got that human touch in some way, even if you can’t give people a hug or shake hands.”

Crisis Underscores the Need to Diversify Revenue Sources

Nonprofits will miss the unrestricted dollars canceled events would have raised.

By EMILY HAYNES

Nonprofits felt the full weight of the coronavirus's impact at the height of spring event season, calling into question longstanding patterns of how and when charities do mass fundraising. Organizations had to cancel galas, walkathons, live auctions, and giving days that often take months, if not a year, to plan.

The losses have been substantial. First, many groups had to take money out of their general operating coffers to cover paying for venues and other expenses that went unused. So instead of raising money, they lost it.

But perhaps just as important, the revenue raised through events account for much of the unrestricted money many groups bring in, says Sam Cobbs, chief executive of the Tipping Point Foundation in San Francisco.

"With those events getting canceled, not only are they going to miss that revenue, but they're not going to have those unrestricted dollars to pay for things that are much needed," he says.

Now most groups that had to postpone events are trying to figure out when it is appropriate to start raising money again for efforts that have little to do with the coronavirus response.

No Sidewalk Solicitations

Many nonprofits have also stopped sending fundraisers to knock on doors and approach pedestrians on sidewalks. Such face-to-face fundraising is "an unfortunate victim" of the coronavirus pandemic, says Daniel Karp, senior vice president for integrated direct marketing at Covenant House, which serves homeless youths.

In a bid to attract more monthly and younger donors, the charity tested face-to-face fundraising in several cities last year and had planned to expand the approach to more. Covenant House hasn't yet decided whether to abandon the fundraising strategy altogether. But for now, it is hoping face-to-face fundraisers can make calls to new donors and keep them updated on the nonprofit's work.

Tweet Chats

Nonprofit leaders say the mess this spring underscored the need for multiple revenue streams — a step some charities were already considering to prepare for the next economic recession.

"Our supply chain is from donors and funders," says Marnie Webb, chief community impact officer at TechSoup, a nonprofit that provides technological support to other charities. "How are we making sure that we're diversifying as much as possible the way the money comes in?"

Webb says fundraisers might need to pause on certain appeals for now but should keep donors engaged throughout the year by adding more digital opportunities for them to interact with a charity.

Asking major donors to host a monthly tweet chat about an organization's work is a good first step, she says.

Digital events like that let donors talk publicly about their support for the organization, like they might otherwise only do at a gala or other in-person event. What's more, Webb says, donors are "continuing to get some of that interaction that's not just about donating."



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