



Hancock County Community Foundation | givehcgrowhc.org

Fundraising in a Virtual World



A Resource Guide for Nonprofits

Platforms and strategies for virtual
donor engagement success

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

3 Disclaimer & Acknowledgements

Section I: Virtual Events

5 Event Format

6 Platforms

7 Sponsorships

8 Do's and Don'ts

Section II: Other Virtual Fundraising Campaigns

14 Other Virtual Fundraising Campaigns

INTRODUCTION

This guide is for nonprofit organizations exploring best practices for virtual events and fundraisers. It will cover strategies and platforms for virtual donor engagement success.

DISCLAIMER

General: HCCF materials that reference any specific commercial or nonprofit entity, process, product, service, manufacturer or company does not constitute its endorsement or recommendation by HCCF or any of its employees.

Disclaimer of Endorsement: Reference herein to any specific commercial products, process, or service by trade name, trademark, manufacturer, or otherwise, does not necessarily constitute or imply its endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by HCCF. The views and opinions expressed herein shall not be used for advertising or product endorsement purposes.

Disclaimer of Hyperlinks: The appearance of external hyperlinks does not constitute endorsement by HCCF of the linked web sites, or the information, products or services contained therein.

Disclaimer of Liability: Reference from this guide, web page, or from any of the information services sponsored by HCCF to any non-governmental entity, product, service or information does not constitute an endorsement or recommendation by HCCF or any of its employees. We are not responsible for the content of any "off-site" web pages referenced from this document.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document was created with the help of Stephanie Amick, Agape; Ginny Brown, Greenfield Central School Foundation; Allyson Smith, Hancock Health Foundation; and Emily Wethington, Hancock County Community Foundation. Several other online resources are also cited throughout.

Section I

Virtual Events



EVENT FORMAT

This section will cover things to think through if your nonprofit will host a virtual event with a program and a set time in which people will “attend.” If your nonprofit is looking to do more of an ongoing fundraising campaign, see Section II: Other Virtual Fundraising Campaigns.

When beginning to plan your nonprofit’s virtual event, you will want to start by determining the goals you hope to accomplish. Consider your priorities for your event, including:

- Fundraising
- Networking
- Decision making
- Mission awareness
- Client growth
- Board and volunteer recruitment
- Information sharing
- Volunteer recognition

Once you have decided on your top goal(s) for the event, you can begin choosing what elements you will incorporate into your event to achieve those goals. Here are a few ideas to consider:

- Silent/Live auction
- Breakout rooms
- Music (live or recorded)
- Client testimonials
- Text-to-Give
- A report on the year’s achievements
- Awards presentation
- A funding appeal
- Videos
- Game (ie. trivia, BINGO)

Once you have determined your top goal(s) and the elements that will help you achieve them, you will want to decide what kind of format will best help you seamlessly put them together for an audience. Start with:

- Will the program be live or pre-recorded?
- Will this be a staged production or more informal presentation?
- Will there be any in-person, live audience?

Before you choose a platform(s), you also want to consider any potential limitations your audience may have technologically.

PLATFORMS

Depending on the format you choose for your event, there are different options for online platforms to power your event or campaign. When choosing a platform, you will want to consider price, how many people can participate, and payment options. These are not exhaustive lists, but this will help you get your search started.

Price Key: Free/Low Cost  Moderate Cost  High Cost 

Auction Platforms

Sources: [Capterra](#), [Charity Auctions Today](#), and [Go Charity](#)

32Auctions

Website: <https://www.32auctions.com/>

32Auctions is a silent auction software. 32Auctions provides templates for auction page creation and allows for personalization of campaigns with branding, sponsor highlighting, goal meters, and many other design options. Auction participants are engaged with real-time notifications on the status of the items they are interested in. This opens the potential for remote as well as on-site silent auctions.

