



The Seattle Public Library Foundation



# Navigating the Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19)

March 17, 2020

Webinar powered by: Carl Bloom Associates

What to do about our  
fundraising event? Wait,  
what to do about  
everything?

# King County Library System Foundation Response



- Scheduled for March 7
- Cancelled March 4
- 27<sup>th</sup> year of the Literary Lions Gala
- 20 Authors, 750 guests, 80 volunteers
- Estimated Revenue of \$500k+

# King County Library System Foundation Response



## Decision Making

- 2 weeks prior
  - Factors: rising # of cases
  - Actions: alert library/board leadership and staff
- 10 days prior
  - Factors: rapid geographic spread of cases; lack of containment measures
  - Actions: KCLS Executive Committee, Library leadership notified to be ready to cancel; board leader discussion

# King County Library System Foundation Response



# King County Library System Foundation Response



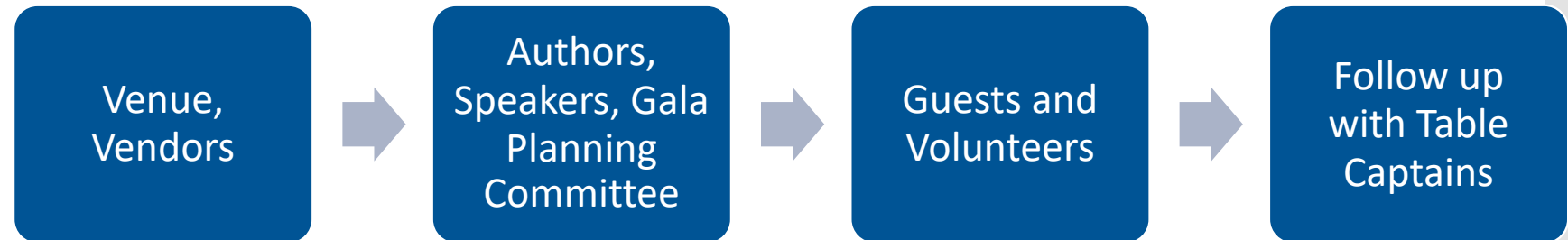
## Decision Making

- 6 days prior
  - Factors: closing of corporate offices and work-from-home decisions; emerging research on infection and mortality rates
  - Actions: ED and Executive Committee call for decision
- 4 days prior—board makes decision to cancel



## Notification Process for Cancellation

King County  
Library System  
Foundation  
Response



# King County Library System Foundation Response



## Vendor Implications

### *Venue*

- Did not fall under Force Majeure Clause
- Canceling within 72 hours of event
- Contractually obligated for 80% of food & bev minimum
- In negotiations with Hyatt to try and reduce this

### *Other Vendors*

- Keynote Speaker, Photographer, Auctioneer and others have agreed to postpone to 2021 no extra fee



# King County Library System Foundation Response



## **Transition to "Virtual Gala"**

- Follow up send to all guests ask for online RTP gift
- Emphasized Challenge Match and additional incentive of signed Melinda book for gifts of \$1,000+
- Link to ticket sales for Author Salons and Wine Magnums

## **Ongoing Fundraising for Spring – follow up to Gala**

- Library Giving Day, Spring Newsletter, GiveBIG and Mid-Year Appeal will have refocused theme

# King County Library System Foundation Response



## Lessons Learned

- Timing is everything
- Being nimble and able to pivot
- Opportunity for growth
  - Relationship building with key donors
  - New donors stepping up – gifts in lieu
  - How do we build this experience into our plans/contracts for the future?

# The Seattle Public Library Foundation Response



- Scheduled for 3/17, Canceled 3/4
- Process for Decision Making & Communications Plan
- Venue Implications
- Sponsor Implications
- Ongoing Fund Development Efforts

