

Developing Online and Community Based Fundraising Strategies within the Monteverde Community



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WPI



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**Developing Online and Community-Based Fundraising Strategies
within the Monteverde Community**

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Report Submitted to:

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This project represents work of WPI undergraduate students submitted to the faculty as evidence of a degree requirement. WPI routinely publishes these reports on its web site without editorial or peer Review. For more information about the projects program at WPI, see

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ABSTRACT

The economy of Monteverde, Costa Rica, is heavily based on tourism, and as a result it has been financially devastated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Our goal was to work with the Monteverde Community Fund (MCF) to develop online and community-based fundraising strategies as the organization transitions away from utilizing large federal grants. We interviewed fundraising experts based in the United States to further understand nonprofit fundraising strategies, and businesses amongst the Monteverde community to assess and develop their interest in collaboration. Based on our findings, our group recommended that the MCF should further collaborate with community-based businesses, increase visibility and raise funds by utilizing social media, and improve their donor relations efforts.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Monteverde Community Fund (MCF), established in 2012, supports community initiatives through a small grants program that finances grassroots projects, supported by a number of existing fundraising methods. These fundraising methods include dollar for dollar programs with the Monteverde Coffee Tour Alliance, and the Monteverde Hotels Solidarity Alliance, their Community Ambassadors program and numerous online donation options such as Amigos of Costa Rica and Offset Your Footprint. MCF wished to expand their small grants program during the Covid-19 pandemic to alleviate some of the stress on the community but had also just lost a multi-year grant. Our project is centered around helping the MCF develop effective online and community-based fundraising strategies to increase their donation revenue in support of the small grants program.

Costa Rica is a unique country. It is typically regarded as the happiest country in the world. They completely demilitarized in 1948 and, since then, have been able to focus on social and ecological issues such as education and combating climate change. This unique aspect of Costa Rica is reflected in Monteverde, which has a goal of carbon negativity and a very strong sense of community. Over the last few decades, the economy of the area has gradually shifted towards tourism and away from staple industries such as agriculture and dairy production. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has negatively affected the gradual change in the Costa Rica and Monteverde economy. At the start of the pandemic, the tourism sector of Costa Rica experienced a devastating slump overall of 40 percent, and in Monteverde the contraction was around 90%. Monteverde residents changed their feelings about ecotourism because of this, with most of them wishing that the Costa Rican government would incentivize a shift away from ecotourism because they now feel it is too vulnerable of an economic sector. Understanding the needs of the community and country allows us to portray issues more accurately to donors and use strategies to attract funds.

Throughout this project, we kept aware of potential drawbacks and concerns we might come across. First, there is some literature on how external donations can change the structure of community-based organizations for the worse. We realized that cultural differences across Central American countries and between Costa Rica and countries like the United States may make some fundraising strategies less effective. Our final concern was that adopting additional fundraising strategies for an organization the size of the MCF may spread their resources too thin.

Methodology

The goal of our project is to improve the MCF's fundraising efforts by researching and developing a wide range of methods of community-based and online fundraising. We have three objectives that were created to accomplish this goal: Establish connections with businesses rooted in the community to create future fundraising partnerships; evaluate opportunities to expand visibility and receive donations by leveraging social media and online donation platforms; and develop a personalized blueprint for sustained donor relations. We employed various data collection methods to accomplish these goals. These included conducting interviews, mapping local businesses, and conducting small-scale interviews with local businesses.

We conducted interviews with a variety of individuals who are knowledgeable about fundraising, philanthropy, marketing, donor habits, and what appeals to possible donors. The criteria for choosing who we interviewed included relevant and sufficient experience in fundraising and working with nonprofits, and availability in accordance with our project schedule. Questions asked include what their fundraising experience was, what strategies they deemed most effective, and if they had any online or community-based fundraising experience specifically.

Next, we created a mapping system of all the businesses in areas with high foot traffic in order to know where businesses are located because online mapping systems were not up to date. The information was collected in the form of a drawn paper map and a spreadsheet.

Finally, we conducted door-to-door small scale interviewing of local businesses. The purpose for this was to assess the interest within the community regarding working with the Monteverde Community Fund for charity, which is crucial to our objective of establishing community-based fundraising partnerships. The questions asked included the following: How long they have lived and worked in Monteverde; whether or not they were born there; if they are aware of the MCF; and if they would be interested in collaboration in a variety of different ways that we would list. We followed ethical procedures including asking for consent, leaving their names out of our analysis, and keeping their information confidential from all entities outside of our team and the MCF.

