



Advocating for fundraising during emergencies

How to respond to arguments that fundraising is ‘inappropriate’ during the Coronavirus pandemic

● **ENGAGEMENT**

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ROGARE
THE FUNDRAISING THINK TANK

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This is one of four projects Rogare has commenced to look at how the Coronavirus/ Covid-19 pandemic might affect fundraising. The others are:

- Ethics of legacy fundraising during emergencies
- Fundraising during economic emergencies – collating and assessing existing research and evidence
- Critical reflections on how the Covid-19 pandemic might change fundraising.

Details of all these projects – and all Rogare's projects and outputs – can be found on the Rogare website – www.rogare.net

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Foreword

The Coronavirus pandemic that is currently sweeping the world (as of June 2020) has caused incredible disruption to everyday life and wreaked economic havoc in many sectors and industries. Voluntary and nonprofit sectors around the world have not escaped.

Charities are in a different position to companies. If there is no demand for the services or products a company sells (people don't want them or cannot afford them), then it has no revenue and goes out of business; it's the demand that drives the revenue.

The demand for the services a charity provides does not have such a causal connection to a nonprofit organisation's revenue, because people do not (generally) buy charities' services; instead, services are provided free of charge, and paid for from donations voluntarily given by others, who often do not consume those services. Simply put, the ones who benefit are not the ones who pay.

If people can no longer afford to make donations, that doesn't make the demand for services go away. The need for services continues to exist and, in a global emergency such as the one we are currently facing, are likely to increase.

So the need to fundraise is just as imperative during an emergency as it is during normal times, and may be even greater.

Yet many fundraisers have reported opposition and pushback from peers, management and leadership, who argue that fundraising at these times is inappropriate or unethical, and that fundraising activity should be scaled back or stopped completely during the Coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic.

For example, communications teams have advised fundraisers to stop sending out direct marketing because it might be seen as inappropriate while potential donors are enduring straightened

economic circumstances, while boards have said legacy fundraising should cease, as it might be seen as offensive.

If this advice is followed, charities will find themselves in an even more parlous state, with the effects of the pandemic exacerbated by a reluctance to ask for support.

Fundraising regularly faces these kinds of criticisms and objections at the best of times. These objections often seem 'ideological' rather than being fact-based or evidence-based. And the fundraising profession has historically found it difficult to respond to these ideological challenges to its professional practice.

This is something that Rogare has been working on for a few years, work that came to fruition in 2019 with the new Canadian Fundraising Narrative developed for the AFP Canada. It is a natural extension of the ideas generated for the Narrative to help fundraisers first to recognise the objections being thrown at them during the current health emergency, and then to come up with counter-arguments.

That's what this project did. I asked a team led by some of the Canadian fundraisers who had been most heavily involved in the Narrative project to collect and collate the many such arguments and develop some standard counter-arguments that fundraisers can use and adapt to make the case for fundraising at their own organisations.

I think that the project's leader, Vivian Smith, and her team have done an excellent job in an incredibly short time frame. 🍀

Ian MacQuillin

Director, Rogare - The Fundraising Think Tank

Project team

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Vivian Smith, CFRE

President, Liberty Quest Enterprises (Canada)

Vivian Smith, CFRE, is president of Liberty Quest Enterprises, her consulting firm established in 1998 to provide strategy and training to the charitable sector. Over the past three decades, Vivian has immersed herself in every aspect of the charitable sector, including helping to shape its best practices, policies and educational standards. She sat on the board of directors for the International Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) from 2012 to 2018 and is a graduate of AFP's Faculty Training Academy. She continues to support the profession through a variety of roles with AFP, and speaks at conferences and symposiums across North America. Vivian was recently appointed to the Canada Revenue Agency's Technical Issues Working Group.



Neil Gallaiford

Chair of the board, Stephen Thomas Ltd (Canada)

Neil Gallaiford has spent nearly 35 years in fundraising, beginning on the client side as a national director of fundraising for the MS Society of Canada. He left MS to found a database management and donations processing firm in order to help charities get a better handle on their fundraising data. Neil took the reins of Stephen Thomas Ltd 14 years ago and served as CEO until just recently when he relinquished day-to-day responsibilities in favour of becoming the chair of ST's board of directors. Neil has always been passionate about the role fundraisers play in the world and improving the status of the profession in the eyes of charity leaders and the general public.



