

Museum Results

Your Monthly Resource for Philanthropic News
from Alexander Haas

Alexander Haas
TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONS THAT TRANSFORM LIVES

First Things First



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www.fundraisingcounsel.com



from the desk of
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Museums in the Time of a Pandemic

As we send this newsletter, we know that our readers are living through unprecedented times of personal and institutional upheaval. Seasoned directors and development officers may have managed their museums through the major economic downturns of the past 20 years, but this an entirely different moment. Now, organizations are balancing the unknowns of the economy and markets, along with the impact of closing museums indefinitely, and the mounting concern for employees' health and well-being.

We are sensitive to the difficult challenges that our museum friends and colleagues are going through. In that spirit, we write to offer a few topical recommendations for these extraordinary times.

Know Your Story Before Asking: There is often pressure in moments of crisis to go directly to the step of "asking people for money," bypassing the important process of first articulating why you need a donor's support - not just superficially but in a respectful and meaningful way. With the information we have, there is no way of knowing how this crisis is ultimately going to impact our museums. But all institutions are discussing, on some level, financial projections based on reopening dates that extend into and after the summer. Donors can't expect that you have a crystal ball, but it is important that you can articulate and share the various financial scenarios, the impact each situation would have on your museum's programming and ability to serve its visitors, and how their gift would help in these circumstances before asking.

Keep Your Closest Friends Close: All organizations have a small group of donors who are genuinely and emotionally committed to its success, deepened through years of generous personal giving. Because we don't yet know how this crisis is ultimately going to unfold, it may be premature to ask these donors for a gift, especially if this would be the first communication you've had with them in some time. In this moment, it is especially important to stay in personal touch with this

special group of friends and let them know how things are going with the museum - not just operationally, but with updates on special programming such as virtual tours, videocasts, or collections-based programming through social media. With everyone homebound, including them, this is a perfect moment for ongoing relationship building and finding out how they and their families are also coping with this situation. Then, when the time comes to ask, they will be informed, engaged and primed to make their best gift possible rather than one given out of reaction to a crisis solicitation.

Giving through Donor-Advised Funds: Given the continued volatility of the markets, some donors may be skittish about sending outright gifts from their discretionary income. Remember that some who have contributed to donor advised funds over time may have built up a meaningful balance in their DAF and could direct a special gift to the museum without affecting their current assets. A place to start would be to print out a list of all donors and members who have given through a third-party vehicle in recent years and to review the list for those that might be candidates for such a special gift.

Consider a Small Business Administration (SBA) Loan: The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) stimulus bill passed in March provides special provisions for nonprofits, including an SBA loan program through which museums with fewer than 500 employees may be eligible. In combination with contributions raised through a solid fundraising plan, this resource could subsidize critical employee- and facility-related costs for museums of all sizes and types during this crisis. Detailed information is available through a variety of sources, but [this article](#) in the *NonProfit Quarterly* provides a broad overview and information on how to participate in this time-sensitive program.

As we navigate these uncharted waters, know that all of us at Alexander Haas share your concern for how our current circumstances will affect our museums' financial sustainability in the short term and over time. It is our belief that the museums that take the time to develop and put into place a thoughtful, rational fundraising plan NOW with the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances have the greatest opportunity for long-term success. Do know that we are here to offer our support and advice and help in any way we can as we all manage through these difficult times together.

News You Can Use

It Bears Repeating Stimulus Bill Includes Help for Arts Organizations

The \$2 trillion stimulus signed by President Trump, expands the charitable deduction to all taxpayers for a year, makes nonprofits eligible for federal loans that could be largely forgiven, and boosts tax incentives for corporate giving, according to nonprofit analysts. The stimulus bill will allow nonitemizers to deduct up to \$300 in cash giving for the 2020 tax year.

It also includes provisions that will benefit nonprofit organizations. In particular, the bill includes \$75 million each for the National Endowment for the Arts National Endowment for the Humanities.

For those who itemize, the bill lifts the cap on annual giving from 60% of adjusted gross income to 100%. For corporate charitable giving, the bill raises the annual limit from 10% to 25% of taxable income. The cap on deductibility of food donations from corporations would increase to 25% of taxable income, up from the current 15% cap.

[Go here](#) to get more information about how the stimulus bill will benefit nonprofit organizations.

#GivingTuesdayNow

GivingTuesday announced **#GivingTuesdayNow**, a global day of giving and unity, set to take place on May 5, 2020 as an emergency response to the unprecedented need caused by COVID-19. The last GivingTuesday, 12-3-19, generated \$2 billion in giving, just in the US alone.

It's a month away. Time to start alerting your audience and organizing your appeal.

[Go here](#) for help with making the most of the opportunity.

Museums in the Times of a Pandemic

There's a saying, "The only time you should ever look back, is to see how far you've come."

However, during these stressful times, it can be prudent to look back. Understanding the past can help organizations persevere during difficult times like these.

Marjorie Schwarzer, Professor of Museum Studies at the University of San Francisco, has written a blog to remind us how the museum sector has risen to similar challenges in history, and points to several ways museums could or are responding to COVID-19.

We encourage you to read it. [Go here.](#)

Ok, on a Lighter Note...

Is Your Social Media Business as Usual?

Besides sharing virtual tours of your collection, **#MuseumFromHome** and **#MuseumMomentofZen**, now's the perfect time to experiment with hashtags, digital outreach, and other means to boost engagement with your audience.

The [National Cowboy Museum](#) caught the attention of the news media when it put its head of security, Tim, in charge of social media. Tim, a neophyte to all things Twitter, shares his favorite displays, asks his grandson for tips, and has had a hard time learning the proper ways of using hashtags. But not only has Tim gotten attention, the museum has been featured in places like *The Wall Street Journal*, CNN, and even the Metropolitan Museum of Art has retweeted Tim's witty posts.



The [Carnegie Museum of Natural History](#), who has an impressive presence on [TikTok](#), is embracing the popular video-based social network's "silliness factor" as an opportunity to demystify museums and science, by filming its curators in humorous and informative clips.

Time to think outside the box.

We Want You to Know

Transforming Institutions

For more than 30 years, Alexander Haas has been a fixture in the nonprofit community. We are honored to have worked with some of the largest, and some of the smallest, cultural organizations that help make our country a better place to live.

[Take a look at all of our past and present museum Client Partners.](#)

**Face It: *Museums* are Different
Our Transformational Museum Services**

Alexander Haas serves a cross section of museums throughout the country. We specialize (and delight in) what makes you distinctive. As a museum, you have different needs at different times. We can help you create real results.

[Read all about them!](#)



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