

fundraise

# Virtual Event Guide

\$120,000.00 goal

Donate

Mar

6	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	7	8	9	10	11	12
20	14	15	16	17	18	19
27	21	22	23	24	25	26

TOTAL RAISED

\$316,818

Good news for nonprofit event planners everywhere: especially these days, virtual fundraisers can bring in real money. In fact, with potentially less costs, the potential profit is phenomenal! There's no need to rent a pricey venue or schedule a dinner around an important donor's travel plans. A tropical storm or surprise blizzard won't lead to your keynote speaker canceling out at the last minute. Even better? Your guest list is basically the entirety of the internet since you're no longer limited to local attendees.

And once you're ready to get that (virtual) party started, we'd be remiss not to mention that Funraise makes planning and execution a breeze. Imagine Virtual Events tools that let you sell tickets, register guests, and livestream everything on your own campaign site for a memorable, glitch-free fundraiser.

## Here's what to expect:

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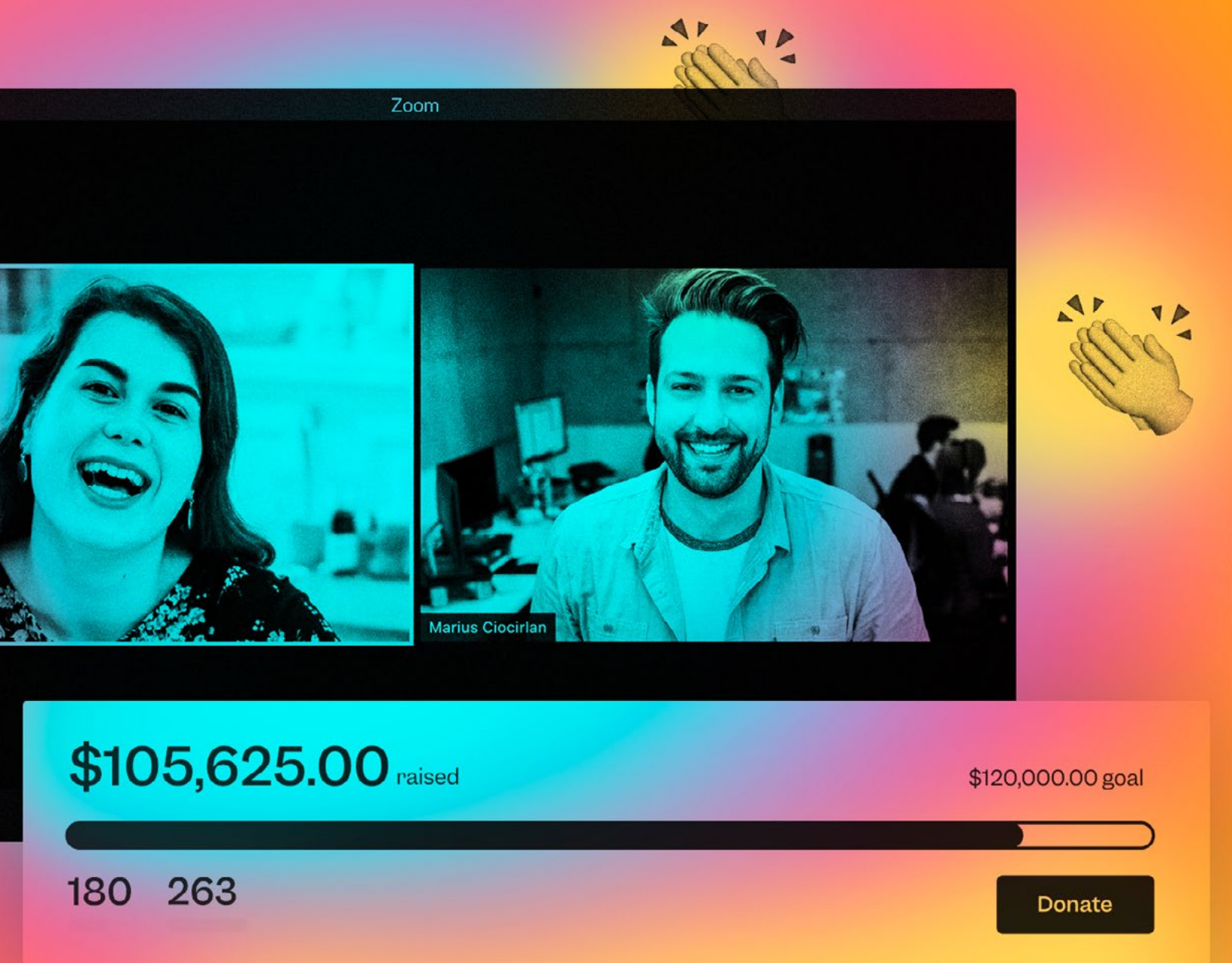
# What kind of fundraiser do you want to host?

