



## **D7620 VISION PAPER**

### **Fundraising During Covid-19 Recovery & Allocating Funds for Club-Designated Activities (May 2020)**

#### **Introduction**

Rotary Clubs across the world rely on fundraisers to allow them to increase their impact in their communities and beyond. Additionally, these fundraisers often serve as a community outreach tool, showcasing the role of Rotary and clubs' notable projects. Since the onset of COVID-19, many clubs are unsure if and how their fundraisers will continue in the next six to twelve months. This Vision Paper provides reflections on the possibilities and options to ensure D7620 and our Clubs maintain a firm commitment to fundraising and carefully allocate funds for Club-designated activities in view of the uncertainty of Covid-19 developments on public events, mass gatherings, community projects, etc.

#### **The Current Reality of Fundraising Today**

There is no doubt that fundraising, in general, will be impacted during the Covid-19 recovery. The removal of large-scale events, the fear of being in crowds of people, and the reality of the economic impacts of this pandemic are just as derailing to fundraising as the public health impacts. More than 60% of respondents to the District's Covid-19 Survey indicated their Clubs are rethinking fundraising. Luckily, we can learn from history how to adapt to a change in the fundraising climate. While the Covid-19 virus is novel, dealing with crises is not. It is important to keep engaging with your Club members, prospect and with community leaders. To goal: ensure Rotary remains an organization of choice to those who can donate their time, money, and effort during this time of turbulence.

#### **Fundraising Event Options**

There are many options for events during the Covid-19 recovery, each with pros and cons. The most critical factor is to understand the goals of your event and to determine if you can meet those goals with new, creative options.

##### **Canceling an Event**

Depending on the type of event and time of year, you may decide you need to cancel your event. Factors that contribute to canceling may be that you serve a certain type of food at your event that is not available at different times of the year, of your venue of choice doesn't have availability or conflicts with other major Rotary or community events. If your club decides to cancel an event, be sure to understand the implications. Are there contract costs that will be lost or deposits you cannot get back?

Additionally, will this leave a void in your community for a certain type of activity? None of these reasons should be used as single factors when canceling but should be considered as part of the broader conversation and environment. If you choose to cancel your event, do so thoughtfully and transparently. Communicate as early as you can to all vendors, volunteers, and attendees and ensure your communications are thorough in answering their likely questions & concerns. Plus, let them know you'll be back next year!

### **Postponing an Event**

Postponing your event may be another viable option. If you decide to go this route, there are a few critical reminders. First, keep in mind that you will need to adapt to ever-changing safety practices during Covid-19 recovery. Secondly, understand any financial implications of rescheduling or moving the event. Will you lose vendors or entertainers? Are there other community events taking place when during your rescheduled date that will lower your attendance? Communicate regularly and often to maintain relationships with your sponsors and attendees. By demonstrating the direct community impact from your event, you will keep sponsors and attendees engaged and remind them of the necessity of their contributions.

### **Adapting Your Event Style**

Many organizations are finding fun and innovative ways to change their event style. Instead of canceling or postponing, they are finding ways to host the event as scheduled – just using a different format. For example:

- **Going virtual**: Consider transforming your 'in-person' celebration into a 'virtual' event. You can increase your reach and may be able to hit a more diverse audience (age, gender, location). While the financial return of a virtual event may be lower, it still allows you to fundraise and keep your Club and Rotary's brand alive. One Rotary Club put on their annual dog show online and to their surprise raised funds equal to prior years. To produce a virtual event well, creativity is a requirement. Put your thinking caps on and try something new. Many auctions have been moving online as well. If you already have auction items, consider mobile bidding. The organization 'Greater Giving' is currently offering a promotional discount that allows you to turn your in-person event into an online campaign.
- **Curbside & Delivery**: Let's be honest, D7620 hosts some great events with some great food. It's what the attendees look forward to and expect. Instead of canceling the event, why not give them a curbside or delivery option? One D7620 Club has already announced their fall Crab Feast will be done as a 'curbside pick-up' event. Most of your fixed event costs can be reduced, and you can focus on the revenue-generating streams – your food and drink offerings. This is another chance to be creative and introduce new fun experiences to keep your event brand alive.