The deliverable of our project was a fundraising portfolio, which offers our recommendations and next steps, with examples of the ways that these ideas can be brought into practice by the decision-makers of the Monteverde Community Fund and help to guide the implementation and development of fundraising practices for future ventures.

Results

Throughout these data collection methods, we developed three main findings. The first of these findings is that certain trends and attributes among businesses can be used to anticipate the likelihood of collaboration.

While completing these short interviews with business owners, it became apparent that having physical promotional materials as tools for conversation was useful for accurately expressing opportunities for collaboration. Due to the minor language barrier that existed in these conversations, having written examples of options for financial collaboration presented clearly made many of the business owners more comfortable in this option.

Certain trends became apparent regarding a business owner's interest in talking to us and collaboration with the fund through our methods. While we had 70 businesses initially listed with us, we were only able to have conversations with 39. We detail both trends noticed across similar businesses that were not willing to talk to us as well as individual stories of our personal experiences interacting with them. The data shows that most business owners we spoke to are willing to work with the Monteverde Community Fund on some level, with owners demonstrating more interest in displaying information rather than financially supporting the MCF.

We identified certain characteristics that showed who was more likely to collaborate with us on a financial level: Owners who had lived in the community for more than 30 years, had their business for more than 5 years, were moderately aware of the MCF, and owned hotels or restaurants were more likely to collaborate with the MCF at a higher level. Meanwhile, those who had lived there for less than thirty years, owned their business for less than five years, were either unaware or relied on the MCF for support in the past, and owned places like pharmacies and tourist shops were more likely to just put up information. However, our fieldwork made it clear that there was still a substantial amount of interest in forming money-based partnerships.

The second finding is that social media influencers and online donation platforms are beneficial opportunities to increase visibility and funds. Through our methods, we became aware of various opportunities to expand the MCF's online influence through connecting with various influencers, integrating social media donation platforms, and optimizing donation portals on the MCF's website.

The most established social media platform that the MCF uses is Instagram. Our findings specific to this platform gave us strong ideas of how to improve upon and utilize this presence. The feature of integrated fundraising which provides a registered non-profit account the ability to start a fundraiser through the social media platform was found to be a useful venture for the MCF as well.

The next platform of interest was Facebook. Our first finding related to Facebook was that, contrary to Instagram, Facebook targets a much older audience. However, this difference is positive, as it allows the MCF to target separate demographics of people simultaneously. Another finding was that Facebook has a highly effective approach to integrated fundraising which is based on several events that center around days of giving. These options require relatively little organizational effort but have great fundraising potential for the MCF.

Additionally, we decided to direct some of our focus to the rapidly growing platform Tik Tok. Through working with our sponsors, we developed the plan to take advantage of Tik Tok's potential for any video to rapidly gain many of views and raise awareness. This led us to our ideas regarding collaboration with influencers, detailed below.

The final social media platform that we decided to incorporate into our project was Twitch, which came up while working with our sponsors. The first finding was that Twitch has a unique and close relationship between its content producers and consumers that would be especially useful for raising funds. Also, Twitch has many built in features, like noticeable donate buttons and enticing donation perks that directly promote fundraising.

When discussing specific platforms with our sponsors, we suggested that the MCF collaborate with larger social media influencers to grow their name recognition. When this was brought up, our sponsor Maria Vargas immediately had the idea of reaching out to her cousin, @lalo.belmar on TikTok. Lalo posts a variety of videos and has about 200,000 followers on the platform. After lots of brainstorming, Lalo was able to tie in two other social media presences, Malcolm Hill and Paula Monge. At the time of writing this, Maria Vargas has collaborated with multiple businesses and hotels in the area to formulate a two-night trip to Monteverde, as a giveaway that members of all of these influencers' respective audiences can enter by sending a screenshot of a donation receipt of at least 2,000 colones to the MCF.

Our third finding is that donor relation strategies and stewardship are crucial to sustainable fundraising. We analyzed effective strategies to create sustainable fundraising for the MCF. Through our interviews, we gained key insights including how to attract potential donors, retain previous donors, and what aspects appeal to both of these audiences. Potential donors are defined as ones that have not donated in the past. Previous donors are defined as ones that have donated in the past.

The group found that potential donors are attracted mostly by emotional appeal and advertising as a successful cause. For example, it wouldn't appeal to a donor to say the MCF needs to keep their lights on because it becomes framed as declining cause. However, one would be attracted to issues such as climate change, or children/education. A cause that either reflects on the values of or personally impacts a potential donor is more enticing to donate to.