Auctria

Website: <https://www.auctria.com/>

Auctria is a Canadian-based software provider geared towards fundraiser auctions. Their system may be based on traditional bidding systems, but their infrastructure is solid with an online payment feature, which runs in-line with their auction reporting system. If your nonprofit can do without mobile or desktop bidding, Auctria may be exactly what you are looking for.

Better World

Website: https://betterworld.org/?utm_medium=cpc&utm_source=google&utm_campaign=online_auctions

BetterWorld is a social impact venture built to support the individuals, businesses, and nonprofits that serve their communities. With BetterWorld, nonprofits can access a full suite of best-in-class fundraising tools, completely for free. No cost, no “platform fee”, no percentage of transactions, no more skimming from the dollars that donors give.

BiddingOwl

Website: <https://www.biddingforgood.com/>

This free auction software for nonprofits has fewer features compared to other options, but you can use it to create a customized website for your audience. BiddingOwl allows donors to bid on items on mobile and desktop. You can use this platform to manage donors and create a list of items available for auction. You can also print bid sheets if you’re organizing a live auction event. You will get access to tech support and other resources that will help you organize your fundraiser. Note that BiddingOwl is free to use, but the platform will keep 5% of the donations you receive.

Charity Auctions Today

Website: <https://www.charityauctionstoday.com/>

Charity Auctions Today is a mobile and online auction company that provides a unique fundraising platform for individuals, nonprofits, schools, and businesses so they can raise more money for the causes they care so much about. It only takes 5 minutes to set up an auction with assistance every step of the way. Set up an auction for free and pay a 5% performance fee or select a prepaid plan for only \$497. Features of this platform include that it works flawlessly across all devices and risk-free auction items are offered for your online fundraising. The best part of Charity Auctions Today’s free plan is you only pay if you actually raise money. If you don’t raise anything, you owe nothing.

ClickBid

Website: <https://clickbidonline.com/>



ClickBid helps schools and nonprofits raise funds with hybrid events. Using their live auction and live video services, you can run silent, live, raffle and fundraising from the donor mobile devices. A basic annual license runs \$795 for up to 4 events. It is designed with add-on packages including live streaming the event, ticket pages, and landing pages.

Event.Gives

Website: <https://event.gives/>



Event.Gives is one of the easiest platforms to use to manage your auctions and events. You can add items to your auction or create events from a convenient app with a customizable dashboard. You can use Event.Gives to sell tickets to an event, auction items, or sell raffle tickets. You can also send text notifications to donors and guests. Event.Gives stands out thanks to its intuitive interface and simple controls. It's ideal if you don't have a lot of experience with auction software. The text-to-donate feature is an interesting addition that allows donors to send you money via their mobile device.

HandBid

Website: <https://www.handbid.com/>



If you're looking for auction software for nonprofits that is easy to use, Handbid is a safe bet with its intuitive interface. Handbid comes with a wide range of features designed to help you organize auctions, events, crowdfunding campaigns, and peer-to-peer fundraising campaigns. You can use this platform to have guests bid on items with their mobile devices during a silent auction or send donations via text message. Handbid has a convenient mobile app that your guests can download to bid on items or make donations, but there is also a web-based platform available. Handbid includes a live streaming feature that you can use to connect with your audience and share a live video of your events. There are additional features that make Handbid a convenient choice for your charity auctions, including a messaging tool to contact bidders or donors, reporting capabilities, and a guest list feature.

OneCause

Website: <https://www.onecause.com/>



With more than 8 years of industry knowledge and a team of more than 250 fundraising professionals, their US-based account management and support teams are ready to assist you. Through phone and email support, an online knowledge base filled with helpful videos, web-based guided tours, you'll always have a place to turn for guidance. DIY options start at \$1995 to \$3995 a year. You can also get a custom quote based on your needs.