# The Seattle Public Library Foundation Response



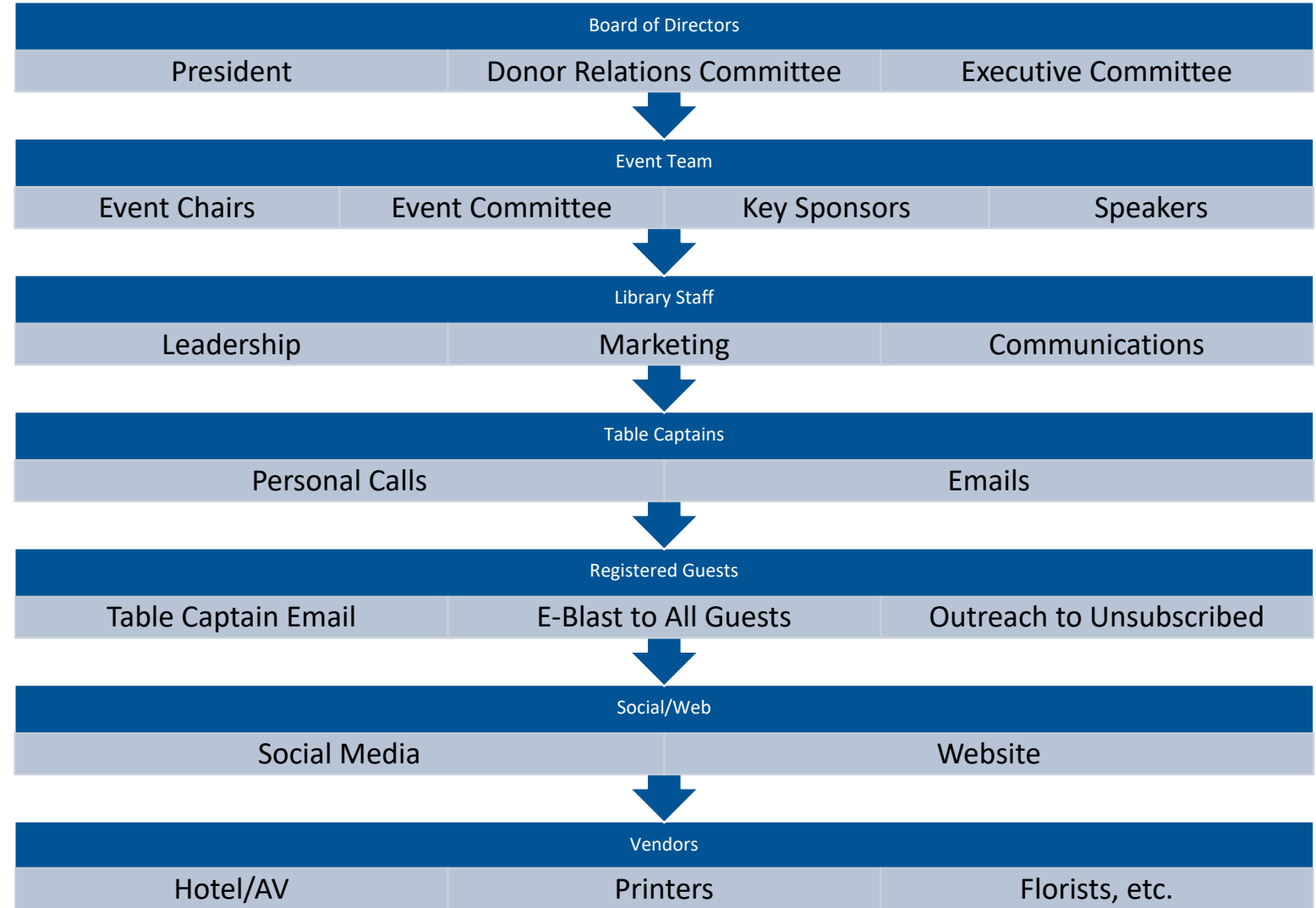
- Decision Making
  - Values
  - Health & Safety
  - Postpone vs. Cancel Debate
  - Long-Term Perception
  - Financial Impact

# The Seattle Public Library Foundation Response



- Venue Implications
  - Force Majeure Clause
  - Initial Proposal from Hotel/AV
- Sponsor Implications
  - Requirement to Return Funds
  - Present Opportunities for Remaining Year
  - Make it Simple to Redirect

# SPLF Communications Plan



# The Seattle Public Library Foundation Response

- Ongoing Fund Development Efforts
  - Table Captain Cancellation Appeal
  - Foundation-Initiated Cancellation Appeal
  - Event Day Appeal (coming from speaker)
  - Follow-up Forward of Event Day Appeal1
  - Peer-to-Peer Activation
- Direct Mail
  - Refocused message
- Supporting the Emergent Needs of the Library
- Strategic Use of Time/Resources While Virus Impacts Subside

# The Seattle Public Library Foundation Response



- Key Learnings
  - Stay Calm
  - Create a Plan / Share Responsibilities
  - Overcommunicate (Personal/Email)
  - Donors Appreciate 1:1 Contact
  - Peer-to-Peer Activation
  - Step Back to Look at Your Messaging
  - Think Long-Term



# Toronto Public Library Response



## Challenge:

We have our major gala in April and other donor events in the spring. Revenue of \$800K+

## Considerations:

- What are the City and Library directives
- Risk assessments
  - Our responsibility to guests, staff, volunteers
  - Financial implications

# Toronto Public Library Response



## Approach:

Proactive planning with positivity and flexibility

- Risk Management
- Communications

# Toronto Public Library Response



## Actions:

- Update Crisis Management and Business Continuity Plan
- Stay in step with the City/Library operational plans and messaging
- Evaluate risks and make decisions accordingly
- Communicate to key stakeholders at milestones driven by external or internal decisions: staff, Board, committees, suppliers, volunteers, etc
- Hold daily meetings to keep leadership connected
- Remain calm, pragmatic, strategic, transparent
- Remember: when the dust settles the business still has to be in good shape so keep essential business practices, meetings, projects, moving forward

# Toronto Public Library Response



## Decisions so far:

- Postpone the fundraising gala to the fall: comm plan to all stakeholders before it is publicly announced
- Do a financial analysis on postponing or cancelling all other events until July 1<sup>st</sup>. Includes impact to revenue and expenses
- Include impact of longer term revenue now that these events won't provide a pipeline
- What other solutions can we introduce? Is there digital solutions to help close the loss in storytelling/fundraising with the cancellation of events?



Beyond the event