Juniper Locilento, CFRE

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Juniper Locilento is chief development and communications officer for Community Food Centres Canada; vice-chair, government relations for AFP Canada and an instructor and course developer for Ryerson University's Fundraising Management Program. She holds a Master's degree in Philanthropy and Non-Profit Leadership from Carleton University and is a Certified Fundraising Executive.

Contributors

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Introduction



Vivian Smith, project team leader

I have always believed in the power of philanthropy. The honour of working as a professional fundraiser, facilitating the goals of philanthropists around the world, has enriched my life.

The challenge of our profession may have never been greater than it is today. We have a duty to those who are served by our charities to continue our work, to continue to ask those who can give to do so - even now. The impact of Covid-19 on our health, on our economies, on our very lives cannot be overstated. Yet, at the same time, we continue to face other challenges in our communities: cancer, heart disease, climate change, extinction of species, poverty, mental health to name but a few.

We cannot ignore these, despite the prevalence of Covid-related news stories as the world grapples with this unseen enemy. As fundraisers, we must continue to take up the banner and raise the resources our charities need to meet the wide range of issues they were formed to address.

I hope you will find in the following pages what you need to continue.

My thanks to Neil Gallaiford and Juniper Locilento for their leadership, and to the project team members - Mary Brumbach, Craig Mullaly, Ruth Smyth and Colin Skehan - who contributed their insights and thoughtful assessments of this topic. ●

1

Arguments against fundraising during the pandemic

Collecting arguments against fundraising

The first step was to collect the types of objections that had been levelled at fundraising. We did this through a simple online questionnaire that asked for a short description of the argument against/objection to fundraising, and who had made this objection. Forty-three people responded to this survey, all from Canada, UK or USA. A few examples of the responses we received are given on p7.

We also asked respondents what had happened as a result of these objections being made. Many said that fundraising was halted, delayed or stopped altogether. One organisation even pulled out of discussion with a major donor when there was a US\$2 million gift in the pipeline. Others softened or delayed asks, or switched to stewardship, rather than solicitation, communications. Others said that fundraising was continuing but, as one respondent said, the board needed “much convincing”.

Fundraising that did go ahead sometimes performed less well than anticipated because of the limitations imposed on it.

But it is important to stress that we can't draw any conclusions about how prevalent these objections to fundraising are, nor how often they have had detrimental effect on fundraising. We can't do that with such a small, self-selecting sample of responses, and that was not our intention. The purpose was to get a feel for the types of objections that fundraisers were encountering.

Collating arguments against fundraising

Looking at the survey responses, we could see that four different themes or categories were emerging, under which we could group the objections:

Theme 1 - Economic

- We ought not fundraise because the economy is in bad shape:
 - People don't have money to donate to charity because they've been furloughed or laid off
 - Our charity will be criticised if we fundraise right now because people have been furloughed or laid off.

Theme 2 - Anxiety and stress caused by the pandemic

- We can't fundraise because people are afraid, anxious, overwhelmed and dealing with too much right now:
 - They have lost family members, jobs and their ability to give. It's inappropriate to ask now and would be seen as insensitive.
- No one cares about non-Covid-related organisations right now. We don't want to come across as tone-deaf and uncaring by asking for donations. We have to be careful about how the message will land.

Theme 3 - Emergency response (only frontline Covid-19 charities should/will get support)

- If we are not directly involved in the frontline response to the pandemic, we should not be fundraising.
- We don't want to be seen as 'capitalizing' on the current situation.
- It is unethical to be 'begging' for money when so many people are dying
- Philanthropists are only interested in Covid work right now, so it's not worth fundraising:
 - We would be wasting our money to try to compete.

Theme 4 - Perception of the need for fundraising

- We shouldn't fundraise right now because:
 - Our needs are not as great as charities that are struggling
 - It's in poor taste/seems greedy
 - We can't predict results and could waste resources. 🚫

‘We should not fundraise during the pandemic because...’