SilentAuctionPro

Website: <https://www.silentauctionpro.com/>



SilentAuctionPro was designed from the ground up to be an Internet-based, multi-user team environment. Any group member can access the system from any Internet-connected computer. Includes branded receipts, bid sheets, and more. The pricing is per event. All pricing quoted is per event with ranges from \$99 to \$800. If you use SilentAuctionPro for multiple events in the same calendar year, they offer a 20% discount on your 2nd event and 30% discount on the 3rd and subsequent events in the same calendar year. You'll have to tally everything up to see if this is the best pricing option for your fundraiser.

WEDO

Website: <https://wedocharityauctions.com/>



WEDO allows nonprofits to utilize technology while simultaneously integrating expertise. With a two-tiered approach, WEDO utilizes event and mobile bidding technology to engage clients' partners. They use their technology and expertise as a catalyst to develop strategies and processes that ensure continued success and growth for clients.

Winning Cause

Website: <https://www.winningcause.org/>



WinningCause is an silent auction software with many well-known charity partners. Whether you are holding an online auction or printing physical bid-sheets for an event, WinningCause covers both methods. Their software is tiered into three versions: Start for Free, Better than Free, and Ultra Competitive.

Comprehensive Fundraising Platforms and CRMs

Sources: [Capterra](#), [Charity Auctions Today](#), and [Go Charity](#)

Abila

Website: <https://www.abila.com/>



Abila is now part of Community Brands, the leading provider of cloud-based software to associations, nonprofits, faith-based groups, and K-12 schools. Organizations adopt Community Brands solutions to manage memberships, career centers, learning, accounting, fundraising, donations, admissions, enrollment and events. Empower your nonprofit organization with fund accounting software. Use data and personal insight to improve strategic and financial decision making. Enhance donor engagement and value. Accelerate and grow revenue from donations, grants, memberships, and other sources.

Bidding For Good (Panorama by frontstream)

Website: <https://www.frontstream.com/auctions>



BiddingForGood is a charitable eCommerce company that offers an online auction platform where consumers can create fundraising events for their businesses and achieve great results. The software used at BiddingForGood works with computers, laptops, tablets, and mobile phones. With the help of their customers and shoppers in the bidder community, they've created a new category of shopping, Charitable Commerce™.

CauseVox

Website: <https://www.causevox.com/>



CauseVox is a digital fundraising application that enables fundraisers and marketers in the nonprofit industry to collect online and offline donations. Donation forms or campaign pages can easily be created and embedded into any web page or turned into a pop-up donation button. The platform offers peer-to-peer and crowdfunding, website donations, event registration, and a fundraising CRM. CauseVox will connect with 1,500+ other applications and platforms, including MailChimp, Constant Contact, Salesforce, and Bloomerang.

Charityproud

Website: <https://www.charityproud.org/>



Charityproud is an online donor management system that allows you to access your information anywhere, anytime. Backed by nonprofit and tech industry professionals, Charityproud anticipates your needs and provides an easier way to evaluate your donors, donations, campaigns, events and analytics to increase donor engagement and giving.

DoJiggy

Website: <https://www.dojiggy.com/>



DoJiggy is a provider of affordable fundraising software solutions for nonprofits, schools, and community organizations in the US and Canada. DoJiggy provides reliable and cost-effective credit card processing solutions that integrate seamlessly with our fundraising websites. Its fundraising event management software includes online event registration, sponsorship sales, and promotion, and a customized website to promote any type of fundraising event. Software also includes capabilities for crowdfunding and P2P and golf tournaments.

DonorPerfect

Website: <https://www.donorperfect.com/>



DonorPerfect, a configurable cloud-based CRM, provides a seamless workflow experience for unlimited users – on a desktop or on the go with your mobile device. Configure your database by adding fields relevant to your organization (and hiding ones that aren't) and choose which users can access this information by managing individual & group user permissions. DonorPerfect makes it easy to organize fundraising events with integrated registration forms and a handy hub for managing RSVP status, seating arrangements, and metrics on each of your events' successes. The DPMobile app allows your staff to collect gifts and payments at your event in a snap. The software also includes auction management and email marketing.

