

# Proven Strategies to Raise Funds During Difficult Times

An Introduction to Disaster Fundraising for Nonprofits



# Contents

- 01** Introduction
- 04** Local Disaster
- 05** Far-Away Disaster
- 09** Global Disaster
- 12** Step-By-Step Disaster Preparedness Plan
- 19** Final Thoughts

# Introduction



In some ways, disaster fundraising is the easiest and hardest fundraising you'll ever do.

## **It's easy because you have a ready constituency.**

People will come out of the woodwork to help their neighbors and organizations like yours, especially if you've shown the value of your work in the past. Even people who've never given to your nonprofit before may surprise you and make a donation.

## **It's hard because it's heart wrenching.**

You may be personally upset or affected by the disaster; the people who rely on your services may be too. And with that, your regular donors may be unable to give if they've been impacted by the disaster. You may also find that talking and thinking about the disaster takes an emotional toll on your staff and board.

The good news is that in the wake of a disaster, people really do want to help, especially when you're thoughtful about how you communicate with them and frame your asks.

### **THAT'S THE KEY HERE:**

When raising funds in the wake of a crisis, you must be aware of and sensitive to the needs of the people you're hoping to serve.

# How disaster fundraising differs from fundraising during normal times

Disaster fundraising and everyday fundraising are separated only by their urgency, meaning the activities involved in effective disaster fundraising are similar to those your organization does day to day. Hold these truths close next time a crisis rears its ugly head. It'll help you succeed in raising funds needed to address the current disaster and keep your supporters loyal over time.



## **People will give IF you actively get the word out.**

They need to know that you're dedicated to helping those affected and are welcoming disaster response donations. Don't forget to clearly state what you'll do with those donations!



## **People will give IF you're sensitive and supportive**

to current and emerging needs.



## **People will give to you again IF you follow up**

and remind them what their giving accomplished. Otherwise, your disaster fundraising will be a oneshot deal. You'll have raised immediate money, and that's good. But you'll have failed to seize the limited window of opportunity to continue your mission long after the current crisis subsides.

**Even if you're not on the front lines of the disaster response, you have a role to play as a social benefit organization.**

**You may not be able to do everything, but you can always do something.** This doing versus not doing is what separates the great social benefit organizations from the more narrow-minded ones.

**If you're more bottom-line oriented, think of this as a branding and trust-building opportunity.** The disaster is going to be top of mind for many of your supporters, and they'll be looking to you to set an example of how to respond. People are looking for leaders, so be a leader. You may be surprised at the supporters you'll gain.

**Clearly, not all disasters will affect your organization in the same way. However, they will be on your supporters' minds.** Remember: The heart of successful fundraising is [staying relevant](#).

**Now let's take a closer look at the possibilities, promises, and perils of fundraising in the wake of different types of disasters.**

**You must get inside the minds and hearts of potential donors.** They expect you to say something to address the crisis. The more you show you're sensitive to and aware of community needs and the more you're plugged into the disaster response, the more your supporters will feel good about their affiliation with you. And if they feel good, they won't abandon you.

