

Luzerne Music Center: Creative Donor Engagement

TEACHER NOTES

Learning Objectives

- Describe the dynamics of a summer music camp and presenting arts festival.
- Generate and evaluate fundraising opportunities for a small arts organization.
- Recognize the need for a capital campaign.
- Apply fundraising ideas to large capital initiatives.

Topics For Discussion

Fundraising Initiatives

Luzerne Music Center (LMC) is both a summer camp and concert series located in the rural Adirondack Mountains of New York State. Along with creating a musically rich culture for the community, LMC focuses on making its program accessible to all students regardless of their financial circumstances. As a result, much of the LMC budget relies heavily on donations and grant funding rather than tuition income. As the summer program grows each year, so does LMC's annual operating budget. The organization has a need for lucrative and efficient fundraising initiatives to be led by a small administrative staff.

- What initiatives has LMC used so far to procure donations both during the summer season and in the off season? Ask the students to rank the present tactics in terms of effectiveness.
- In addition to events, soirées, and house concerts, what additional sources can the LMC administrative team seek for fundraising? Considering the function of the instructional program and concert series, invite the students brainstorm other possible initiatives. How do the newly generated ideas compare with the existing fundraising initiatives?
- The case outlines how dependent LMC is on the work of its artistic director, Elizabeth Pitcairn, and the connections she fosters through her outreach and house concerts. Without a specific donor-relations or fundraising staff member, the team also works to operate these events in addition to other responsibilities. How might administrative team members consider redistributing responsibilities? If they were to hire additional staff, what roles could be assigned in the area of fundraising?
- Examine LMC's current income sources shown in **Appendix 1**. How might the organization make its existing approach to fundraising even more effective? Where should administrative and strategic energy be focused?

- LMC is located in a rustic summer camp setting, yet high-profile performers are invited each summer to create an artistically rich program. The administration sees this as a competitive advantage. How can existing and new fundraising efforts build on this perceived competitive advantage?

Donor Relations

Throughout LMC's history, the organization has been supported by generous and active donors, many of whom visit the campus during the summer. As supporters of the arts, these donors take interest in both the musical performances and student life on the LMC campus. Aiming to both fundraise for student scholarships and create artistic experiences within the community, LMC works to maintain its mission with all donor interactions.

- LMC's existing donors are large supporters of the arts, and most are involved in giving to a number of arts organizations. What steps could LMC take to engage donors who already support the arts community and those who may not yet? Consider the different types of fundraising events encountered in the case, from house concerts to the 5K run/walk.
- Investigate the efforts made to engage donors at LMC's annual gala. What creative techniques has the administration used to promote further involvement with the organization? Ask students to brainstorm other approaches LMC could use at this event.
- In the off-season, LMC actively fundraises through house concerts and soirées. List the possible benefits these events have from the perspective of donors and students. Survey the possible challenges these events have for the administrative team and how they might overcome them.
- The case outlined several place-based events, but did not emphasize digital fundraising initiatives. How might LMC use social media or email communications to enhance its donor relations? Have students brainstorm how this might look for the different fundraising approaches that currently exist.

Capital Campaign

As the case explains, all physical structures on LMC's campus are integral to the daily operation of the summer program, yet most of these buildings are in need of drastic repair or a rebuild altogether. With design plans in hand, LMC actively fundraises for both this capital campaign initiative and the operational budget each summer. As the structures deteriorate and the artistic program grows, the administration has found raising funds to be more urgent than ever.

- Using **Appendix 2** and **Appendix 3**, what needs are visible for new facilities, from both a functional and artistic standpoint? What areas of need should the administration target when appealing to donors for the capital campaign?
- Each year, LMC's most generous donors are invited to the campus for the annual gala. What creative ways can LMC use the campus to its advantage to help donors see the need for a facility rebuild in real time?
- There is some concern that reaching out to LMC's existing donor pool for the capital campaign may create "donor fatigue" among those from whom it already solicits general donations for annual operating expenses. What are the upsides associated with targeting this group for both areas of need? What risks are involved?

- When looking at a large fundraising initiative like the capital campaign, organizations often seek the involvement of donors who make transformative pledges and who may then encourage others with large giving capacity to do the same. In this way, what different approaches are needed to target these individuals, as opposed to the larger pools of smaller individual donors? What avenues might LMC explore to reach these potential donors in the Adirondack region? Throughout the United States? Internationally?