### **Remember the Partnerships You Have Built**

Rotary Clubs may hurt without successful fundraisers, but many of our sponsors or contributors are likely hurting, too. These partners have taken years to cultivate and build a healthy collaboration. Some sponsors may need to take a year off. Other sponsors may need to decrease their level. Throughout all your event discussions, communicate with your sponsors

directly. Get creative with future ways to promote sponsorships and have an alternative to your sponsorship fulfillment plan. For example, one D7620 Club is in the planning stages of hosting a drive-in movie event in their local country fairgrounds in collaboration with local restaurants who will serve food and drinks. To help maintain these partnerships during the Covid-19 recovery, also encourage your Club members to patronize local establishments that have previously supported your events and remind your members to inform the local establishment they are Rotarians.

### **Non-Event Fundraising Opportunities**

Not all fundraisers are event-based. Especially during this time, it is advantageous to have ways to raise funds for your Club's use that are not event related.

***Direct Ask:*** Consider a vessel such as 'GoFundMe' or 'Facebook Charities' that are set up to ask for support directly. Your 'ask' should include your compelling message/story; history has shown that fundraising for the named recipient of your Rotary grants tells a more powerful story than fundraising simply for the benefit of your Club. Be sensitive when sending out direct appeals – as we know from responses to the D7620 Covid-19 Survey, not all donors have the ability to make donations during the Covid-19 recovery for a variety of reasons (e.g., unemployed, Covid-19 loss of family members, other financial challenges, etc.).

Assuming possible, when doing a 'direct ask' request, give recipients options. For example, the District recently sent out a 'direct ask' email to D7620 registrants of the cancelled May 2020 'on-site' District Conference whereby registrants can: (1) donate their conference registration fees to the D7620 Covid-19 fund, (2) donate their fees to Rotary International's PolioPlus fund and receive Paul Harris points, (3) donate their fees to Rotary International's Annual fund and received Paul Harris points, or (4) request a full refund.

Also, it is essential to identify which donations to Rotary are tax-deductible and which are not. If you wish to offer tax-deductible giving, and your Club is not currently designated as a tax-exempt 501 (c) (3) organization, which means you have created a foundation or separate fund through something like a Community Foundation, you may want to inquire about using the D7620's tax-exempt Project Trust Fund. Please remember, regardless of how you do your 'direct ask', transparency in all that you do is of the utmost importance.

***Raffles and Other Forms:*** If you cannot hold an in-person event, consider an online raffle. These online activities allow you to garner interest from afar, just like a virtual event, but do not require mass gatherings.

### **Be Realistic in Your 2020-2021 Rotary Year Budgeting**

"Hope for the best but prepare for the worst." Anticipate that some (much?) of your traditional fundraising money may not be possible during the coming Rotary year for many reasons, including there will be more competition for all kinds of fundraising events during Covid-19 recovery. Which parts of your Club's budget will you need to adjust if your Club is unable to fundraise as you have in the past? Do your due diligence on funding sources. Does your Club typically rely on 'external' forces to drive engagement at your fundraisers (e.g., publicity, the draw of crabs or beer, etc.)? Or does your Club rely on members to bring guests and invite friends? If your Club depends on the former, it may be

hard to pivot to a member-driven, online fundraiser. An additional item to consider for Clubs that pre-charge for meals is to ask members to contribute these meal expenses to support your Club's fundraising activities.

Suggestion: Set your own Club's budget for Club-designated activities carefully during Covid-19 recovery. It is better to lower your Club's giving expectations now and, if possible, add additional money for these community projects at a later date.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

The involvement of your entire Club on fundraising and budgeting decisions is necessary to weather your COVID-19 recovery efforts. Now more than ever is the time for your Club to be innovative and adaptive in all you do to raise and disburse money, while remaining financially sound. Think out of the box. Consider new ways to garner public support and to make Rotary known in the community. While your funding streams may not be as they have in the past, Rotary is an important constant in most communities. Be strategic, be intentional, and be thoughtful on how you move your fundraising efforts forward.

### **Questions/Comments**

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