Before we dive into the details, you should think about what kind of fundraiser (or fundraisers!) you want to host. Don't get distracted by the familiarity of Zoom if it's not going to work.

## Take a minute and answer these questions:

- What's the focus of this event?
- Who will be speaking or performing?
- Is this event Invitation Only?
- How many attendees do we hope to attract?
- Is this a fundraising event?
- What is our nonprofit's event budget?





## PART 1

# A Nonprofit's Complete Guide to Virtual Event Types

Is my mic on? Okay, good. Can everyone see my screen?

There's no doubt about it: in-person events are fun, but they're not where it's at these days. Today's events need some digital component—and we're here to help you find it.

# Fundraisers Gone Digital

Here are some general event types that you may already be familiar with... while going digital may feel foreign, starting with an established event will get you farther into the planning process before you have to hit the virtual plane.

## Virtual tasting

Cheese or wine from the comfort of your couch, all while raising money for a good cause? Yes, please! With a little extra effort, you can host a virtual tasting to raise funds for your nonprofit.

## Livestream concert

Capture the energy of a live event by featuring performers singing the praises of your cause.

## Virtual 5k or race

A virtual race can provide an adrenaline rush for participants—and an influx of funds for your nonprofit. Participants can join from wherever they are but still have the sense of community that comes from running with a crowd.

## Virtual keynote speaker

A great keynote speaker can inspire your audience to get involved and give big—but they also book up early and cost a lot. If you're planning a virtual keynote, however, you won't have any travel or travel costs, making many speakers more available and affordable than ever before.

## Virtual trivia fundraiser

Tap into donors' competitive spirit, and humanity's love of random facts, with a virtual trivia night. As a bonus, you can tailor the questions to your nonprofit sector, so attendees have fun and learn something new.

## Virtual classes

Teach your supporters something that relates to your mission in a virtual class. Dog training, second or third or more languages, or kids' crafts. And bonus, these can be more than just one-time events.

## Virtual facilities tour

This may be the perfect time to introduce supporters to your team—while your team is making their magic happen! Yeah, an office tour may not be the jam, but if you work with animals, sports, or outdoors, it may be just the ticket.

## Virtual Conferences

Aside from hosting or presenting at industry conferences, you can extend your reach by live-tweeting any conferences you attend. It's a great opportunity to share relevant information, engage with your donors, and allow your nonprofit's witty personality to shine through.

## Remote Meetings

You CAN host video meetings that are engaging for everyone. The key? Choose your platform wisely, up the interaction, and test your tech before you go online.

Below, a few meetings you can (and should) take online—while keeping attendees from falling asleep at their screens.

### **BOARD MEETINGS**

The upside of virtual board meetings includes better attendance and, hopefully, greater member diversity. The rules are the same as in-person board meetings: have an agenda, take detailed minutes, and give each member the opportunity to speak.

### **MEET-AND-GREET WITH DONORS**

It's never been so easy to grab a cup of coffee with potential and current donors. Just don't forget the handwritten thank-you note afterward!

### **ALL-STAFF MEETINGS**

All-hands meetings are especially important these days, keeping everyone connected even when they're apart. Make it special by adding polls, using breakout rooms, and celebrating successes to keep everyone engaged.

## Volunteer appreciation events

Consider mailing your volunteers some swag to make them feel extra special. As for the event itself, consider something really fun, like a virtual escape room or a livestreamed cooking class.

## Virtual Trainings and Workshops

Online workshops, trainings, and coaching sessions allow you to bring in expert facilitators to ensure a great, cost-effective experience. Additionally, trainings can be live or on-demand, so that attendees can access them anytime, anywhere.