We found that previous donors are retained through a variety of methods, mostly ones with personal appeal. One example of this would be to send a newsletter, or a birthday card. This shows personal gratitude for previous donations and incentivizes future donations. Another

way to retain donors is to show where their donations have gone specifically. Lastly, one additional way to receive donations, through optimizing a donation portal, is to have an option for donations in which donors sign up for. This way, they do not need to personally donate every month because the donation is automatically charged.

One way to attract potential and previous donors alike is through stewardship. Stewardship in fundraising is defined as rewarding donors for their donations. This could be anything from a sticker to a coffee mug, to a sweatshirt, depending on the amount donated. Not only does this incentivize donations, but donations of a larger amount due to higher quality rewards.

Recommendations

Our first recommendation regards advising the MCF in advancing and establishing relationships with community-based businesses. The first aspect of advancing relationships with local businesses is to reach out to a portion of the owners we surveyed, with the intent of establishing a formal agreement. Additionally, unsuccessful interviews that did not show explicit disinterest that may prove lucrative should be followed up on. An example of this would be a very popular restaurant in the area that generates a lot of income, where we could not get into contact with the owner after multiple attempts. Finally, we recommend that the MCF reach out to reform agreements with businesses that have been partners in the past.

The next group of recommendations focus on the intersection of social media and online fundraising practices. The online giveaway that the MCF will be collaborating on with several social influencers in the area is the main aspect of this. Following the principle of a simple donation process, our group decided that the best option to support the potential surge in popularity would be a Wix integrated feature for forms. Since the MCF already hosts their website using Wix, this functionality would allow the MCF to ensure that all participants follow their Instagram, send proof of donation, and have their email on record. It is crucial that future events are considered, so we recommend that the MCF does a full reflection of the event to evaluate successful strategies

In addition to this, we advise that the MCF continues to utilize and grow its core presence on Instagram and Facebook. One way they can utilize these platforms is by registering as a non-profit on both, allowing them to take advantage of platform-specific integrated fundraisers. Finally, we recommend that the MCF spend time to optimize their donation portal, which could be a component of a small re-organizing project for the website. These changes all regard, simplification, and emotional appeal.

We have three recommendations regarding donor relations. First, we advise that they instill a sense of urgency in the potential donors. Secondly optimizing the donation portal allows for people to make repeated donations without needing to put in their information every time they want to donate. Lastly, stewardship would be a helpful tool that the MCF may not have considered in the past. Having merchandise available to ship to donors may make them more likely to donate again and in higher amounts.

The group, in this subsection, outlines additional ways that they could assist the MCF with their organization. The focus of teams going forward would be project implementation. One example of this is to survey the same businesses we have surveyed, and additional businesses, in their interest in small grant programs. Groups in the future could also survey the interest of community members and businesses in different possible projects. Additionally, groups in the future working with the MCF could use information acquired through our project to successfully address which businesses and community members would be more apt to engagement and how to engage with these entities.

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1.0 Background

The Monteverde Community Fund (MCF) had requested assistance in researching effective online fundraising methods and expanding their local network of fundraising to tourists and community-based businesses. The purpose of this section is to provide the fundamental background information that was necessary for undertaking this project. This chapter will introduce relevant information about Costa Rica, fundraising methods of the Monteverde Community Fund used previous to our project work, online fundraising avenues for the MCF that we investigated, and the potential drawbacks of outside funding of a community-based organization.

1.1 Costa Rica

Costa Rica is a small country of roughly five million people located in Central America. It is bordered by two countries and two oceans: Nicaragua to the north, Panama to the south, the Atlantic Ocean to the east, and the Pacific Ocean to the west. The country's seven regions are Guanacaste, Alajuela, Heredia, Limon, Puntarenas, Cartago, and the capital San Jose

1.1.1 Monteverde

Monteverde is a district of the Puntarenas province of Costa Rica located in the Cordillera de Tilarán mountain range. The population of Monteverde is about 4,500 and the area is about 52.97 km² (Country Statistics, 2020). The two main sectors of Monteverde's economy are agriculture and tourism, with tourism being a gradually growing sector since the early 1990s (Nadkarni, 1999). Due to the growth of tourism and multinational corporations in the area, there has been a decline in staple industries such as dairy and livestock. The history, culture, and information about Monteverde are all important to help us complete our project in a culturally sensitive way that ties in important aspects of life in Costa Rica to maximize the output of our proposed fundraising methods. It is also important to analyze the effects of Covid-19 on businesses in the area to gauge which ways to attract possible donors

1.1.2 History and Culture

When assessing the needs of Monteverde and the people who live there, it was important to reflect on their values. By investigating the history of Costa Rica, the values of its people became explicitly clear. Learning these values was vital for understanding what fosters a culture of giving.

