

# Responding Rapidly

## Preparing for Disaster Relief on JustGiving® from Blackbaud®

From hurricanes to fires, blizzards to floods, pandemics to humanitarian crises, natural and man-made disasters are an unfortunate reality that all organizations will be required to respond to regardless of mission or geography. Historically, the social good sectors has taken a reactive approach to addressing disasters, placing a heavy burden on staff and leadership volunteers to respond immediately after a disaster has struck when time is a precious commodity.

In these moments, war rooms are set up to quickly strategize, email communication plans are re-written to pivot based on the current needs, and corporate partners, major donors and volunteers are assembled to take swift action. This intense, stressful work is often happening in a moment when some of these same people are potentially dealing with the impact of the disaster in their personal lives.

Organizations that prepare in advance of a disaster are often able to respond more quickly and with less burden on staff and volunteers. Speed, ease, and efficacy are critical in chaotic times and by planning ahead of the disaster. Building a preparedness plan before it is needed helps your organization more quickly shift from reactive chaos to the coordinated execution of a thoughtful approach, reducing stress in an already hectic situation.

“We find consistently that about 70% or more of all dollars are given within 30 days of a disaster... by 60 days or so, we’re pretty much at the end of the giving cycle for that disaster”

— Bob Ottenhoff, President and CEO  
of the Center for Disaster Philanthropy

In the world of the 24-hours news cycle, every minute counts for your organization to raise much needed funds during in the early stages of a disaster. As part of your preparation activities, you will need fundraising technology that can be customized quickly and easily to a specific situation for online giving and digital fundraising. JustGiving enables staff or volunteers to spin up fundraising campaign in a matter of minutes that can be quickly promoted to the community.

This guide will outline the steps your organization can take to help prepare for a disaster and how organizations can take steps to help make them more impactful during a crisis.

## Consider Your Potential Impact from Disaster

Think broadly about the types of calamities by which your organization or constituents may be affected. The most common are natural disasters (like wildfires, hurricanes, tornadoes, cyclones, earthquakes, etc.) but when considering applications, you can also explore the need to develop response plans for “human disasters” (like viral outbreaks, humanitarian relief, radicalism that may negatively impact local landmarks, human populations, or human rights).

### WILDFIRES

In A Model for Wildfire Disaster Relief, Kim Lynes asks, “What can we do to better address wildfires? The first step is understanding the impact on these communities: cities and counties will end up paying for at least half of the hundreds of billions of dollars that can go into wildfire recovery in a single year. As the LA Times observes, putting out the fires represents only 9% of the total cost of the wildfire.” That’s where you come in. When launching a wildfire relief initiative, be prepared to share the statistics, and developing effects of the spreading fire and how your organization is helping to bridge the gap. Keep content up to date with personal stories from impacted persons to foster community spirit and social media shareables. Leverage video to demonstrate the power of local contributions and your organization’s involvement to connect loved ones with precious things (lost dogs, food, shelter, clothes, etc).

### HURRICANES, CYCLONES, TYPHOONS

Because we know there will be a hurricane season every year, you may consider pre-funding your disaster relief account, like the American Red Cross does. They created an Annual Disaster Giving Program (ADGP). Corporate members of the program donate at various contribution levels to essentially pre-invest in disaster relief. If you couple this corporate outreach with crowdfunding (or potentially even leverage a corporate gift as a match), you could be well backed before the flooding starts.

While fundraising for hurricane relief, communicate how your constituency can make a difference in the numbers: Number of people who get their basic needs met after a disaster, that are temporarily displaced, that are permanently resettled, that complete reconstruction after a disaster. By working with community and corporate partners while soliciting individual gifts both before and during the disaster, you can lead through the aftermath.

### VIRAL OUTBREAKS

The COVID-19 Pandemic impacted everyone. Whether local events were canceled, you and your family were required to stay-at-home, or the students in your community could not attend school, we all felt the effects as the virus swept the globe. In some cases, this may have been intensely experienced both personally and professionally. Organizations and individuals created a variety of online giving pages to collect funds in an effort to provide aid to healthcare workers, facilitate safe cancer treatment, bring joy and connection through virtual trivia contests, and convert in-person events to online-only digital engagements. Sensitive, thoughtful asks are core to the success of any fundraising initiative during times like these and using tools like peer-to-peer fundraising allow individuals to get involved in meaningful and engaging ways.