Here are a few trainings that can easily be brought online:

### **VOLUNTEER TRAININGS**

Onboard, update, and celebrate your mighty volunteers with online trainings and workshops. Trainings can be as simple as screen-sharing your PowerPoint or as involved as interactive video modules.

### **STAFF LUNCH-AND-LEARNS**

Want to teach your staff some new skills quickly and painlessly? Send everyone a meal delivery gift card, get a good speaker, and then hop on any streaming platform. Done and done!

## Webinars

When you want to quickly share vital information with a larger group, a webinar is the no-frills way to go. They're short, informative, and, best of all, easy to produce. Breaking news, policy updates, best practices... just webinar 'em.

While the pandemic forced us to take our events online a bit more quickly than expected, virtual events are here to stay. And now that you know all the possibilities, the sky—or the cloud—is the limit.



## PART 2

# Virtual Fundraising Fun: Choosing A Platform that Works

Your virtual event or livestream's platform will dictate much of the success of your event, so choose wisely! Here are the top platforms for virtual fundraisers, events, and livestreams to make your decision a lot easier.



## Zoom

**YAY:** Well-known. Which means audience recognition, excellent streaming quality, a good option for smaller speaker events or webinars, share screen options, and special background choices.

**NAY:** Zoom's not a good platform for music. Also, you can't see all attendees at once, larger events need the paid version, and audience engagement is difficult.

**PRO TIP:** If you're going to use a filter on Zoom, be sure to practice! Otherwise, you might just end up like the lawyer who showed up to Zoom court looking like a kitten.

## Instagram Live

**YAY:** Come one, come all! Anyone can join public IG livestreams. With built-in social connections and advertising and easy usability, Instagram Live is great for music events or one person engaging an audience.

**NAY:** IG's not a good choice for groups of speakers, someone who needs practice time with the technology, or folks who want to hold their phone as they stream.

## Facebook Live

Facebook Live is a lot like Instagram Live, but is better for events with multiple speakers. Just as with Instagram Live, you can save your Facebook Live events to your nonprofit's page so people can give on their own time.

## Twitter

**YAY:** Wooo hooo! Livetweeting is super easy to do, builds an audience quickly via hashtags, creates an instant archive of your event, and is great for quick updates and extra-informational bites.

**NAY:** Twitter makes it harder to share media than other platforms. And it's not good for discussions!

## TikTok

**YAY:** TikTok has huge audience potential and lots of livestreams, is great for sharing clips of nonprofit events and fundraisers, and also works for silent auctions. Who knew?

**NAY:** Not a good platform for larger discussions or audience members who need to speak/be seen. Everyone in the program's gotta be ready to dive into video, too.