Our wealthy donors will also be struggling. We don't want to be seen to be 'capitalising' on the situation. We don't do front line work so we can't make a good case – people will give elsewhere.

Chief executive/senior director and board members, UK

Businesses are closing and people are being laid off. We are not on the frontlines of Covid-19 so now is not the time to ask.

Chief executive/senior director, Canada

Many of our members are suffering job and income losses, it would be callous to press them for donations, since we are not a first responder charity.

Chief executive/senior director and board member, Canada

We have already asked our supporters to give to our emergency appeal so we shouldn't be asking them to do anything else.

Chief executive/senior director and comms teams, UK

The price of oil has tanked, the stock-market is down, people are being laid off and hurting; how can we ask them for money at a time like this?

Chief executive/senior director, Canada

Philanthropists are only interested in Covid work right now so it's not worth fundraising.

Board member, USA

Donors would be insulted and outraged.

Board member, USA

We don't want to come across as tone-deaf and uncaring by asking people to give what they don't have. We'll just make people feel worse.

Chief executive/senior director, programme staff and finance staff, Canada

We are not a direct service provider, so we should pause since donors will be focused on food, shelter and medical supplies/PPE. Otherwise we appear 'tone deaf'

Donor, USA

You're going to come off as tone deaf. My friends are giving to first responders and emergency aid, not your college.

Programme staff, USA

We are in a stronger financial position than most of our peers so it wouldn't be right for us to make any appeals.

Chief executive/senior director and board member, UK

We have to be careful about how the message will land. People might react poorly if we appear to be tone deaf.

Comms staff, UK

There's no point engaging in community fundraising because nobody can do anything anymore.

Chief executive/senior director and comms staff, UK

You're not a frontline charity. It's disgraceful/unethical/awful to be 'begging' for money during this time when so many people are dying/more needy/in poverty

Donor, UK

NB: These are not necessarily direct quotes from the people who made these objections but the words used by respondents to our survey to report those objections.

2

The Canadian Fundraising Narrative

The next phase of this project was to create counter-arguments to the themes, which fundraisers could then use to engage with people who make these objections, in a way that will hopefully mean they need less convincing to continue with fundraising than some of them currently do.

To compile these counter-arguments, we drew on the Canadian Fundraising Narrative, which Rogare had developed with with the Association of Fundraising Professionals Canada, and which was adopted by AFP Canada in July 2019.

The Canadian Narrative is a way of engaging with criticisms of fundraising that appear to be 'ideological'. For example, a criticism that using third-party agencies to fundraise is wrong because it diverts money from the 'cause' (i.e. service delivery) is not really an argument about the cost-effectiveness of outsourcing fundraising. Rather it is the ideological argument that people ought not make a profit out of someone's charitable giving, irrespective of whether outsourcing fundraising generates more money than if the charity tried to do this in-house.

Arguments like this are more about values than they are facts; and a values-based argument is much less likely to be defeated by facts. But that's exactly what the fundraising profession has historically done when it encounters such ideological criticism: it tries to present factual counter-arguments, and in doing so, fundraisers can easily come across as 'tone deaf' to the values of the people they are trying to engage with - the concern expressed in a number of responses to our survey.

The Canadian Fundraising Narrative takes a different approach to trying to 'educate' people out of their ideological positions by using facts. Instead of approaching this from the perspective of:

What is it about fundraising/charities that people don't like and how can we get them to change their minds about that?

...the Canadian Narrative presents a values-based counter narrative that asks:

What is it about fundraising that we value and can we get other people to value those things too?

The Narrative is based on five main building blocks from which various key messages have been constructed. It's not really relevant to repeat all the thinking behind this, particularly all the key messages, but anyone who is interested in finding out more should visit the Rogare website - <https://www.rogare.net/canada-narrative> - where you'll also find links to the relevant AFP Canada website pages.

The project team used some aspects of the Canadian Fundraising Narrative to craft how we would engage with critics who argue that fundraising ought not go ahead during the Covid-19 pandemic. We used four of the main building blocks (the one we didn't use is very specific to fundraising in a Canadian context) and some of the key messages. At least one of these will be familiar to people who have followed Rogare's work on fundraising ethics.

