



Ten Tips for Museum Fundraising During Covid-19

6th April 2020

- 1. Contact your existing funders.** The people most likely to help you at this time are those already supporting your work. Many grant funders are changing the conditions of their grants to enable organisations to respond to the current situation. This includes turning restricted grants into unrestricted donations, relaxing reporting deadlines and advancing grant payments.
- 2. Be honest with your current funders about the challenges you are facing.** Funders can only respond if they know what the problem is. Many are actively asking organisations to tell them about the challenges they are facing. Funders are trying to adapt to this situation just like you are. Their trustees and managers will be discussing how best to help organisations at this time. Your input can help ensure they come up with an appropriate response. (NB. The Association of Independent Museums are also asking museums to let them know of any emergency financial situations they might find themselves in to help support their current advocacy work. You can inform them by emailing info@aim-museums.co.uk).
- 3. Consider your fundraising needs when making decisions on whether or not to furlough staff.** The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme provides support for covering salary costs for staff unable to work during the crisis. To be eligible, organisations must furlough. The minimum furlough period is three weeks and during this time they are not able to carry out any work for the organisation – even on a voluntary basis. While we are aware that furloughing staff might be the only option available to organisations we urge museums to take time to consider your needs – including your fundraising needs – both short term and into the future. In the short term it is likely that you will need someone to complete applications for emergency funding and to liaise with existing supporters. Longer-term there will be costs associated with reopening and delivering your workplan. The person applying for funds and communicating with your existing supporters doesn't necessarily need to be the same person as under "normal circumstances" but this workload needs to be considered when assessing the resources you need at this time.
- 4. Sign up to receive announcements from your local community foundation, your local MP, your local council and your local ACE and Heritage Fund officers.** A lot of decisions on how to respond are being taken quickly. As we have seen with the NET funding, national bodies are turning to local partners to help get funding and support to organisations as quickly as possible. Proactively connecting with the people likely to be distributing this in your area enables you to stay on top of calls for proposals. Make sure you are signed up to their newsletters and follow them on Twitter.

- 5. Sign up to receive announcements from the Museums Association, the Association of Independent Museums (AIM), SHARE Museums East, Arts Council England, the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and UK Fundraising.** There is a drive to get funding out as quickly as possible. This has resulted in rolling programmes, where getting your application in early can be an advantage. This means you need to be in the know when funding becomes available. Funding pots or support specifically targeted at museums are likely to be communicated through the sector-wide support organisations. Make sure you are signed up to their newsletters and following them on Twitter. (You can find information from AIM about coronavirus financial support here - <https://www.aim-museums.co.uk/coronavirus-support-finance/>). This can be extended to other sector press, such as Arts Professional, who have removed the paywall for coronavirus-related content. UK Fundraising is a free resource that is a good source of information for more general funding opportunities around the coronavirus crisis. While not everything will be relevant to museums, there are likely to be some funds to support charities across the spectrum. You can sign up here - <https://fundraising.co.uk/>.
- 6. Reach out to funders before submitting new applications.** Many of the traditional arts and culture funders are still “open for business”, making grants based on their existing criteria and, where possible, working to their pre-Covid-19 timetables. However, there are likely to be conversations going on in the background about how they should best respond to this situation which could see a rapid change to their activity. Before submitting any new applications – either as part of your work to respond to Covid-19 or for post-coronavirus projects – try and make contact to check that nothing has changed. You don’t want to spend time on an application if the trust is about to pivot their grant-making, or pause their programmes. This is also a good opportunity to build a relationship with potential funders.
- 7. Check in on existing individual supporters.** Some of the most important fundraising actions you can take today won’t feel like fundraising. Your supporters and volunteers are going to be just as scared and confused by all of this as you are. It’s likely they will also feel lonely, bored and isolated as the lockdown continues – if they don’t already. Reaching out to check they are ok and focusing on their needs rather than the museum’s needs can help to strengthen the relationship you have with them. Pick up the phone, send an email, arrange a video call. Talk to them human to human and let them know you are thinking of them. Something as simple as sending a picture of something in your collection you think they might like can brighten someone’s day and help build a bond. This is about building long-term relationships.
- 8. Give people the chance to convert refunds into donations.** If people have bought tickets to exhibitions, give them the chance to turn their refund into a donation. This won’t be appropriate for everybody – remember, some people will be worried about how the lockdown is going to impact their finances. However, there are others who will not see any change to their financial position. For those in a more stable position this can be an easy way for them to support your work at this time.

- 9. Recruit your website and social media channels to your fundraising team (if they are not already).** While your museum is closed your online channels now represent your best way of engaging with your audience and supporters. Many organisations are already looking at how they can increase the content available on their website, including blogs, behind-the-scenes videos, virtual museum and exhibition tours and interviews with curators. This is a good time to make sure people can also make donations through your website. There are a number of online donation platforms available (we've written a free resource with some tips of what to consider when choosing an online donation platform and a summary of some of the main options - <http://apollofundraising.com/blog/online-donation-platforms/>). Make it easy for people to give and then actively promote this as a way that visitors to your website can help at this time. (Don't assume they will know that you need support at this time, or that they will come to your site already thinking about donating!)
- 10. Consider launching an appeal.** In times of crisis it is natural for people to want to help. We have already seen people donating in large numbers to their favourite causes to help them respond to the current crisis. Your museum will have a passionate and loyal group of supporters already known to you. People will help if they know you need it. Let them know what has been put at risk as a result of the coronavirus outbreak, what you need people to do to help and what impact it will have. Then make sure you have made it as easy as possible for people to help.

What is stopping you from taking your fundraising to the next level?

Unsure about the steps you need to take? Worried that your team doesn't have the skills or knowledge they need to be successful? Nervous about putting your plan into action?

We all need a helping hand from time to time. Apollo Fundraising can provide the support you need to achieve your fundraising goals.

We can help you find your direction – we've helped arts organisations write their first fundraising strategy, planned large-scale capital appeals and reviewed the strategies of successful teams looking to take their fundraising to the next level.

We can help you improve your skills – we've trained arts fundraisers, volunteers, board members and senior managers. We've provided training on topics such as making the ask, making the most of digital technology and setting up individual giving schemes.

We can help you build your confidence – we've coached theatres on approaching major donors, mentored visual arts organisations on launching crowdfunding campaigns and supported museums to put their fundraising plans into action.

Need a helping hand? Contact us today to see how we can support you!



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