The Monteverde Community Fund works on many projects including cultural engagement, educational facilities, preservation of resources, and mitigating climate change. Throughout the history of Costa Rica, there has been a heavy emphasis on protecting the land and empowering its people. The country was completely demilitarized in 1948 and as a result, Costa Ricans have been able to focus on civil and ecological issues.

Therefore, when addressing the need for fundraising, we had to look at what brought about this need. Climate change is an issue that countries around the world are combating. Being one of the most biodiverse countries on the planet, Costa Rica is threatened greatly by increasing temperatures. Cloud rainforests, a staple of both ecology and tourism in Costa Rica, are being consistently affected by rising temperatures. The clouds that affect the biodiversity so heavily in these rainforests are becoming less and less immersed, endangering both flora and fauna in the area (Foster Oct. 2001). Costa Ricans have relied and continue to rely heavily on the land, and it is necessary to combat anything that causes harm to it. While Costa Rica has committed to the goal of carbon neutrality, Monteverde has a lofty goal of carbon negativity (reversing the impact of climate change). This, and issues such as water waste management, local talent empowerment, and creating educational opportunities, are among the multitude of issues that the Monteverde Community Fund addresses.

Stressing the aspects of Costa Rica that deserve worldwide appreciation is very important, and the "Pura Vida", the national motto of Costa Rica meaning pure life, is said to be the reason that Costa Rica is the No. 1 happiest country in the world (according to the HappyPlanetIndex, an accepted metric of sustainability and vitality among nations worldwide). About 8% of Costa Rica's GDP is used for education, compared to a worldwide average of 4.8%. By functioning on 99% renewable energy, Costa Rica can protect its biodiversity, hosting 5% of the world's species (World Economic Forum, 2020).

Understanding the issues in the community and where the MCF is involved allowed us to effectively communicate where donations will be allocated. Issues such as climate change and education resonate with both locals and tourists, and therefore we were able to attract the attention of and direct, people to donate to a cause that will create a lasting impact on Monteverde.

1.1.3 COVID-19

The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have been felt throughout Costa Rica. As of January 26th, 2022, Costa Rica has had 655,825 confirmed cases of Covid-19 and 7,483 deaths stemming from the virus (World Health Organization, 2022). This kind of loss has created a ripple effect through the nation with a significant economic downturn. In 2020, during the start of the pandemic, the Costa Rican economy saw a 4.5 percent contraction, with the tourism sector experiencing a devastating slump of 40 percent, and up to 90 percent in Monteverde. This caused many of the citizens, specifically those in tourism-dependent areas such as Monteverde, to lose a significant part of their income or their job (Webber 2021).

The result of this has been a significant shift in the sentiment of Costa Ricans towards the tourism sector of their country (Schönberg, 2021). A recent study out of Monteverde used semi-structured interviews with residents of the area to assess their physical and mental health and feelings towards ecotourism after a year of the pandemic. The study found that Monteverde residents felt that their "physical and psychological health", "physical environment" and "social environment" were the primary concerns regarding their well-being

and that elements of conservation and sustainability are more essential to their way of life than ecotourism. Stemming from this, the study found that Monteverde residents' feelings concerning "ecotourism" and their "work" and "income" have changed over the last year, with the phrases going from a net positive feeling to a net negative feeling. In terms of a plan of action, they wish the Costa Rican government incentivized a diversification of the economy away from ecotourism because they feel that it is too vulnerable to an economic sector (Schönberg, 2021).

1.2 Existing Fundraising Methods

The Monteverde Community Fund (MCF), established in 2012, supports various community initiatives through a small grants program that finances grassroots projects. As outlined by the MCF, these projects typically fall under the four categories of "Environment", "Society, Culture and Youth", "Smart Economy", and "Climate Change". Examples of these initiatives include the financing of an integrated wastewater commission to help implement new wastewater management techniques, the reforestation of areas around water sources, and the construction of a school garden at a local elementary school. Currently, they have reactivated the Emergency Fund that was created in response to Tropical Storm Nate in 2017 to use for the economic downturn caused by Covid-19. MCF currently uses a variety of fundraising methods, both online and in the local community, and this section will explore them in further detail (Curtis, 2021).

1.2.1 Previous Grants

In the past, MCF has received a large, multi-year grant from the Costa Rican government that was used to fund various initiatives including the Emergency Fund. This is the first year they will be operating without this constant cash influx, and to sustain the work they do, other sources of funds are required (Curtis, 2021).