A) A 'professionalist' ideology underpinning charities

Many of the ideological arguments against fundraising are predicated on ideas that everything about charities should be 'voluntarist'. For example, profit-making agencies are wrong, volunteers are better than paid street fundraisers ('chuggers'), small local charities are better than big national ones (because the bigger national ones use business-like marketing methods). The professionalist ideology however stresses that what is important is helping

beneficiaries, and often the best way to be able to do that is to be as professional as is needed. The full statement of professionalist ideology is:

i. The role of charities is to effect the greatest necessary change.

ii. To bring about that change, nonprofits need to be professional (and possibly 'business'-like), utilising the best talent and staff to effect change, and rewarding staff fairly and proportionately for the contribution they make.

iii. What matters most for us, and our beneficiaries, is effecting change, and provided change is effected, a nonprofit organization can be big or small, local or national, campaigning or helping, fundraising or non-fundraising. There is no one 'ideal' way for us to change the world, provided the world is changed

iv. Charities cannot change the world unless they have the money to do it, so they have a right - in fact a duty, because research shows most people only give to charity if they're asked to do so - to ask people for support. If we're not going to waste your money on ineffective and inefficient fundraising, we must adopt professionalised methods to raise that money.

The key message drawn from this that is relevant to this project is:

A1 Fundraising enables charities to help their beneficiaries.

B) Rights Balancing Fundraising Ethics

This is the theory of professional fundraising ethics that Rogare has developed to ensure the interests of beneficiaries are always taken into consideration in the resolution of any ethical dilemma or policy-making in fundraising. It states that:

Fundraising is ethical when it balances the duty of fundraisers to ask for support, on behalf of their beneficiaries, with the relevant rights of the donor, such that a mutually optimal outcome is achieved and neither stakeholder is significantly disadvantaged.

In day-to-day practice, one of fundraisers' main duties to their donors is not to subject them to 'undue pressure' to donate. But their main duty to

the beneficiaries is to ensure the services they rely on and use are funded.

The key messages relevant to this project are:

B1 Fundraisers have a duty to ask for donations on behalf of our beneficiaries.

B2 Through our ethics and regulation, we aim to balance our duty to ask for support with our other duties to our donors, particularly to not subject them to undue pressure to donate.

D)* Donorcentred language

Even though we might be engaging with people who are critical of fundraising, we are not critical of the people who give to charities, so it will always pay to frame our messages using the same kind of language as we would phrase our fundraising appeals, praising donors for their generosity and recognising how they make the work charities do possible.

E) Extra facts and information

Although this is a value-based narrative that is not contingent on facts, supplementing it with facts can be helpful in getting the message across when these facts are relevant and appropriate. Specific to this project, for example, are that:

- CanadaHelps noted that in March 2020, there was a 62 per cent year-on-year increase in donors, with a 92 per cent spike in overall donations to various charities. CanadaHelps also saw a 58 per cent increase in the number of donors committing to monthly donation plans.
- People are feeling isolated and want to find a way to connect and help others
- People who have not suffered job losses or economic upheaval may actually have more disposable income because their spending in other areas (i.e. leisure, travel) has been curtailed.

These components underpin all the suggested counter-arguments outlined in the next section. **6**

* We're missing 'C' since that is the building block that is specific to Canadian fundraising. We've kept the lettering system used in the Canadian Narrative to ensure consistency between that work and this project.

3

The counter-arguments

Theme 1 - Economic

- We ought not to fundraise because the economy is in bad shape:
 - People don't have money to donate to charity because they've been furloughed or laid off
 - Our charity will be criticised if we fundraise right now because people have been furloughed or laid off.

Suggested economic counter-argument

There's no question that Covid-19 has had a significant impact on the world's economy. There are certainly people in every country whose incomes have declined and there are many people struggling financially. That's exactly why we can't forget that the role of charities is to effect the greatest necessary change in the world. Many of the most acute changes needed right now are related to the impact of Covid-19. Some of those impacts are being felt right now (such as with food shortages) and others will be felt over a longer time horizon (such as with the decline of the performing arts).