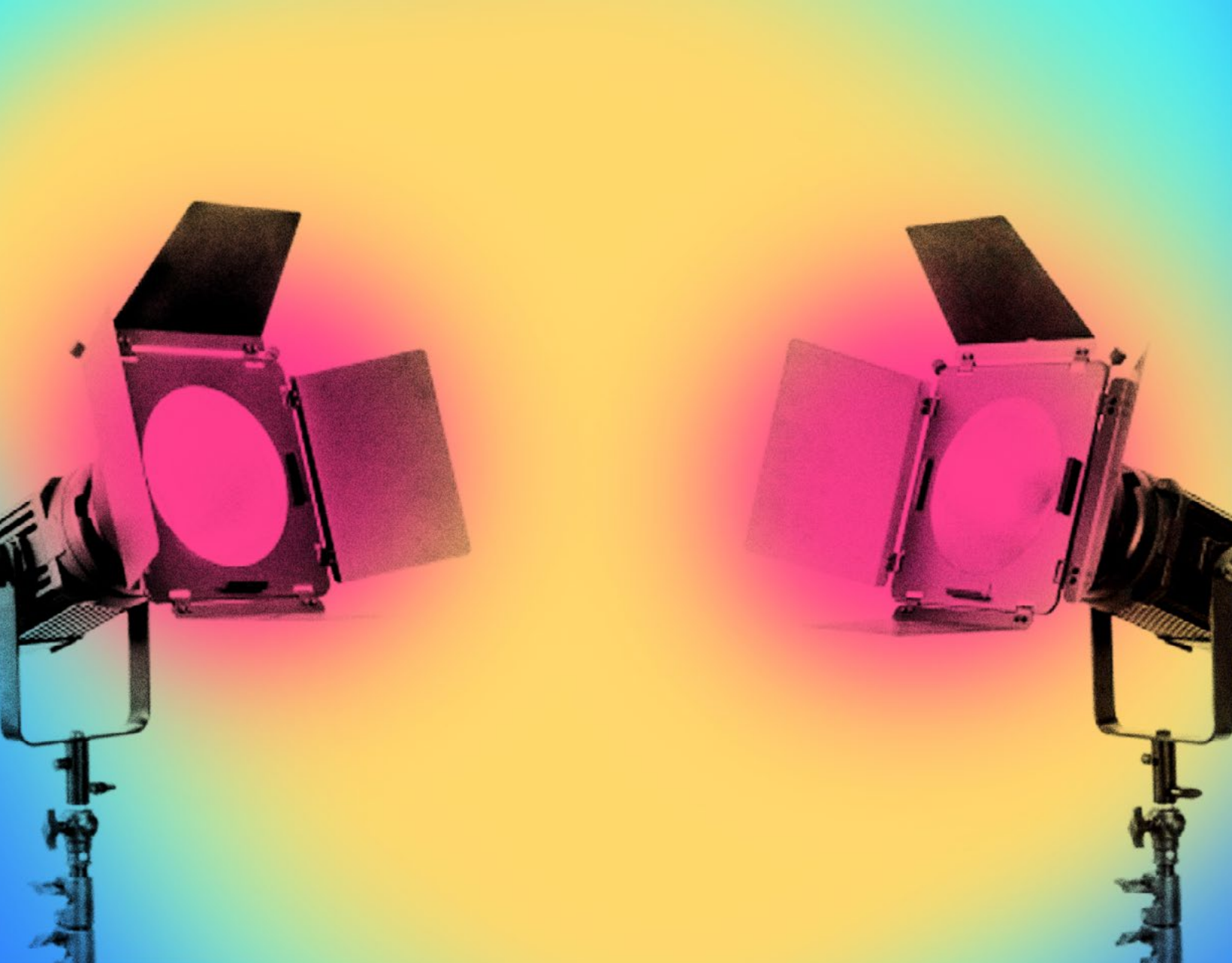
## YouTube

**YAY:** YouTube has incredible audience potential, makes it easy to be ADA compliant (subtitles and scripts), is great for showcasing live and recorded events, and works well for speaker series. In addition, YouTube is likely to be the best of the social options if you want to embed a recorded event on your website after the fact.

**NAY:** You'll need a dedicated (notice we said "dedicated", not "professional") videographer to make videos that look good, and you can't use copyrighted music in your videos.

The best part of choosing a platform? You don't have to stick to just one! If one doesn't work out, try a different platform next time. You'll find the right fit.





### **PART 3**

## **Ready for Your Close-Up? Virtual Events, Lighting, and Sound**

It should be that easy to launch a great-looking virtual event, right? Oh, if only that were the case.

It's tempting to just push the record button and go, but your effort toward sound quality, lighting, and background will go a long way to set you—and your nonprofit—apart.

# Let's Talk Lighting

This isn't about vanity, this is about clarity. Good lighting helps audience eyes see clearly, makes for better physical cues, and allows more communication than just verbal, resulting in a more rounded and fuller storytelling experience.

The best kind of lighting to use? Natural sunlight!

The only small hiccup is that, as you can guess, natural sunlight isn't always readily available in homes, offices, and definitely at nighttime events.

If you can't get natural light, bring in a ring light, a SAD lamp (UV-imitating light), or multiple floor and table lamps—ideally one for each speaker. The key thing to remember is to avoid backlighting.

## Sound

Surprise! You don't have to spend hundreds of dollars to capture professional-quality sound for your virtual events. The uptick in quality is very large when you use a microphone—it'll make your events feel and sound so much more professional.

We recommend investing in a microphone or two rather than relying on the sound from headphones or computers. Look for USB microphones and ones that have either a clip or a stand. You don't want a mic to move and you don't want your guests to touch it, either. Hands off!

**SUPER PRO TIP:** Sound is best when you don't move around. Keep your face close to the mic and still.

# Background

When hosting virtual events and fundraisers, the background really matters. Keep things clean and simple whenever possible... that goes for speaker clothing, too!

**DO:** Use solid colors, distant bookshelves, walls, curtains, or virtual backgrounds (so long as they're stable) to help keep the focus on the speaker.