### COMMUNITY AID AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Catholic Charities USA gave over \$21 million in the first year after the 9/11 terrorist attacks through their Terrorist Attack Relief Fund. Captain Tom Moore was able to raise over 32 million pounds for the association of NHS charities as they fought against the impacts of COVID-19 by walking 100 laps in his backyard and gaining media attention. The Black Lives Matter movement raised almost \$800,000 globally in May and June of 2020 (via JustGiving) as people responded to racial injustice and inequality following the deaths of black lives. Peer-to-Peer initiatives are important and applicable models in response to these unexpected disasters, allowing individuals to tell their personal stories and support

grassroots efforts. Honest discussions and civic relations can help your organization connect with the community, humanizing issues while raising awareness. These are ideal use cases for true peer-to-peer fundraising, allowing your supporters to fundraise their own way, whether that be livestreaming a drag fashion show to collect donations, creating a memorial page to honor a loved one, garnering donations while playing a movie about clean water access for all, equality or human rights. With JustGiving, you can create a campaign featuring the incident and promote the use of personal page creation. The key here is to share both the why and the what. Will donations be used for the construction of a museum? Educational Programs? Scholarships for those impacted? Equipment for those serving? By sharing why you feel the effects of this incident and what you are going to do about it, you can create a compelling story, leading to higher conversion rates and more persuasive individual pages.

While these scenarios unfortunately happen far too often, they may not all be appropriate for your organization to personally respond to. Sometimes, your constituency may still expect you to take action. If so, thoughtfully craft statements acknowledging the disaster and your organization's commitment to helping those impacted. You can either make a recommendation for individuals to give to an appropriate cause or collect through your response fund (which your organization

can give to another organization who is deeply involved in the relief efforts). Maintaining sensitivity here is key: don't ask just because you want the funds. Connect appropriately and use the opportunity to do more social good. Examples of ways you can get involved:

- Schools can create a student relief fund, helping kids return home to friends or family that may have been impacted by the natural disaster.
- Individuals can host virtual events with their friends and family (game night, trivia contest, fitness competition) to collect donations for an affected area and to raise awareness.
- Collaborate with a celebrity or influencer who was impacted by the disaster and ask them to advocate for your organization, raising money in the process.
- Host a virtual pass to your museum, zoo, or theater. Collect donations in exchange for live stream access. Donations can either be used to rebuild your facilities or donated to a similar establishment to help them rebuild.
- Churches can collect a digital offering to provide to affected areas, sister churches, or missionaries.
- Launch a gratitude campaign, sharing thanks for your supporters.



**North Texas Food Bank**

\$1 = 3 meals



**\$53,701**  
raised  
by 605 supporters

[Donate](#)

[Share on Facebook](#)

## Crowdfund your Response

Relief crowdfunding can take different forms. You may choose to rebuild homes, schools, or churches. Perhaps you need to fund medical care for animals, patients, or communities. No matter your purpose, you can create an unlimited number of socially shareable campaigns on JustGiving.

When using JustGiving you can quickly create a crowdfunding or peer-to-peer webpage. First, [create a campaign](#). If you have never created a campaign before, these tips can help:

- ✓ Pre-create campaigns; save them as Drafts. Based on the misfortunes that will likely cause you to fundraise, go ahead and create campaigns, using stock imagery if needed. This way, all you must do is update the text and publish when disaster strikes. While you are at it, you may want to go ahead and [create a stock event](#) that lasts 365 days, like “Disaster Relief”, since these can take a few days to process.
- ✓ Use the Summary section to explain what happened and the immediate goal of the effort. Keep it brief.
- ✓ Use the Story to explain what happened and how it hit your community or impacted your nonprofit – writing to not only include your known supporters but others who may not know the full story. If there is a map that shows impacted areas or a graphic/chart that is appropriate, upload the image to provide a visual break from text.
- ✓ Set a financial target. You can always increase it after you start fundraising if you get close to 100%.
- ✓ If you have sponsors, upload a digital Sponsor Board, acknowledging their support.

- ✓ Embed a YouTube video that covers the issue. This can be pulled from local news or provided by your production team if you are filming.
- ✓ If you do not want to allow for personal fundraising pages, toggle the option to “No” and you will have a crowdfunding page. Should you choose to allow fundraising pages, leave the default as “Yes”.

### **Crowdfunding:**

backing a project or campaign by raising many small amounts of money from a large number of people, typically via the Internet.