1.2.2 Dollar for Dollar Programs

The Monteverde Community Fund currently has two dollar-for-dollar programs set up. First, is the Monteverde Coffee Tour Alliance. This is a group of four local coffee tours that came together to redirect some of their profits to the MCF and other community organizations. Currently, \$1 per visitor on the tours is redirected to the MCF to support various community initiatives. In their first year, the Alliance raised \$20,000 for community-based organizations, allowing the MCF to distribute support to three different grassroots projects. The success of this initiative inspired community organizations to collaborate with local entrepreneurs to form the Monteverde Hotels Solidarity Alliance, the fund's second dollar-for-dollar program. This alliance follows the same structure as the Coffee Tour Alliance and donates \$1 per visitor to various community organizations in the area (Curtis, 2021).

1.2.3 Community Ambassadors Program

Outside of their dollar-for-dollar programs, where money reaches the fund directly from the revenue of businesses, the MCF has a Community Ambassadors Program with businesses in the area. They created this program to create a continuous sense of unity in the community, not just for emergencies, but to engrain it in the culture for years to come. Members of the Community Ambassadors Program "display the Community Fund's card with a QR code in easy view" (Curtis, 2021) and set up continuous fundraising options such as naming a meal after the MCF or having \$1 opt-out options for visitors of hotels. This is a quick and easy way for tourists to "nourish the community that welcomed them, even after they have left." Right now, the program has seven member businesses including bakeries, health centers, and guided tours. The MCF is looking to expand upon this and tie in more businesses to get their name in as many places as possible and create more visibility within the community.

1.2.4 Existing Online Platforms Used by MCF

Additionally, the MCF has a few existing online platforms. For people donating within Costa Rica, they use El Banco Nacional de Costa Rica. Patrons must call a number and give the account number of the MCF to donate. For people looking to give money outside of Costa Rica, they have a variety of existing options to give money to the MCF.

The first online platform listed on the MCF website is the website Amigos of Costa Rica. This is a centralized hub for various charitable organizations and community organizations in Costa Rica and gives simple and easy ways for people outside of Costa Rica, specifically in the United States, to donate (Amigos de Costa Rica). They also have a link directly to their PayPal page, which is a simple website that provides the option to give a specified amount of money and make it a recurring donation but provides no information about the organization.

Separate from these two traditional routes for people to donate through, they have a link to a different part of their website that is their Offset Your Footprint project. This is targeted at tourists and has options to input information about flights to Costa Rica, hotels, and the amount of transportation used during a trip (Curtis 2021). It then calculates how much money it would take to offset a tourist's carbon footprint for the trip and gives an option to donate this amount of money. In addition to this, the MCF has utilized Facebook and Instagram to garner visibility among a wider group of people.

Online fundraising relies upon all these individual platforms. To evaluate where the MCF needs to go with their online strategies, comprehensive summaries of options for utilizing the internet to raise money need to be outlined.

1.3 Online Fundraising Strategies

Online fundraising is a term that captures a wide array of practices and strategies, with the central concept being that money is raised by utilizing the online platforms and social networks

that are enabled by the internet. This is something that allows donors to donate quickly, easily, and securely. It also allows for nonprofits to collect donations from across the country and around the world. In 2021 it was recorded that 6.055 billion people globally have access to or use smartphone technology, and in a world increasingly becoming connected by several means of accessing the internet including mobile devices, online fundraising allows fundraising campaigns to reach this large portion of the world (O'Dea, Aug 6, 2021).

1.3.1 Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding is a method of fundraising that collects small amounts of money from a large number of people. Although there have been some smaller-scale crowdfunding initiatives that do not utilize the internet, it is primarily enabled by the internet, as that allows for a bigger network of people to be reached. Additionally, in 2020 the market size of crowdfunding worldwide amounted to \$12.27 billion U.S. dollars and is predicted to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 11% (Statista, 2021).

Within the field of crowdfunding, there are multiple subtypes including donation crowdfunding, lending crowdfunding, and equity crowdfunding (Paschen, 2017). The main difference between these methods is the reward that is promised by the organizer and expected by the donor. As seen in the table below, donation crowdfunding gives the least in return, which is no reward (of value), and equity crowdfunding gives potentially the most through equity, bond-like shares, profit sharing, etc. (Paschen, 2017). In the scope of this project, donation-based crowdfunding is the most likely to be researched and implemented due to its simpler implementation and ceiling for optimization using various methods.