All charities play a crucial role in our society: often, they fill gaps left by the government and the market economy. In the wake of Covid-19, those gaps are more acute than ever, and that means charities are more important than ever.

When charities ask for support, they are asking on behalf of those they serve: the under-served youth who need places to play; the future generations who will benefit from advances in medical research; the wildlife in need of protection. In fact, because research shows that most people only give to charity if they're asked to do so, charities have a duty to their beneficiaries to ask for support.

Some charities are concerned about being criticised for being insensitive by asking for support during the pandemic, particularly if they are not engaged in 'frontline response'. In fact, because they have a duty to their beneficiaries - the people they serve - they risk criticism by not fundraising. A lack of action sends a message to a charities' beneficiaries that they are not important.

Some charities may feel that asking for support when people are struggling financially is inappropriate. Although many people's incomes have been affected, there are others whose financial circumstances are unchanged. The lockdown has altered spending patterns, meaning that some people may have more money available to donate to charity than previously. Charities have always appealed to people at all levels of the socio-economic scale. Charities' most loyal supporters are often those with modest incomes giving small regular or cash gifts.

It is important to remember that giving has been proven to have numerous positive effects. In a time of social distancing, people are looking for ways to feel connected to each other, and giving can offer that sense of connection.

Giving a gift, of whatever size, to charity is a hugely positive and empowering action for a person to take. While charities have a responsibility to fundraise responsibly and effectively, it is not our place to decide whether people have the financial capacity to give.

NB - the argument is strengthened by including facts (which could be market research or research carried out by fundraising agencies) that show how people want to get involved in supporting charities.

Theme 2 - Anxiety and stress caused by the pandemic

- We can't fundraise because people are afraid, anxious, overwhelmed and dealing with too much right now:
 - They have lost family members, jobs and their ability to give. It's inappropriate to ask now and would be seen as insensitive.
- No one cares about non-Covid-related organisations right now. We don't want to come across as tone-deaf and uncaring by asking for donations. We have to be careful about how the message will land.

Suggested anxiety/stress counter-argument

People are feeling anxious and stressed, and part of what feeds that anxiety is the loss of control. We can't see this virus and we don't really know when this will end. We wait anxiously for the daily report of the numbers; we feel helpless as the death toll mounts around the world.

But what is also happening is a sense of community that stretches across borders, languages and boundaries. We are finding that we have much in common. One of the things we do have in common is a desire to share and experience compassion.

The act of giving allows donors to demonstrate compassion. We know that donors are far less likely to give if they are not asked. It is our duty to our beneficiaries to ask people to give and, in turn, their decisions to give allow donors to gain a sense of purpose and control.

Giving may be different these days in terms of size and frequency. This is the widow's mite at work. Each small gift rolls up into something larger. Giving together provides us with collective control in our communities, in our countries.

In a time of social distancing, people are looking for ways to feel connected to each other; giving can offer that sense of connection. The growth of informal activities - like honouring our frontline workers during the pandemic - is one example of how people will organize themselves in order to feel a sense of connection and purpose. Charities that invite donors to give can also offer a sense of control and focus.

People want to find a sense of worth, a way to contribute, a way to find joy.

This pandemic gives us an opportunity to deepen relationships with our donors.

Theme 3 - Emergency response (only frontline Covid-19 charities should/will get support)

- If we are not directly involved in the frontline response to the pandemic, we should not be fundraising.
- We don't want to be seen as 'capitalizing' on the current situation.
- It is unethical to be 'begging' for money when so many people are dying
- Philanthropists are only interested in Covid work right now, so it's not worth fundraising:
 - We would be wasting our money to try to compete.

There are two suggested responses to the emergency response challenge - the first responds to the first three bullet points above and the second responds to the last main bullet point.

First suggested emergency response counter-argument

Our role as a charity is to effect positive change on behalf of our beneficiaries. Our mission has not gone away, in fact it may well be even more critical in this novel situation in which we find ourselves.