Give Smart

Website: <https://www.givesmart.com/>



Give Smart is yet another event management tool and auction software geared specifically towards nonprofits. Their software covers live, silent, and online auctions, creating versatility for nonprofit organizations and their fundraising events. Pricing is based on the needs of the individual organization.

Little Green Light

Website: <https://www.littlegreenlight.com/>



Little Green Light helps nonprofits improve fundraising and donor relationships through a comprehensive, online platform that includes event planning, activity tracking, mail merge, advanced queries, and easy-to-use forms. Their built-in tools allow you to manage your data efficiently so you can spend more time cultivating donor relationships. Ideal for smaller-to-midsize nonprofits, Little Green Light is an excellent core donor management solution that is suitable for larger organizations as well. The platform is designed to meet the growing needs of a variety of nonprofit organizations, including faith-based ministries, arts and cultural organizations, environmental associations, and more.

Mobile Cause

Website: <https://www.mobilecause.com/>



Mobile Cause's fundraising software and services were built exclusively for nonprofits to help create more meaningful connections with their donors. Mobile Cause takes fundraising and donor engagement programs to the next level with online giving and text-to-donate, virtual events, event fundraising, peer-to-peer campaigns, engagement, mobile messaging and reporting & analytics.

Qgiv

Website: <https://www.qgiv.com/>



Qgiv exists to help nonprofit organizations raise more money with a comprehensive suite of fundraising tools featuring customizable donation forms, event registration, peer-to-peer fundraising, text giving with outbound messaging, and app-based auctions. Unlimited users with unlimited access to tools and support, no long-term contracts, and integrations with leading CRM and email tools make it easy for nonprofits to experiment with new technology and grow their digital fundraising programs.

Qtego

Website: <https://qtego.com/>



Qtego pioneered mobile bidding technology, and they continue to lead the industry in fundraising and event management software. Their technology offers at-a-glance overviews, user-friendly interfaces, and customized graphics. They deliver the same premium tools for each event—regardless of size. Whether you're planning a large gala or a small golf outing, Qtego customizes their event management software to fit your needs, meet your budget, and exceed your fundraising goals.

ReadySetAuction

Website: <https://www.readysetauction.com/>



ReadySetAuction is a comprehensive platform that allows you to manage every aspect of your events and online auctions. You can use this software to sell tickets and sponsorships ahead of the event, check-in guests on the day of the event, and offer mobile bidding to guests for a silent auction event. You can also accept and process payments through ReadySetAuction and use this platform to send messages to guests and bidders. This software also comes with online bidding features. You can use these features to host virtual events or keep donations coming in after a live auction if you have some items left over. It's a convenient platform you can use to generate receipts for bidders and donors or to create a catalog of the items up for auction.

Snowball Fundraising

Website: <https://snowballfundraising.com/>



From free Donation Pages to affordable Text-to-Give, Snowball has everything your nonprofit needs to raise more money for your cause. Transparent pricing without hidden fees. Free customer service. No minimum donation thresholds. Amazing features and value for your program.

Streaming Platforms

Source: [Go Gather](#)

Much like hosting an in-person event, the location of a virtual event is a key consideration. There are several platforms that you can use to host a virtual event, but you'll need to evaluate which one is the most appropriate for your event.

When choosing a platform, consider the following:

- How robust is the system? Can it handle an influx of hundreds or thousands of attendees at once?
- Is the cost right for your budget?
- Are there features of the platform that allow you to interact with your attendees?
- Is there a support team to help you with any technical issues throughout the event?
- Does the platform allow you to test out your presentations beforehand? Can you record your sessions in advance and schedule them out for the event?
- Or, can you record your live sessions and send them out after?
- Does the platform offer password protections so only your attendees can access the content?
- Does your platform support phone call-ins and computer audio?
- Does the platform provide a sign-up capability that is functional and visually appealing?
- Does your platform provide mobile options for attendees that want to tune in on their phones?