	Donation Crowdfunding		Lending Crowdfunding			Equity Crowdfunding	
	Pure Donation	Reward Donation	Forgivable Loan	Presales	Traditional Loan	Investor-Led	Entrepreneur-Led
	no tangible reward ←					→ tangible reward	
Reward Type	No reward	Recognition, tokens, or other non-tangible rewards	Interest only if the project has revenue or profit	Finished product	Fixed-term interest	Securities, revenue, or profit sharing; projects accessible to accredited investors only	Equity, bond-like shares, securities, revenue, or profit sharing; projects accessible to all investors
Platform Examples	Kopernik Crowdrise	Indiegogo Experiment	Quirky TubeStart AppsFunder	Kickstarter PledgeMe	SoMoLend Lending Club	AngelList Seedrs EquityNet	Crowdcube Fundable

Table 1: Types of Crowdfunding (Paschen 180, 2017)

The online implementation of donation crowdfunding often recruits the use of a platform to coordinate projects, project founders, and donors through a web interface. Two examples of crowdfunding platforms that are popular today are GoFundMe and Kickstarter, which both have the core concepts of a crowdfunding platform, but differ in many ways. GoFundMe is a donation-based crowdfunding platform that is free and more widely used, and is commonly used by many different populations trying to raise money for causes that can usually be

grouped as medical, memorial, nonprofit, emergency, and education. Within the actual applications, these platforms are typically structured so that a founder’s project can have its own page, containing various types of information about the fundraising project including its description, goal, founder, and any other information allowed by the platform.

1.3.2 Extending Reach with Social Networks

In recent years, the methods nonprofit organizations (NPO) have used to support their projects have shifted towards using the internet and social networks to establish global connections and extend their reach. For example, in a study called Improving Fundraising Efficiency in Small and Medium-sized Non-profit Organizations using Online Solutions, the media's role is described as, "The traditional media provide one-way communication from organizations to their stakeholders such as donors, supporters, and beneficiaries. In the last decade, NPOs have begun to use social media technologies, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Twitter to post updates and photos, contacting donors directly and inspiring them to support their operations" (Nageswarakurukkal et al., 2019). On these sites, posts do not disappear, allowing for any person to view content, typically from most recent to least recent, allowing for a collection of information to be formed as the accumulation of content. In addition to this, social media accounts benefit from gaining followers and posting recent content, which indicates that some form of regular posting is recommended for maintaining an audience.

As mentioned above, there are several different platforms that allow organizations to interact with their donors or intended audience, each having a different cultural use that can contribute to the larger goal of inspiring donors to support a project. For example, YouTube is used for long and informative videos, LinkedIn is used for professional and entrepreneurial reach, Facebook is used to reach supporters with single posts, and Instagram is typically used to build a portfolio of posts for a large number of people to see. Each platform has its unique combination of audience, content, and cultural use, which contributes to the idea that multiple sources of media are better for an organization.

YouTube	Capacity for long or short informative videos. Seen as a reliable source of information by many, and widely accepted.
LinkedIn	Business oriented social media. Users are more professional when posting and constructing a profile.
Facebook	Very broad and widely used social network that promotes media sharing, social blogging, and discussion.
Instagram	Social network that is centered around the sharing of pictures, short videos and temporary posts. Instagram is generally used by a younger audience.
Twitter	Used for blogging and sharing of posts. Users have limited characters for each post, so informational posts must be kept short and redirect the consumer to

	other sources of information.
TikTok	Social network that promotes the sharing of short videos, typically 1 minute long, up to 3 minutes long. TikTok is very new and popular, and is used extensively by many younger people.
Twitch	Social network that revolves around live streams, often gaming related, in which viewers concurrently watch, chat, and donate in a stream.

Table 2: Social Media Platforms and their Uses

The internet may also be used to supplement online fundraising by being a platform for advertising. Advertisement, virtually or physically, is a crucial step in fundraising for any operation as it allows the project to have more reach and allows more potential spenders to consider donating, buying services, or giving support to the project. In 2019, the online advertising market was valued for \$319 billion and has a projected growth of 17.2%.

1.4 Potential Drawbacks and Concerns

While it is important for organizations like the Monteverde Community Fund to raise capital to keep operating and providing their community with the resources they need, it is necessary to examine whatever drawbacks may be present in the outside funding of community organizations. Having too many resources coming from outside the community can fundamentally change the organization for the worse.