We are going to need money in order to continue our work. In fact, our very survival might depend on continuing to fundraise and we know for sure that most people only give to charity if they are asked to do so. It isn't up to us to determine which needs are more urgent or more important. Fundraising is ethical when it balances our duty to ask for support on behalf of our beneficiaries with the rights of the donor to choose whether to give at this time or not. We cannot presume to know what is in our donors' minds, nor to choose on their behalf whether to give or not.

It is our job to anticipate and understand the needs of our beneficiaries and communicate this effectively to our supporters, or potential supporters. It will be up to them to decide if they want to give at this time.

Second suggested emergency response counter-argument

It may be that fundraising in a pandemic is actually more effective, especially for charities which can show a particular need related to the pandemic. For instance, a zoo might desperately need to fundraise to feed their animals because they have lost revenue from ticket sales or parking.

For others, raising money might be more difficult, but we need to rely on good data to help us make decisions about the approaches we might take to fundraising. We need to adopt a more professional attitude, making sure that we research, test and generally rely on what the market is telling us rather than just assuming that people won't give.

Our cause is too important for us to retire entirely from the field.

It makes sense for us to remain connected with our donors even if not every communication contains an ask. Our donors will tell us by their reactions if and when they are ready to give.

NB - note that the objection this responds to pretends to be a pragmatic one which predicts that even if asking is ethical, it will be fruitless because 'everyone' is focused on the response to Covid-19 or is laid off and so doesn't have money to give.

Theme 4 - Perception of the need for fundraising

- We shouldn't fundraise right now because:
 - Our needs are not as great as charities that are struggling
 - It's in poor taste/seems greedy
 - We can't predict results and could waste resources.

There are three counter-arguments to this theme based around different building blocks of the Canadian Fundraising Narrative.

First fundraising need/perception counter-argument (based around Rights Balancing Fundraising Ethics)

Fundraising is ethical when it balances the needs of beneficiaries and the needs of donors. If a charity is able to meet the needs of its beneficiaries without fundraising, then it is reasonable to not fundraise.

In terms of appearing greedy, this also comes down to the charity's ability to meet the needs of its beneficiaries. It is not greedy to fundraise in order to be able to serve beneficiaries, both now and in the future. It is incumbent upon the charity to clearly illustrate need and the impact of donor support. If it does this effectively, the charity will not appear greedy and the need for funds will be well understood.

If a charity needs funds to support its beneficiaries and chooses not to fundraise for fear of appearing greedy, then it is compromising its responsibility to its beneficiaries.

Second fundraising need/perception counter-argument (based around the Professionalist ideology)

Many charities are afraid of being perceived as wasteful because the predominant narrative in the charity sector assumes that spending money is bad. However, it is our responsibility as fundraisers to generate resources that ensure our charities can meet the needs of their beneficiaries. Being efficient and effective means a financial investment in fundraising. If we stop fundraising now because we are concerned about perception, we risk losing donors now and having to increase our costs later to make up for it.

Third fundraising need/perception counter-argument (based around donor-centred fundraising and voluntary giving)

Fundraisers learn from the outset that giving is voluntary: the decision to give always rests with the donor. If a charity declares that its needs are not as great as others during the pandemic and chooses not to fundraise, it is taking that right to choose away from the donor. This is not donor-centred fundraising.

4

How to use the counter-arguments

The previous section presents counter-arguments to the general types of arguments we think fundraisers are encountering as to why they should not be fundraising during the current Coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic.

As we have said, we've categorised those arguments into four themes:

1. The state of the economy
2. Anxiety and stress felt by the public
3. Emergency response to the pandemic
4. Perception of the need for fundraising.

The counter-arguments we have developed are full and detailed responses to the category of anti-fundraising argument, but not knock-back one-liners against every conceivable argument a senior director or board member could give about why fundraising is inappropriate right now.

Neither are our counter-arguments presented as soundbites to be reeled off. This project is not an exercise in PR crisis management, but a way to try to engage with people who have what are often spurious and ill-informed anti-fundraising arguments, and hopefully bring them to a better level of understanding.

And so in using these counter-arguments, it is important that fundraisers understand the whole counter-argument and how it is built from the components of the Canadian Fundraising Narrative (which is why we spent some time describing these in s2).

