



COVID-19 Advice for Museums

Fundraising

Summary

Museums and heritage organisations, large and small, have quickly felt the impact of closure due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Many face significant financial challenges as they try to model what the future holds for both their teams and the collections they care for.

Whatever the organisation's business model, good fundraising practice can be a cornerstone to recovery. But can we fundraise when there are so many 'good causes' competing for attention and so many people face personal financial hardship?

Yes, we can — and we should. Recent donor and attitudinal research¹ shows that:

- 68% of people want charities to continue fundraising
- Members of tourist attractions are feeling particularly altruistic right now and that it is a good time for donation asks².

In times of crisis, people think more about the places that are special to them and their families, places that connect them and where they can share experiences and feel a sense of community. Increasingly, they are showing that they want those places still to be there when the situation improves.

But practically, how do we fundraise when our museums are shut?

These guidelines suggest practical ways to fundraise in consideration of the limitations of lockdown and closure, including:

1. Applying for grants
2. Encouraging people to donate online
3. And once we get through this... what then?

¹ You can find a round up of research into how giving is changing throughout the COVID-19 crisis at: <https://www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk/blog/how-is-giving-changing-during-the-coronavirus-crisis/>

² ALVA visitor sentiment research undertaken by Decision House for ALVA, 30th April 2020

1. Apply for grants

You can apply for grants from one of the many funding programmes set up to mitigate the impact of Coronavirus.

Museums Galleries Scotland has a page dedicated to funding that can help Scottish museums. You can find it [here](#). Grantfinder has a regularly updated Coronavirus hub, for grant-funding news related to Coronavirus. You can find it [here](#).

Fundraising agency Blue Frog has helpfully created some appeal templates, which are a good starting point for crafting your proposals. You can find it [here](#). If you can print and post, letters can also be used to ask your individual donors to donate online.

Many individual grant-makers are also providing support to existing grant-holders, or offering flexibility as to how grants that have been awarded can be used. If you are a in receipt of a grant, make sure you get in touch with your funder.

2. Encourage people to donate online

If you're new to online giving, The Digital Fundraising Book from Matt Haworth has been made freely available online to support non-for-profit organisations. You can find it [here](#). #MakeitSocial is another useful free resource stuffed full of tips on how to be successful on social media. You can find it [here](#).

But more briefly, here are some quick steps you can take to be ready:

CHECKLIST

ONLINE DONATIONS	
1	Can people donate to you online? If not, set up a page. If you aren't already set up with an online giving page, now is the time to create one and to embed donation messaging across all your communications and social media platforms. It's easy to set up an online giving page, though it may take a few days for your account to be registered. You can find a round up of the best free and cheap online fundraising platforms here .
2	Decide which channels to employ. You need to drive people to your online fundraising platform of choice via your channels eg your website, blog, e-bulletin newsletter or preferred social media platform(s)—for example, Facebook. Your most effective channels will be those that are targeted to the people who feel closest to you; an e-bulletin that goes to supporters will be more likely to raise money than a post on twitter, which may or may not be seen by the people who care about your work. Of the social media platforms, Facebook* is the most effective channel for driving people to your donation platform. <small>*Facebook have also just launched 'Facebook Donate' which some museums are currently trialling, however, there is no evidence of the success of this over other methods yet.</small>
3	Get your messaging right. To use your channels effectively you need to agree your core fundraising proposition and call to action. What do you exist to do? What crisis or opportunity are you facing? How can donors help? Your fundraising proposition needs to be: short, simple and emotional. For example:

	<p>Horniman Museum Website Generations of families from London and beyond have grown up with the Horniman as a constant delight, inspiration, and resource for life-long learning. We need your support to expand and continue the Horniman’s vital work. If you were one of the 941,632 people who enjoyed our galleries and Gardens last year please support our work. Your donation can help us continue welcoming visitors through our gates, along with looking after our important collections for generations to come.</p> <p>Horniman Museum on Twitter Get baking for the Great #WalrusTeaParty, a virtual get-together with friends and family on 24 June. Support the work of the Horniman and help us to inspire London's future generations of families for years to come. #TogetherMW</p> <p>A short 5 minutes guide to developing your case for support from the IoF is here</p>
4	<p>Use images and stories that bring to life your mission and your donation message. Focus on the impact that donations have on the people who love your museum and think about what donors want to hear from you.</p>
5	<p>Balance social media posts that focus on donations with social media posts that interest and engage people, and show the impact of your work. Where people are engaged, you can always weave in a soft ask.</p>
6	<p>Look for hashtags and campaigns that will expose your posts to a broader audience—for example, Museums Galleries Scotland #MuseumsSparkJoy campaign, or the Chartered Institute of Fundraising’s #NeverMoreNeeded. Days like International Museums Day (18 May) offer opportunities to share content, ask and thank too.</p>
7	<p>Work out how you will thank people when donations arrive and how you will keep them in touch with your work. This could support your recovery planning. And do publicly share your joy when people donate: people are influenced by other people.</p>
8	<p>Make it easy to donate. In addition to ensuring you have an online donation page you could also consider using ‘Text to Donate. There are free and paid for services that provide this service. See: https://www.donr.com/ https://instagiv.com/ https://www.nationalfundingscheme.org/sms-text-giving/ http://www.cymba.co.uk/index.php https://www.rsm2000.co.uk/page/text-mobile</p>

Manage your expectations about how many donations social media channels will generate in the short term. Even on Facebook, a post is only likely to be seen by 20% of your fans and only 2% of them are a likely to interact with it: a 0.4% conversion rate. E-bulletin [conversion rates are higher](#). However, messaging now helps to position you as a charity with your audiences—and that will be vital in the short and long term.

3. And once we get through this... what then?

If you're not already an active fundraising organisation, you have the chance to embed good fundraising practice within your organisation. The Chartered Institute of Fundraising's Proud To Be A Fundraiser toolkit provides a free practical "how to" guide to helping you become a fundraising organisation. You can find it [here](#). The Institute also provides a huge range of free guidance so that you can ensure you're compliant with the law and with established best practice. You can find their guidance documents [here](#).

This guidance has been coordinated by the **Department of National & International Partnerships at National Museums Scotland** with specific input from Margaret Clift, Head of Development, National Museums Scotland and Aimee Hooper, Development Manager, National Museums Scotland.

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