There are a myriad of virtual event platforms available, from GoToWebinar to Adobe Connect to something as simple as Facebook Live. Researching the capabilities of these platforms in regard to the questions above will help you find the right fit for your event.



SPONSORSHIPS

Source: [Go Gather](#)

To obtain sponsorships in a virtual setting, start by asking those that have supported your in-person events in the past. Chances are, they are going to support you regardless. When sending letters or making calls, be as transparent as possible with the structure of the event and how the sponsor will be promoted. Promoting sponsors in a virtual setting can be as creative as you want it to be! Due to the virtual setting, you may consider revisiting your sponsorship levels.

Sponsors are a major part of many events and often are provided booth space at an in-person event to promote their business. Without the ability to offer a physical booth or materials, consider what value you can provide sponsors at your virtual event.

Some ideas:

- Allow businesses to sponsor a particular session and say a couple words at the beginning or end of that session
- Show slides throughout the event with sponsor logos
- Have a virtual or an actual “swag bag” that allows attendees to interact with the sponsors
- For instance, your virtual bag could include discounts from sponsors for their product or service, or codes to get physical swag set to attendees - how about meal delivery?
- An actual box of swag and collateral could also be mailed to attendees to keep them engaged and your sponsors happy
- Include your sponsor logos on emails before and after the event
- Show a video for a particular sponsor before each session begins. This could be a set of videos that loops while attendees are waiting for the session to start.



DO'S AND DON'TS

We spoke with a few local organizations who successfully ran virtual events or fundraisers in 2020. Here are some of their tips:

DO's

- Whatever your nonprofit chooses to do, commit to that choice. Try to avoid changing dates or platforms after you have pushed information out to supporters.
- Whether this is your first virtual event or twentieth, don't leave the success of the event up to chance. Test everything multiple times before the actual event, from the virtual platform you've chosen to the rooms you will record in. Practice with your speakers and ensure their presentations run smoothly. Test the registration software, phones, WiFi, etc., to figure out and address any issues. Make sure you do a full practice run before the event to figure out any issues you might run into.
- Less is more when it comes to virtual events. Keep it short – 60 minutes is about the maximum amount of time you want to take; 45 minutes is ideal.
- Consider recruiting supporters to help you get the word out and bring in attendees or participants. You can even give them a fun name to make them feel like part of a team (ex. Women Helping Women used "Pink Warriors").
- Think about how you can engage your attendees throughout the event. That could be as simple as providing polls during sessions. Or consider how you can partner with your sponsors to provide event perks such as discounts for meals or activities.
- Attendees often receive "swag" when they attend an event, which also provides sponsors a chance to get their information in front of the attendees. How can you provide something similar in a virtual event? As addressed earlier, you may be able to work with your sponsors to provide a virtual bag that includes discount codes or access to products, services or educational materials from the sponsors. If you have the budget, you may want to consider sending a physical bag to your attendees before the event to get them excited about the event.
- You may also consider including a competition in your event. You can get your attendees to engage on social media by posting their favorite lesson from the presentations and then offer prizes for the best posts. Or you can include "Easter eggs" throughout the presentations to encourage people to tune in and then offer a prize for the person who spots the most. Something fun, simple, competitive and relatively easy to execute is key.
- If you can add a feeling of "exclusivity" to giving opportunities, try that. This would work best for donations for tangible items. For instance, one nonprofit sent a giving opportunity to previous donors and said they have "first dibs" on purchasing certain items for the organization before the opportunity was shared with the public. 65% of the items were purchased in the first 24 hours.

- If you're using recorded music in your event for which you do not own the rights, either look into buying the rights, make sure your platform won't cut the music off, or find royalty-free music at a site like [Free Music Archive](#).
- When it's finally safe for people to gather in large groups again, consider still offering some kind of virtual component to your fundraiser. Some people may support your cause but are still interested in what you're doing, even if they can't afford a dinner or gala ticket or are too busy in the evenings to make it. Perhaps offer a recording of highlights from the event that you can upload to YouTube and share. Tip: If you offer a bar at your event, do not share pictures or video of people drinking.