Fundraisers can then use our counter-arguments to inform their own rejoinders to arguments calling for them to stop fundraising, and they may be able to take their time doing this, since the discussions could well be taking place over email or are required as written responses to questions from board or management.

So to use these counter-arguments effectively, fundraisers should internalise their building blocks and pick and choose the bits they need and craft these into the most suitable response for them.

For example, suppose one of your programme staff said you should stop fundraising because your charity has large reserves, and these can be used to meet the shortfall in fundraising income. Suppose they then said that donors would wonder why the charity was asking for money when the charity already had some in the bank (this is an actual argument submitted to our survey). How could you respond?

This is an argument about perception of fundraising, which falls under Theme 4, so your counter-argument could be built from the counter-arguments to this theme we have already constructed. But you could also add some appropriate extra knowledge about what reserves are for (which the programme staffer ought to have as well!); and pull in some bits to the counter-argument to Theme 1.

A response to this objection could go something like the story on p15.

This is not simply a cut and paste job. Building a response to whatever arguments are thrown at fundraising as this crisis continues will take time, effort and creativity, and what we have developed here might not always be appropriate.

But we hope that what we have done will save a lot of time and brainpower for any fundraisers who find themselves in this position. 🍷

‘Use reserves instead of fundraising’ – a counter-argument

Drawing down our reserves would be a short-term solution that will only push the funding shortfall we face down the line. But then we’ll also be faced with the challenge of replenishing our reserves as well.

It is our responsibility as fundraisers to generate resources that ensure our charities can meet the needs of our beneficiaries, and we need to be able to do that both now and in the future. It’s not just funding services today we need to think about but also funding services tomorrow, which we can’t do if we don’t have any fundraised income or any reserves left. If we stop fundraising now because we are concerned about perception, we risk losing donors now and having to increase our costs later to make up for it. Yes, reserves are meant for emergencies like this, but they are meant as a last resort. We’d be choosing to use reserves as a first resort because we have made a decision not to fundraise.

As for the idea that our donors will have a negative perception of us if they see us fundraising while we have money in the bank, this also comes down to an imperative to have enough resources to meet the needs of our beneficiaries. I am absolutely sure our donors will understand why we are doing this, because they’ve chosen to support us and are committed to our mission.

And it’s important to remember that giving has been proven to have numerous positive effects. In a time of social distancing, people are looking for ways to feel connected to each other, and giving can offer that sense of connection.

Giving a gift, of whatever size, to charity is a hugely positive and empowering action for a person to take. While charities have a responsibility to fundraise responsibly and effectively, it is not our place to decide whether people have the financial capacity to give. And there's been research during the pandemic that shows just this – that people want to carry on supporting the charities they give to and are waiting to be asked.

Get in touch

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Rogare brand identity created by Rebecca Woodall at Bluefrog Fundraising.

Associate Members

Rogare is supported in its work by a number of Associate Members - partners to the fundraising sector that share our critical fundraising ethos. Our Associate Members are:

The logo for Ask Direct, featuring the word 'ask' in a lowercase, rounded font and 'direct' in a lowercase, sans-serif font, both in a dark blue color.

Ask Direct
Creative agency (Ireland)
<https://www.askdirect.ie>

The logo for Bluefrog Fundraising, with 'bluefrog' in a bold, lowercase, rounded font and 'FUNDRAISING' in a smaller, uppercase, sans-serif font, both in a blue color.

Bluefrog
Creative agency (UK)
<https://bluefroglondon.com>

The logo for Stephen Thomas, with the name 'Stephen Thomas' in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font, underlined with a red line.

Stephen Thomas
Full-service fundraising
agency (Canada)
<https://stephenthomas.ca>

The logo for Ethicall, with the word 'ethicalll' in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font, where the 'll' is in a green color.

Ethicalll
Telephone fundraising
agency (UK)
<https://www.ethicalll.org.uk>

The logo for Rogare, with 'ROGARE' in a large, bold, uppercase, serif font and 'THE FUNDRAISING THINK TANK' in a smaller, uppercase, sans-serif font, both in a dark blue color.