

A Glimpse Behind While Forging Ahead

As we kicked off 2020, nonprofits were planning for the year ahead, looking through a largely positive and assertive lens. There was some question as to impact from the looming Presidential election, but the outlook was good, and the data from 2019, **\$449.64 billion in total giving**, was historic in scope and unbelievably motivating. As March rolled around, and the world and our nation was hit with a global pandemic, nonprofits initially braced for a potentially dreadful outcome.

Many organizations suspended fundraising activities, hoping that the crisis would pass, as was initially predicted. Others quickly took stock and began to plan and implement.

We are in mid-August and still in the midst of the pandemic, and the nonprofit community has felt the impact but, unlike in earlier crises, philanthropy has largely stood firm. Organizations have settled into new modes of operation. Many have successfully shifted their plans and initiatives, mobilized their stakeholders – organizing to meet the needs and expectations of their constituents, and have benefited from doing so.

Americans prioritize philanthropy as an essential and meaningful part of their lives. The data bears this out, as the Giving Institute's research shows that 2017, 2018 and 2019 are the three highest years for philanthropic giving ever. Although 2020 has seen numerous pivots since the year began, the motivation to connect to community has remained, and the dramatic halt in funding that was anticipated did not materialize.

It is a clear and hopeful message: uncertainty does not stop philanthropy. Donors engage with organizations because their philanthropy helps others and society in general, and they tend to be less motivated by their own financial benefit. Generosity of the American people is both profound and consistent.

“We know that the very definition of philanthropy means goodwill toward the human race. We encourage you to continue your efforts to be conduits of goodwill. Because, after all, humanity depends on philanthropy.”

–*Giving USA 2020*

The results of [Fundraising Impact of COVID-19, Edition II](#), a study conducted by CCS Fundraising in May 2020, has supported this premise in today's climate as well. Their results demonstrated that **fundraising significantly improved** from May 1, 2020 to June 1, 2020, as compared to the prior month.

Although the longer term impact remains unclear and still somewhat challenging, this is an encouraging message for the balance of 2020. Not surprisingly, current events – the COVID-19 pandemic, civil unrest, and political movements – show cause prioritization for 2020. The sectors experiencing the greatest increase in philanthropic dollars raised so far in 2020 are Hospitals and Medical Centers, Healthcare and Human and Social Services.

So what does the data tell us?

- Donors naturally respond to areas of need, and the perception of need, **making the selling propositions for nonprofits and the imperative of continuously connecting with donors more important than ever**. And many have found that it is easier than ever to connect with a broad range of donors, as the pandemic and subsequent quarantines have accelerated the comfort and ease of use of various technology. There are many tools available to utilize technology to the benefit of organizations through fundraising, use them to **stay relevant and active among your constituents**.
- Nonprofits must be clear and accountable about how the organization is benefiting from fundraising dollars right now, and how it is improving the lives of individuals, families, and communities. Donors need to feel that their dollars are **making a clear impact and creating much needed solutions**.
- Nonprofits need to continue to **modify and update existing fundraising strategies and push forward**. When restrictions began in March, organizations that were in the midst of their annual and special (mainly capital) campaigns – especially at the major gift levels – were encouraged to continue those campaigns despite the pandemic, to make the appropriate adjustments and to embrace new approaches and implementations. Those who chose to press forward were able to show success.
- Charities must **engage with individuals on all levels** of giving in various ways. Although the highest net worth individuals are overwhelmingly

responsible for continued growth in philanthropy, all donors are important to the growth of any nonprofit. Particularly now, as **current events engage the “broader middle,”** and social activism has engaged overwhelming numbers, communities are ready to help in all ways.

One thing that 2020 has certainly taught us, is that we never fully predict the future. We have all learned how to quickly pivot and change plans, adapting to embrace and succeed in the realm of the uncomfortable and the unknown. Although as a nation we face many challenges and the nonprofit world is shifting, it is refreshing to know that, generally speaking, the expansive community of donors is stepping up to ensure the security and longevity of the organizations and causes that matter most to them. And however unwelcome, the current circumstances is providing a look ahead into the philanthropic marketplace of the future

To receive the full presentation and analysis, please feel free to reach out anytime.

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