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Fundraising During COVID-19 Outbreak

Many have asked about continuing fundraising during the COVID-19 outbreak, and the answer is a resounding YES. You should find alternatives for events, and find every way you can to fundraise through digital means in the short-term, and adding direct mail in the longer term. Just be sensitive and explicitly acknowledge that donors may be struggling, but still press on with your message that the animals need support.

You will need your community's support in a crisis to help cover financial and supply needs. **Never assume that your community already knows you need help.** No matter how obvious it is to you, people who can help may have no idea that a crisis is affecting you, or how it is affecting you.

Use all channels you have available to broadcast quickly how people can help (social media, website, email, media).

- Keep your appeals as short, urgent, and direct as possible
- Remember to say you are grateful for all support
- Use compelling photos if possible
- Be repetitive and consistent across the channels you are using so there are multiple touches with your followers so they are more likely to take the action you are requesting (donate, foster, etc.)
- For Facebook donate tools - ensure your Facebook page is set up for donations, and that the selections in your Facebook page settings are all checked to accept them and allow Facebook fundraisers
- Reach out to local media with your stories (animal stories are always popular in local media), and be ready with a clear message about your needs

Tell people *why* you need help

What reality are you facing that you can't solve without support? Pull the public into your story. (Examples: "Many of our staff and volunteers are ill or are in home quarantine, and we must pay overtime to the rest to keep our animals cared for." "We are seeing many more pets surrendered and need funds to cover food, vaccines, and other medical needs.")

Tell people the best way(s) to help

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Due to COVID-19 Shelter in Place government mandates and to accomplish a 90% reduction in social interaction, while maintaining the practice that every pet who enters a shelter should receive urgent, individualized treatment and care, with the goal of a live outcome.

If you need funds most, say so (and why) “Funds are always best because they allow us to respond to needs as they change”:

- Provide clear instructions on how to donate – use prominent links (wherever these appear) to online donation forms, say where to send checks
- **Boldface**, underline, and use a **bright font color** for a link in an email to a donation form
- Donation links should be explicit not “Help the Pets,” but “**Donate**” or “**Please give now**”
- Provide a prominent **contact phone or email** in case supporters have questions or are having trouble donating

Remember that many donors strongly prefer to help with **supplies**

Even if you prefer cash, offer the means to give this way, and provide details about what supplies are most needed:

- Post a wishlist on your website, link to it in your social media, and in email appeals
- If the local media does a story on you, name the 3 most important supplies you need on camera, and say where your longer wish list is posted
- Create a list on Amazon with links to the exact types of supplies you need
- Have lists ready that you can easily print out or email – in times of crisis people often reach out to offer to do supply drives for you
- Remember to be clear about where and when people can drop off supplies
- Say what you *don't* need

Don't forget to use volunteers. Some of your staff may be at home in quarantine and can work remotely to help with writing content, finding good photos in digital storage, creating social media posts or monitoring comments, proofing copy, etc.

Also don't forget to thank any donors giving to you

- Volunteers or staff who are in quarantine can help with this too
- Have them text, call, or email a thank you
- Provide them with talking points in saying thanks
- Provide them with updates on what you are doing in response to COVID 19 in case donors ask

Resources on Fundraising During COVID 19

- <https://bloomerang.co/resources/covid19/>
- <https://www.commfoundations.com/blog/2020/3/11/community-foundations-nationwide-launch-efforts-to-help-communities-affected-by-the-coronavirus>