### **Peer-to-Peer fundraising:**

A type of crowdfunding that empowers your supporters and community to raise money on behalf of your organization via individual pages they promote through their personal networks.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Tell your community and constituency you are fundraising by adding a pop up or graphic to your website that drives traffic to your P2P campaign.
- Provide fundraisers with a toolkit that includes sample imagery, social media posts, and email copy with calls to donate and show support.
- Provide frequent updates. While email and social media are essential, consider updating your campaign's story with new pictures or YouTube videos to keep content fresh and demonstrate your commitment and response.
- Call major donors and ask if they would like to provide a matching gift. Matching Gifts can be entered as offline sum totals to JustGiving campaigns if you process the donation in-house or via check.
- Pre-train your volunteers. Educate them on the tools and processes needed to react as situations arise.
- Once published, add a link of your campaign to the comments section of local news stories or social media posts as a way for readers to get involved.

“The most successful peer-to-peer fundraising programs have always delivered more than the mission – they deliver the magic of helping donors feel better. The most successful fundraising programs deliver autonomy, being part of something bigger, and being able to show competence”

— Katrina VanHuss, CEO of Turnkey.

## Create a Disaster Communication Plan

When disaster hits, it can lead to a flood of media attention. As we know, the window for fundraising is swift but short. Maximizing your exposure through public relations and marketing communications can really make a difference. Share your page on your own profiles, social media pages, with associated accounts, local media pages, clubs and committees. Reporters often push positive stories during these times, so keep your content uplifting while also driving home the change you wish to see.

When crafting your sample communications for sending to your current supporters, we recommend you:

1. Define your goals and audiences based on assumptions of giving behaviors, location, and interests.
2. Share the facts. Give them specifics of people impacted, extent of damage, etc.
3. Communicate your mission. Put it into context with the crisis and make an ask. Use tangible statements like “With your gift of \$100, we are able to provide a Care Kit for a family of 4.”

Donors are eager to know what you need, how much you need and what exactly you need it for. Effective emails should communicate just that. After your initial email that makes a hard ask, provide a follow up with a timeline for fundraising and distribution of funds. Communicate any outstanding needs or continued commitment.



Below, we have provided examples that you can piece together to help inspire your copy.

### SAMPLE SUBJECT LINES:

- Join us today
- Save [IMPACTED PERSON, PLACE OR THING] in 48 hours
- Help victims of [INCIDENT] today
- Give the gift of [STATE PROVISION]
- Can we talk about [DISASTER]?

### SAMPLE OPENING STATEMENTS:

As a donor, you may be wondering what [ORGANIZATION NAME] is doing amidst [DISASTER NAME].

We are continuing to [STATE A PROGRAM THAT IS CURRENTLY IN PLACE AND REQUIRES FUNDING]

We are listening for critical updates and urgent needs.

We are assisting where it's needed most. [SHARE HOW YOU ARE INVOLVED]

As [TITLE AT ORGANIZATION], I learned very quickly... It is hard to ask people for money. However, I am not asking for myself. I am asking on behalf of the people/ community we serve.

[DISASTER] is impacting [AREA] today. We are safe, and what's approaching us is a fraction of the storm that destroyed [AREA OF GREATEST DAMAGE].

### SAMPLE CLOSING STATEMENTS:

When all of this is over, we will be here. [STATE POTENTIAL IMPACT OR UNCERTAINTY]. We will be needed more than ever before. Your donations continue to make a difference.

So from now until [STATE END DATE] we have a matching gift challenge, dollar for dollar, until [TARGET] is reached. If you can dig deep, please do. And if you cannot, dig small. Every gift counts.

### In Closing

These disasters have the potential to demonstrate remarkable flexibility by your organization, especially if you are not used to operating in a real-time fashion to address rapidly evolving needs. Having a plan is key to that agility and hope this guide has provided some assistance if you find yourself in this spot.

For additional help from Blackbaud, please visit [www.blackbaud.com](http://www.blackbaud.com)

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#### About Blackbaud

Blackbaud (NASDAQ: BLKB) is the world's leading cloud software company powering social good. Serving the entire social good community—nonprofits, higher education institutions, K-12 schools, healthcare organizations, faith communities, arts and cultural organizations, foundations, companies, and individual change agents—Blackbaud connects and empowers organizations to increase their impact through cloud software, services, data intelligence, and expertise. Learn more at [www.blackbaud.com](http://www.blackbaud.com).

