

# Philanthropy Emergency Response Guide

As we all adapt to these extraordinary times, many are also considering how to best support those who are in need during the COVID-19 pandemic. The **BMO Philanthropic Advisory Services** team has developed this Philanthropy Emergency Response Guide containing timely and relevant information on making an impact during the COVID-19 crisis through philanthropy.

While the coronavirus is impacting life as we know it, there are those among us who are experiencing a more direct and consequential impact, including: frontline health care workers; and the precariously employed and the most vulnerable people in our communities such as victims of abuse, families living in poverty, the elderly and people living with disabilities. Our global society is in a great time of need, and supporting the response effort is critical.

In times of considerable uncertainty, people often find solace in their ability to contribute meaningfully. If you are looking to make a difference during these challenging times, this guide provides information to help you, as you help others.

## Why is it important to give now and in the long-term?

All charities are under immense pressure. As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, a significant number of charities have reported a huge surge in demand for their services and are already feeling the strain. The role of charities and philanthropy is critical to our economy and for supporting and enhancing government efforts. These organizations are working hard to meet the needs of our communities as we weather this storm; however, most of these charities wouldn't be able to operate if it weren't for private giving. That's why it's especially important to consider philanthropy as a means of supporting the charitable sector at this time.

## Giving in the time of COVID-19

You may be wondering how you can help the COVID-19 effort. No doubt, the charitable organizations you have traditionally supported have been impacted by this crisis and have laid off staff, or postponed fundraising events and campaigns, as well as seeing a drop in general donations. So, what's the best way to help?

First, you may want to consider supporting your favourite charities now, rather than waiting until late fall, the traditional time when individuals and families make their annual donations. Or, you may decide that while your preferred charities are important to you, at this time there are more urgent needs that you'd like to support.

It may be prudent to apply a form of "triage" to determine how to give most effectively right now. The answer could lie in assessing what the greatest needs are in your community, such as: personal protective equipment for staff at the local hospital or nursing home; food for your local food bank program; or assistance for the homeless and vulnerable people that need special help or protection.

You might also want to think beyond the immediate needs and anticipate where support will be needed once we get through the current period of infections, including support for front-line workers and others who may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. This pandemic is not only causing physical illness and economic hardships, but also emotional stress beyond the capacity of many to handle without help.

If you are unable to give money in support of the pandemic, then you may want to help by volunteering your time and services for the following: shopping or making some meals for neighbours who cannot get out; donating blood; sewing face masks or constructing face shields. There are a number of possibilities to explore.

We appreciate that you look to your BMO financial professional for wealth management advice to grow your wealth. However, your BMO financial professional can also help you use your money effectively, in order to provide support to causes that are important to you and that support your community in both "good times and bad times."

## How can you make a difference?

### Take stock of your current giving

Review your current financial situation and determine if you can stretch your budget to give more during this time of need. Consider donating appreciated securities or taking a more strategic approach to your giving by opening a Donor Advised Fund ("DAF"). A DAF provides an opportunity to create a family legacy and support charities not only now, but on an ongoing basis, year after year. This strategic approach will ensure that your favorite organizations continue to receive a reliable source of funds from you, to provide ongoing support to their stated mission.

## Supporting local, national and international pandemic needs

It is essential to identify organizations that are reputable and where your support will have an immediate impact. One way to do this is to look for reliable third-party stakeholders who are already partnering with a charity, or where you see first-hand a need. This includes:

- **Local Support.** Consider donating nonperishable products to your local food bank (visit [Food Banks Canada](#)). Hospitals across Canada are in need of ventilators, face masks, protective shields and many other supplies. Your local hospital may have created a special COVID-19 fund to raise money specifically to fight the pandemic in your community. Contact your local hospital to learn more about how you can provide support. Another area of need, once the economy begins to reopen, will be the large number of Canadians who became unemployed, or may now be facing unemployment. Local employment services centres work to train and connect potential job candidates with employers, and could use support to broaden their services to the increased number of people they will be serving. Check out [Youth Employment Services](#), [Access Employment](#), [Dress for Success](#), [Zero Ceiling](#) or [Building Futures](#).
- **National Support.** National government bodies and sector leaders are engaging and collaborating with charities to create fundraising appeal initiatives. Kids' mental health is a rising concern right now and organizations such as [Kids Help Phone](#) has seen a dramatic surge in calls since the crisis hit Canada. Food insecurity among children is also expected to worsen as the crisis continues. The [Breakfast Club of Canada](#) has started an emergency fund and campaign called #FeedKidsNow. Another group, seniors, are among the most likely to have severe complications or die from COVID-19 infection, but loneliness is also a health risk. Consider donating or volunteering to any of the following organizations: [Meals on Wheels](#), [HelpAge Canada](#) and the [Alzheimer Society of Canada](#). Finally, donations of blood are on the rise. Consider donating blood to a national organization like [Canadian Blood Services](#). Among the national charities supporting the COVID-19 relief effort include: [CanadaHelps](#); [Canadian Red Cross COVID-19 Global Appeal](#); [Food Banks Canada](#); [Canadian Mental Health Association](#); [United Way Centraide Canada](#), and [The Canadian Salvation Army](#).
- **International Aid.** Developing nations do not have sufficient resources to fight COVID-19. In many parts of the world, a lack of infrastructure, food, water and essential medical equipment will leave countless communities extremely vulnerable. Consider making a donation to relief efforts around the world to international organizations like [World Medical Relief](#), [World Vision](#), and [Canada Helps](#).

## Critical principles for emergency response

In order to ensure that your chosen charity is reputable, the following guidelines can help you make sure you're supporting a legitimate and worthy cause:

### Balance your due diligence requirements with trust

- Do as much due diligence on the charity as can be done independently.
- Confirm the registration of the charity in your jurisdiction.
- Look for experienced organizations and organizations that have received high scores from independent rating agencies.
- For newer organizations, look to see if they are transparent, posting their annual impact and financial reports online and whether established donors (e.g. private and community foundations) support them.

### Balance your due diligence requirements with trust

Trust the charity to utilize financial support in the way they know will generate the most significant impact.

### Provide general operating support

More than ever, charities need funds to pay for staff and operations to survive. Consider making a donation and allow your favorite charity to decide how best to allocate your gift to support an area of greatest need.

## Giving through Wills and insurance

Many people are updating their estate plans and Wills at this time. Consider leaving a charitable legacy gift in your Will. It is one of the easiest and most effective ways to give. Legacy or planned giving is extremely valuable to charities and can account for significant percentages of their voluntary income.

Other strategies to consider when supporting charities, is to assign a life insurance policy to a specific charity; or naming a charity as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy. These insurance strategies can help you magnify the benefits of your donation dollar compared to a traditional cash donation. Please speak with your BMO financial professional, who can also refer you to a BMO Estate and Insurance Advisor (Financial Security Advisor in Quebec).

With physical distancing restrictions in place, many estate planning practitioners such as lawyers have adapted their Will execution practices through permissible means such as virtual witnessing, and some jurisdictions are easing the execution requirements in the wake of COVID-19.

Supporting organizations and local groups during this time can have a real impact on how they fight and support communities during this COVID-19 crisis.

 **Speak with your BMO financial professional, who can put you in touch with a BMO Philanthropic Advisory Services Specialist for additional support or guidance on helping others during these times.**