**DON'T:** Use messy rooms or offices, busy prints, green screens (unless you're using a virtual background), or wall colors that overpower your speaker visually.

And remember, background also includes indoors vs. outdoors, secluded settings vs. high-traffic locations, and sites that can fit all of your special guest speakers at once!

## Practice

Although practice is last, we think it's the most important item on the list.

When you're planning a virtual fundraiser, be sure to schedule several practice runs before going live or recording. You can test lighting, position things in the background, and evaluate your outfit so you look your best. You'll also test your sound, and most importantly, work through any issues that crop up!

We can guarantee that you'll hit some bumps along the way to launching any virtual event, just as you have to deal with unexpected hurdles to in-person events. It's all part of the process, but virtual events are a true test of the old adage "practice makes perfect."



#### PART 4

## How to Accept Donations During (and After) Virtual Events

Your virtual event is coming up, and you. Are. Ready. You've perfected every detail and promoted the heck out of it. Now, you can sit back, relax, and watch the money roll in—right?

Not so fast. The most important piece remains: accepting those donations.



To do that, you need (drumroll please) ...an online donation form! Fortunately, with Funraise on your side, you can go big or go simple—or choose something in between.

## Level 1: Accepting donations on your website

Every single Funraise customer can create a branded [donation form](#) that embeds directly into their website. That means all you need to do is set up an account, and you can have a snazzy donation form for your donors in 15 minutes flat. Our donation forms plug right into WordPress and work with all major hosting platforms.

Need a bit more information about online donation forms? Get everything your nonprofit needs to know about online donation forms.

## Level Up: Accept donations on a separate campaign site

One of Funraise's best features is the fully optimized [campaign site editor](#), which makes creating separate campaign sites a snap. Build a site that matches your event theme, weave in some compelling stories, and add a real-time progress meter or donation feed. Then, direct your attendees to your super-impressive event hub for all their giving needs.

## Ultimate Level: Embed the livestream on your event's campaign site

You've got an awesome campaign site, but you really want to go big for your virtual event. We've got you: how about letting people tune into the event on your site rather than on YouTube or Facebook? Funraise lets you embed your event livestream on the same page as your donation form for a polished, streamlined fundraising experience. The best part? Funraise makes it as easy as copying and pasting in the campaign site editor.

## The Small Print: Tips and Tricks for Accepting Online Donations

It's time to consider the rest of the donation experience! Here are a few of our top tips and tricks for optimizing donations for your virtual event.

### Strike a match.

In the hectic world of nonprofit fundraising, an integration with Double the Donation means matching gifts are a triple-win (win-win-win!) for donors, corporations, and nonprofits.



## Get social.

Be sure to share your nonprofit's social media profiles before and during the event. Additionally, ask all your speakers and attendees to share the campaign and their event experience on their own social media.

## Ask and you shall receive.

If you think your fundraising is over once your attendees log off, think again. Events are exciting, people get distracted, and a lot of folks simply forget to donate. So, follow up afterward, reminding those that didn't give that it's not too late.

## Seal the deal.

Post-event, your number one goal is to make sure every attendee feels appreciated. Send a live recording of the event, a thank you for attending, and an update on how much you've raised so far.

So there you have it: a winning recipe to make your virtual event into a donation powerhouse!



## PART 5

# How to Plan and Promote Your Nonprofit's Virtual Fundraiser

When it comes to throwing a virtual event, trust us: you don't want to procrastinate. To that end, we're here to walk you through how to develop a solid virtual event plan, from initial ideation to game day.

**Q:** Why all the focus on planning?

**A:** The best way to save yourself money, mistakes, and a whole lot of headaches? Get planning ASAP.

## Step One: Begin with the Basics

Start off on the right foot by figuring out the basics (who, what, when, and where). Then, dive into the details.

### What type of event should we have?

If you're feeling overwhelmed, here are a few questions to help narrow down your options:

- What are our goals for the event?
- Do we want to emulate a previous in-person event or do something completely new?
- Who's our target audience and how can we best meet their needs?
- How many people do we anticipate attending the event?
- How tech-savvy is the target audience?
- What's our budget?
- How do we intend to generate revenue from the event?

### Who needs to be there?

Okay, you've figured out the type of event you want to hold. Now that the "what" is taken care of, you can move on to the "who." Think about any special guests or hosts and reach out to them pronto.