1.4.1 Crowdfunding Popularity and Sustainable Funding Sources

The literature on crowdfunding claims that elite-run organizations that receive significant outside funding intending to help disadvantaged communities have the tendency to stray from their objective and are ineffective (Mansuri, 2004). Using examples from the past, we can see multiple examples of how the outside funding of community-based organizations has led to significant changes within organizations.

For example, a study looking at an organization meant to build social capital for rural women in Kenya found that receiving significant funding from outside of its community caused significant structural and membership changes within the community. In this study, it was found that outside funding resulted in the entry of younger, more educated women, more men, and more people from outside of the area into the leadership of the organization. The result of this was a two-thirds increase in the exit rate of older women, the most disadvantaged demographic within the group, and a doubling in the rate of people who left the organization due to conflict (Gugerty & Kremer, 2000). While the Monteverde Community Fund may not have the same structure as this example, it is important to consider how outside funding may play a role.

1.4.2 Latin America and Ecommerce

Latin America has been affected by the boom in internet technology. In the past decade, regional growth, falling prices of technology, and free trade agreements have enabled consumers and businesses in the region access to connectivity and to benefit from the internet. (Arancibia, 2015). The difficulty faced by e-commerce initiatives in the area, however, is the vastly different cultures across regional and country borders that affect local cultural perspectives (Arancibia, 2015). When conducting e-commerce websites need to be effective in cross-cultural communication, and such a variance in culture across Latin America causes difficulty with this (Arancibia, 2015).

1.4.3 Fundraising for Small and Medium Organizations

It stands to reason that small and medium organizations do not have similar resources that large organizations may. For example, mass marketing can only be done sustainably by larger organizations, as they can afford the heavy cost that comes with it. In a paper, Nageswarakurukkal writes:

The high cost of adopting these conventional fund-raising strategies greatly affects small NPOs, who lack funds to run their social and humanitarian projects. If instead NPOs focused on more cost-efficient marketing strategies, they could improve the sustainability of their fund-raising campaigns (Nageswarakurukkal et al., 2019).

Along with these guidelines, specific information that will effectively and sustainably transfer to smaller, often nonprofit, organizations must be gathered to ensure that the methods of fundraising match the scale of the organization.

1.5 Summary

With significant background knowledge on the history of Costa Rica, the current situation regarding Covid-19, the existing structure of the MCF, and other options for online fundraising, our processes were sufficiently informed and were made ready to achieve the deliverables of this project. Our project shifted directions in multiple ways while we were on site, but these different areas of research available to us provided us with sufficient knowledge to adapt to this.

With this information, the group was able to address our main objectives. Background information allowed the group to assess the needs of the MCF and develop effective strategies to fundraise in the community. From there, the group designed a portfolio of these strategies to present to the community fund. In the upcoming section, the objectives, and the methods to completing these objectives will be described in full.

2.0 Methodology

Here we detail how we achieved our project goal by outlining the three objectives that accomplish our goal, and the data collection methods that helped us understand these objectives. At the end of this section, the timeline outlines the schedule followed for data collection and the development of deliverable components.

2.1 Goal & Objectives

The goal of our project is to improve the Monteverde Community Fund's (MCF) fundraising efforts by researching and developing a wide range of methods of community-based and online fundraising. To achieve the project's goal, we focused on three main objectives in the areas of exploring crowdfunding, establishing community fundraising partnerships, and expanding social media efforts. These three areas of interest, as follows, combined to create a framework for utilizing a diverse portfolio of fundraising efforts that aligned with the MCF's goals and capabilities.

1. Establish connections with businesses rooted in the community to drive the creation of future fundraising partnerships.
2. Evaluate opportunities to expand visibility and receive donations by leveraging social media and online donation platforms.
3. Develop a personalized blueprint for sustained donor relations.

2.1.1 Establish Community-Based Fundraising Partnerships

As mentioned, the Monteverde Community Fund (MCF) has established two dollar-for-dollar programs, with one of them being one of their most successful ventures. We examined the existing community-based fundraising partnerships in the Monteverde Community Fund and explored new pathways for success through data collection methods in our fieldwork. First, we worked with our sponsors within the MCF to gain a stronger understanding of their previous fundraising partnerships and discussed examples of businesses that would be suitable for collaboration.

2.1.2 Expand and Connect Social Media Presence

The Monteverde Community Fund (MCF) has established a great presence on some social media platforms, which as we mentioned, is becoming increasingly useful for organizations to establish an online presence. We built upon this by helping the organization improve its social media presence while exploring ways of capitalizing on the MCF's existing connections to earn donations (Haddad, 2020).