DON'Ts

- Don't overcomplicate the script or technology set-up. As with the timeframe, less is more.
- If you're doing an auction, don't close it too early. Use the time in the event to remind people to bid and keep it open as long as possible.
- Don't assume everything you've done at an in-person event will translate well to a virtual environment. For instance, certain fundraising games that rely on your attendees "showing off" their ability to give big in a full room or having their inhibitions lessened by drinks from the bar may not work as well when your attendees are on their couch.
- Don't worry if you don't bring in as much money as you'd hoped. Remember, it is likely your overhead is much lower with a virtual event if you don't have to pay for a venue, food, entertainment, etc.
- Don't sweat it if you have a technological mishap or someone's cat walks across the screen while they're speaking. People, especially your supporters, understand the need for grace when things have been moved to a virtual environment. Get through it and move on.

Section II

Other Virtual Fundraising Campaigns



OTHER VIRTUAL FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGNS

Sources: [Donorbox](#), [National Council of Nonprofits](#), [ShopWithScrip](#),

If you aren't doing an event or are looking for a way to raise funds virtually outside an event date, here are some ideas to get the ball rolling.

Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding is a term that refers to any effort to raise money with donations from a large number of people. Crowdfunding can reach a much more diverse audience than a nonprofit's regular audience. Online crowdfunding happens via websites (such as Kickstarter or Indiegogo) that allow sponsors to post descriptions, and even pictures of their projects, to attract donations. A crowdfunded project's online presence can be shared easily via social media platforms and links to giving portals. Live crowdfunding, on the other hand, features live events where spokespeople for the nonprofit pitch their cause to those gathered. Audience members pledge donations in an auction-like setting.

Learn more about online crowdfunding [here](#).

Facebook Fundraising

Facebook provides nonprofits and their supporters a platform for fundraising. Your nonprofit will need to register with Facebook to unlock these features.

Learn more at the [Facebook Help Center](#).

You can also use free online tools to create creative, visually-appealing content. Check out Canva for social media post templates.

Text-to-Give

Text-to-Give has numerous advantages when utilized in the right setting and fundraising campaign. It is the simplicity of this fundraising method that makes it a successful fundraising method and popular among nonprofits and donors. The best part is, it is extremely simple to start and utilizes the ease of donating on mobile phones.

Donorbox offers more tips on utilizing Text-to-Give [here](#).

Retail Giving

Some retailers offer a percentage of profits to organizations with supporters who sign up for the program. Here are a couple examples:

- **AmazonSmile**

AmazonSmile is a simple way for your supporters to give back to your nonprofit every time they shop, at no cost to them. AmazonSmile is available at smile.amazon.com on a web browser and can be activated in the Amazon Shopping app for iOS and Android phones. When your supporters shop at AmazonSmile, they'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added benefit that AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of their eligible purchases to the charitable organization of their choice. Your nonprofit can be one of more than a million organizations benefitting from AmazonSmile.

Get started on AmazonSmile [here](#).

- **Kroger Community Rewards**

This program makes fundraising easy by donating to local organizations based on the shopping your supporters do every day. You set up an Organization account for your nonprofit and get it approved. Then once your supporters link their Cards to your organization, all they have to do is shop at Kroger and swipe their Shopper's Card.

Get started on Kroger Community Rewards [here](#).

Scrip Cards

Your supporters can buy gift cards from their favorite brands to use for their daily purchases. It's the easiest way to create opportunities for your organization and the people that matter most to you. No extra money spent. No extra time wasted.

Learn more about ShopWithScrip fundraising [here](#). A similar program is called [Benefit](#).

Don't Forget the "Old-Fashioned" Stuff!

Don't underestimate the power of more "old-school" tools for fundraising as you incorporate more tech-savvy options. Many donors still respond to direct mailings, emails, and phone calls for support.