### When should we have it?

For virtual events, be aware of holidays and seasonal trends as well as conflicting events and general preferences. For example, while folks might enjoy dressing up for a Saturday night gala, they're probably going to opt out of a Saturday night webinar.

## Where should it take place?

Obviously, it's going to be online, but you still need to choose a platform that suits your needs. Luckily, you got a head start on choosing that important detail.

## Step Two: Ensure Your Event Is for Everyone

With the fundamentals taken care of, you can move on to other items that will make for an exceptional virtual event. At the top of the list: making sure you accommodate every potential attendee. Here are some tips to design an inclusive virtual event.

- Accommodate guests with learning, visual, and hearing impairments by including sufficient break time, using alt text for images, reminding hosts to read all printed text aloud, and adding live captions.
- Before the big day, provide clear login instructions—both text and images—for those with limited tech knowledge or access.
- Employ a diverse event planning team and feature diverse guests, speakers, and panelists.
- Use inclusive language in all materials, acknowledging privilege and avoiding gendered terms and cultural appropriation.
- Offer sliding-scale fees so that everyone can attend, regardless of their financial situation.
- Try to accommodate different languages and locations by using live translation services, including sign language, and making the event available to watch on-demand later. (Good thing Funraise's [donation forms](#) are translatable and support multiple currencies!)
- Be open to feedback before, during, and after the event so you can keep improving.

## Step Three: Plan to Promote

If you don't want to be speaking to an ~~empty room~~ blank screen, marketing needs to be a major part of your event plan. While virtual events require less planning than in-person ones (yay!), you still want to give your audience plenty of time to get excited and clear their schedules—especially when so many are already burned out on e-life.

If this is your big annual to-do, make the initial announcement two or more months beforehand. For smaller or repeat events, announce them 1-3 weeks ahead of time.

Marketing isn't just shouting about something; the purpose is to provide information that will intrigue people.

- Why are you having this event?
- How long will it be?
- Will it be interactive?
- Will participants be on camera?

## Step Four: Don't Forget to Fundraise (and Funraise)

Not that you need reminding, but... this is a fundraiser. While you'll likely do most of the fundraising during the event itself, you can give yourself a head start by (wait for it) ...planning!

Early on, identify and reach out to any foundations or sponsors that you're hoping to get on board. They'll add value monetarily, and they'll promote your event or organization through their networks or on social media. Plus, securing matching gifts in advance puts you on track to meet your financial goals.

You probably already know that Funraise is the perfect tool for accepting donations during and after your event because you can [offer tickets](#), solicit donations, and capture donor info all in one place.

