

COVID-19

Event and Fundraising Resources
During Possible Impact



As the global COVID-19 situation continues to evolve rapidly, organisations are facing difficult decisions when it comes to the management of their in-person events and protecting the health of their supporters. Whether your organisation opts to reschedule or cancel your in-person event, the public's response to this pandemic may impact attendance and participation. Declines in registration could have a trickle down effect on the financial health of organisations, especially those dependent on event fundraising to support their mission.

Fortunately, we live in a time where technology can help bring people together in new and creative ways without the requirement of being face-to-face with one another. This guide will help you quickly set up a basic response as well as provide ideas to pivot your peer-to-peer event website and activities to a virtual event.

If you want to connect with other organisations utilising their Blackbaud solutions to navigate COVID-19 repercussions, please visit the [Blackbaud Customer Community](#).

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Tips and Best Practices for Maintaining Fundraising Momentum

Here are eight tips that can help your organisation make the greatest impact and offset missed fundraising opportunities should your events be cancelled or rescheduled as a result of a health concern or pandemic.

1. COMMUNICATE THAT FUNDRAISING EFFORTS MUST GO ON

Be unashamed of the fundraising side of your event. Ensure that your event participants understand the important role your fundraising event plays in your organisation's ability to accomplish its mission. Building a fundraising culture around your programme reinforces the vital role your organisation plays in the community.

If your organisation is cancelling an in-person event, consider including a paragraph on the important role your event plays in your overall fundraising strategy, and make calls to action or suggest ways your supporters can still contribute to your cause without leaving home.

2. OFFER A VIRTUAL FUNDRAISING OPTION TO YOUR PARTICIPANTS

Adding a virtual fundraising option to your event doesn't have to be super complicated, time consuming, or expensive.

This year we've helped charities such as the [British Red Cross](#) and [ABF The Soldiers' Charity](#) launch Virtual Events for their supporters through our Digital Services offering. Read their stories [here](#) and find out more about our [Digital Services](#).

3. ADD FITNESS TRACKING TO YOUR VIRTUAL EVENT EXPERIENCE

If you are hosting a virtual event that includes some kind of physical activity, consider incorporating fitness tracking apps like Strava or Map My Fitness,

enabling your event participants to track and communicate their progress towards a goal. Instead of asking your cyclists to gather together face-to-face at a physical location for a century ride, you can ask them to cycle in their own community or on an exercise bike at home at a time that works best for their schedule and use fitness tracking to monitor progress.

Fitness tracking allows your organisation to create engaging online experiences that help with community building. One organisation used fitness tracking to display a map of the world on their website with real-time updates tracking the cumulative progress of their entire cycling community to virtually ride around the globe!

Your supporters will soon be able to track their fitness and fundraise online at the same time! Our colleagues at JustGiving are close to the finish line with a Strava integration. Contact the success team for more information at success@justgiving.com.

4. IF YOUR PEOPLE CAN'T COME TO YOUR EVENT, BRING THE EVENT TO YOUR PEOPLE

Now we are in an unprecedented situation where social gatherings are not allowed and people have to stay in their homes, creating a virtual meet up for your event participants could be the ideal solution. This is achievable using social media or livestreaming platforms such as Twitch, Facebook Live, YouTube or Zoom. Use a consistent hashtag to make your posts easily accessible, and pose specific activities or questions to your participants to respond to using their favourite social channels. Try to find social influencers or celebrities within your supporter base to help spread the word.

If you use JustGiving, and your supporters are into video gaming, they have some great tips and tools in their Gaming for Good hub, including how to drop online fundraising into a gaming livestream. Learn more at gaming.justgiving.com.

And if you're new to online gaming, we recommend this jargon-busting guide to get you up to speed blog.justgiving.com/a-jargon-busting-guide-to-gaming-for-good/

5. HIJACK YOUR HOMEPAGE

Leverage your organisation's primary communication tool—your homepage—to highlight your fundraising efforts. Use clear calls to action for your supporters to fundraise, donate, and spread the word through their preferred social media channels.

6. GET IN THE NEWS!

Let your local news outlets enhance your communications by providing them a concise statement informing those in your area about the urgent need your organisation faces in order to continue serving your mission, or share information on how you plan to aid in the relief effort, encouraging others to follow suit.

7. CONSIDER THE RELEVANCY OF ALL POSTS

Even if you're in the middle of an ongoing social media campaign, consider how each post might distract or devalue your more-urgent calls to action. You can still post anything that provides value to your friends and followers, but be mindful of maintaining an economy of posts to ensure your urgent requests aren't watered down by over-posting.

8. SAY THANK YOU!

Be sure to thank anyone that makes a gift immediately (for in-kind or cash gifts). Now more than ever, it's important to recognise people and companies making donations or doing their part to protect your mission. You should also send a follow up communication after the initial acknowledgement, and educate new donors on your broader mission and offer them opportunities to grow their support by becoming a regular member or monthly donor (within the next few weeks).

Email Tips and Best Practices

It's important to portray the urgency of your need and the impact your supporters can have, despite the circumstances. Here are some tips for crafting effective messaging.

1. SUBJECT LINE

Think of this message as a short, urgent message—something that you want your constituents to really notice. If a constituent only reads the subject line, what would you want him or her to know? Use the subject line to convey the urgency, importance, or time-sensitive nature of this message.

Some examples:

- Take Action: COVID-19's Impact on {Event/ Organisation Name}
- COVID-19 Special Update – Our Response
- Take Action | Ways to Help COVID-19 Victims

2. CONTENT - HEADLINE

Use brief, compelling headlines that speak as directly to your constituents' interests as possible. Think of this as your call to action, your front-page story. Choose attention-grabbing headlines that highlight the outcome you're seeking, like "Saving Lives Cannot Wait—Help Fight the Spread of COVID-19" or "Coronavirus is spreading, but millions do not have access to soap and water. Help us make a difference". If there is a deadline, make sure the headline includes the date the action needs to happen by, even if it's a relative date or fluid window like "next week" or "in the near future". Urgency and immediacy are very important in getting substantial, quality responses.

3. CONTENT – EMAIL BODY

This is your opportunity to provide your participants with a focused message about regretfully having to cancel the event while encouraging them to continue making a difference by turning up fundraising efforts. It's okay to be emotional here—make it count. It breaks your heart the event can't go on, but the fundraising must. Your content should be concise, poignant, and immediately relevant. Unlike your eNewsletter that might contain many different types of stories, this topic should be the sole focus of the message.

Additional Resources

Here is a list of resources from across the sector that may be useful.

- [UK Government's advice](#)
- [NHS](#)
- [JustGiving's COVID-19 hub](#)
- [Advice from the Fundraising Regulator](#)
- [Advice for fundraisers from UK Fundraising](#)
- [Information for fundraisers from the Institute of Fundraising](#)
- [JustGiving's Quick and easy campaign launch guide webinar](#)
- [Blackbaud's Guide to Virtual Event Success](#)
- [JustGiving's Gaming for Good glossary of terms](#)

About Blackbaud

Leading uniquely at the intersection point of technology and social good, Blackbaud connects and empowers organisations to increase their impact through cloud software, services, expertise, and data intelligence. We serve the entire social good community, which includes non-profits, foundations, companies, education institutions, healthcare organisations, and the individual change agents who support them.