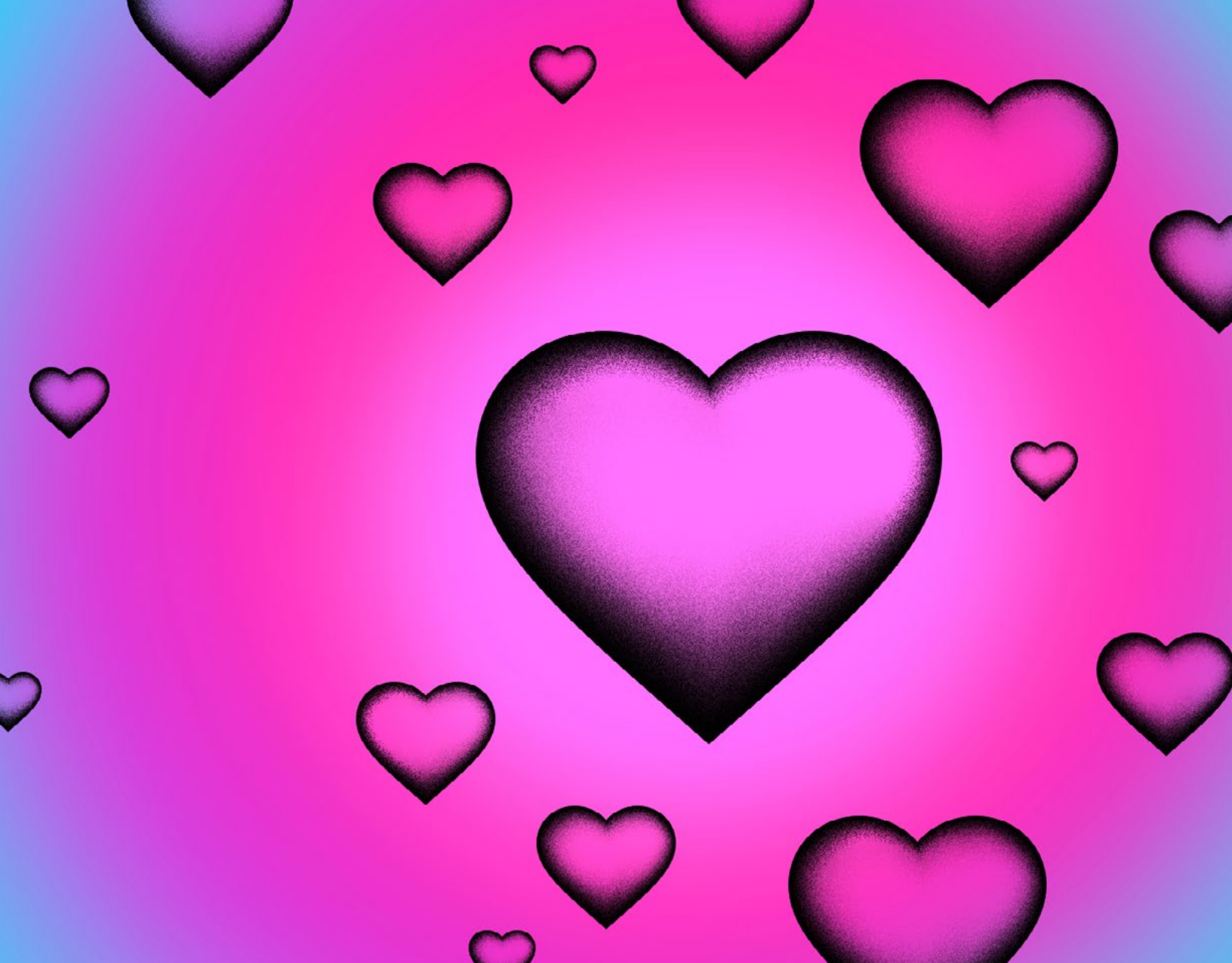
## Step Five: Triage Your Tech Troubles

You always do a run-through before a live event, and a virtual event requires the same. Prepare for the inevitable tech troubles by rehearsing the event in advance—you want to check for a smooth registration and log-in process as well as any software glitches.

On event day, make sure everyone knows where to get help if they need it. Share a help link before the event begins and display it on your event website.

By planning and promoting your event ahead of time, you can hit the ground running with a fantabulous virtual event—and eight hours of sleep the night before.





## **PART 6**

# **Ways to Engage Virtual Audiences**

It's challenging to keep audiences, especially virtual ones, engaged and listening; computers create extra distance, watching from home means constant distractions, and the pull of streaming movies is super strong.

But there are also lots of ways to ensure your audience enjoys themselves and that you keep their attention (and donations). Here are some tried-and-true favorites.

## Talk to the Source

The absolute best way to know what your audience wants to see, hear, and engage with is to ask them. Have you already put on a few virtual events? Send out an audience survey! Better yet, ask for feedback as people leave the event.

## Connect with Donors Directly

Virtual fundraisers give nonprofit organizations the chance to talk directly to their donors, in real time, and make a connection that will (hopefully) turn into a lasting donor relationship.

- Respond to audience comments/questions in real-time
- Acknowledge people by name when they join the event
- Bring people to the video foreground when addressing a question
- Create breakout rooms for more intimate discussion

## Use Activities to Engage your Audience

If you really want to get your audience involved, or you're needing to grow prospective donors, add in some activities to relieve the tedium of staring at a computer screen.

## Quizzes

Ask your audience questions throughout the event or have a quiz at the end where attendees can win a prize.

## Raffles

Raffles are a great way to keep people listening and raise money. Call out raffle winners throughout the event, but require people to be present to win.

## Auctions

Silent or otherwise, auctions generate a lot of excitement and energy. Not only will you raise money at your event, but you'll probably bring out the audience's competitive spirit, too.

## Virtual Events Need Diversity

Think of the difference between a one-man show and a full musical cast. People want to hear diverse voices and perspectives, as well as ways of speaking, engaging, and joking.

Bring in a guest speaker and promote their specific expertise. Let a variety of people take over different sections so it's not just one person the entire time. Diversity makes everything better and it should be an essential part of any virtual event plan.

These are all great ways to not only keep your audience engaged during events, but to make your events extra-engaging as you go, building a reputation for awesome events your organization can be proud of.



## PART 7

# A Nonprofit's Virtual Events Checklist

Yep, this is a checklist; no more, no less. It feels good to be able to go through the list and cross items off, so here you go: A Nonprofit's Virtual Events Checklist.

Before hitting the record button, be sure you've gone through each of these sections. A full checklist will mean a great, prepared event. Good luck!

# Virtual Events Checklist

- Platform prepared
- Bright lighting
- High-quality sound
- Strong background
- Social media promotion scheduled
- Fundraising websites linked
- Event agenda set
- Audience engagement activities planned
- Donation asks written
- Practice sessions complete

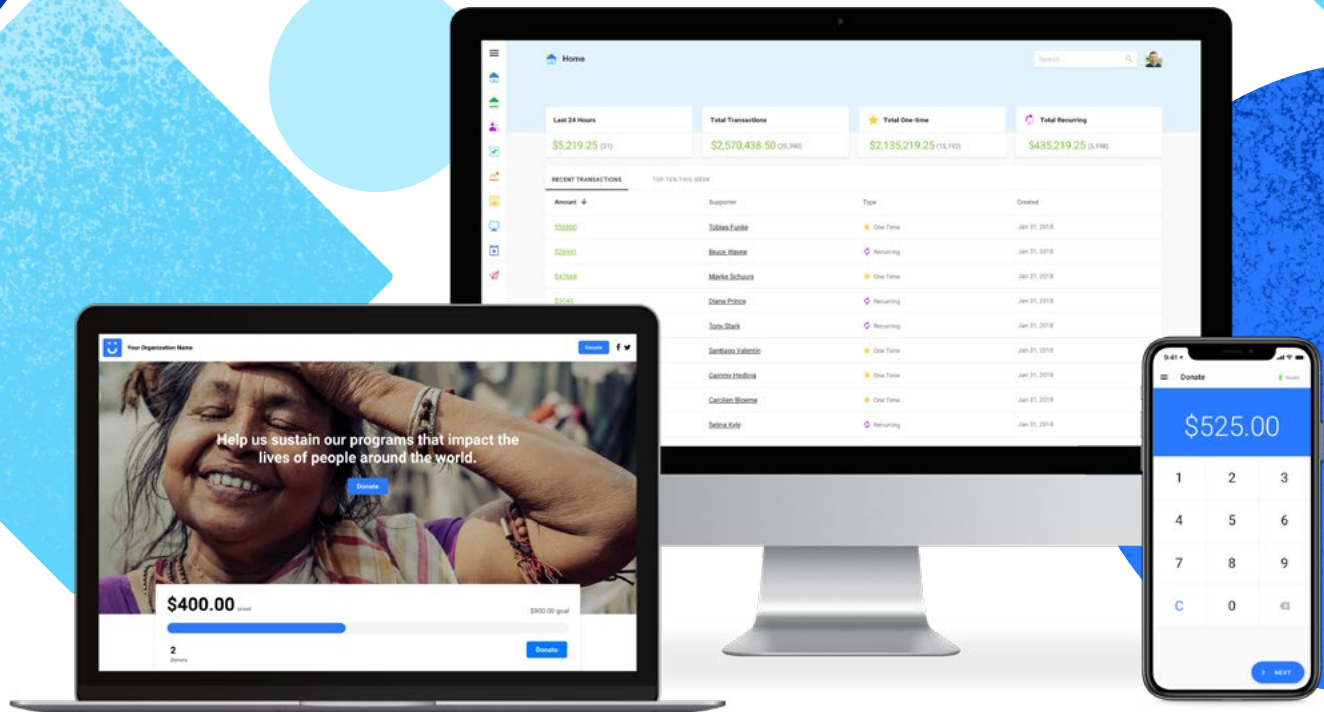
That's it! Those are all of the major components to having an engaging, successful virtual event. If you can check off all of these items on the list, then you can feel confident about hitting that record button and showcasing your nonprofit organization. Go get 'em!











# funraise

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