The first step to assessing the MCF's social media was working with the employees to gather information regarding their existing efforts such as their platforms utilized, posts, online interactions, and popularity. Then, this gathered information was assessed to find trends between effective aspects of their social media platform and ineffective strategies and identify opportunities for working with social media influencers in the local community.

2.1.3 Develop A Blueprint for Sustainable Donor Relations

The goal of incorporating a blueprint for donor relation strategies into our objectives was to provide concrete ideas and solutions to improve the procedures for engaging and retaining donors. We created a framework for optimal donor relation practices, supported with a series of "1-on-1" interviews with nonprofit professionals who were able to provide crucial insights (Stofer, 2019).

2.2 Data Collection Methods

The following data collection methods fulfilled the objectives outlined above by providing valuable data and insights into how the objectives were met. These varied from on-site surveying in Monteverde, in-person interviews in Worcester, and remote interviewing sessions with different organizations in the United States.

2.2.1 Understanding Effective Nonprofit Fundraising by Conducting Interviews

To understand effective and relevant fundraising methods and how best to move the organization forward, we conducted interviews with a variety of individuals who are knowledgeable about fundraising, philanthropy, marketing, donor habits, and what appeals to possible donors. These individuals include Laura Roberts, Thea Marcoux, David Pula, Paul Sienko, and Carlisle Jensen and Margaretta Andrews of the Nantucket Community Fund. The information gathered is relevant to all of our objectives, especially crowdfunding and community outreach. Interviews were conducted over Zoom and recorded using the zoom recording feature. The recordings were then transcribed into text form for analysis using Microsoft Word (Stofer 2019).

Our criteria for choosing whom we interviewed, is that the interviewees had relevant and sufficient experience in fundraising and working with nonprofits. We quantified this as having held a position within an organization that manages a fundraising team or philanthropic group, 5+ years in these types of positions, and a "fundraising success" that is left to our discretion based on total funds raised and the size of the organization they were fundraising for.

Interviewees must be deemed available per our project schedule to have been selected. Similar to other data collection methods of our project, these questions are a guide rather than a checklist of questions to ask (Stofer, 2019). Questions we have formulated include:

- Question Groups - Non-Profit Professionals**
- 1.) What type of fundraising experience do you have?
 - a.) What was the medium?
 - i.) Online
 - ii.) organized in person
 - iii.) asynchronous?
 - b.) What was the campaign/what type of group was it organized for
 - c.) We have a particular interest in these types of fundraising programs, do you have any experience with them?
 - i.) Dollar for dollar programs
 - ii.) Community-based e-commerce
 - iii.) Sustainable Crowdfunding
 - 2.) In your experience, what have you learned that is important in ensuring a fundraiser is effective
 - a.) Working with donors
 - b.) Advertisement
 - c.) Type of people to target for fundraising
 - d.) How to improve reach
 - 3.) Have you utilized any form of online fundraising?
 - a.) Online platforms
 - b.) Social media to support fundraisers

Figure 1: Interview questions for non-profit professionals

2.2.2 Mapping Local Businesses

To establish a plan to canvas the area, we needed to know what businesses were within the area. However, the mapping system of local businesses was not up to date, so we created a map of local businesses in Monteverde and what type of business they are. This was done on foot by walking around the area and making note of business names, relative location, and the type of business. The information was collected in the form of a drawn paper map and a spreadsheet. We then discussed with sponsors how to approach each business individually, and which businesses they would like us to talk to in particular (Puntenney et al., 1996).

2.2.3 Interviewing Local Businesses About Interest in Charity

Collecting information relevant to establishing relationships with various companies and organizations in the area was done through door-to-door small-scale interviewing of local businesses. The purpose for this was to assess the interest within the community regarding working with the Monteverde Community Fund for charity, which is crucial to our objective of establishing community-based fundraising partnerships (BEAM Fieldwork). We visited the previously mapped-out businesses in Monteverde and spoke directly to the person in charge, and if they were not available we asked for their contact information to talk with them later.

When we had the opportunity to speak with the owner, we first asked if they would be willing to be interviewed. We informed them about who we are (students from the United States), whom we work with (the Monteverde Community Fund), and the purpose of the interview (gauge interest in collaboration with the MCF). They were then informed that their names and

contact information will be held confidential if they chose to give them. If at this point they still agreed to be interviewed, we asked the following questions and scribed their answers:

Business Owner Questions:

1. How long have you been in business within the Monteverde community?
2. How long have you lived in Monteverde?
3. Are you from Monteverde? If not, please feel welcome to tell us where you are from.
4. Are you aware of the MCF and their work
 - If not, explain a bit:
 - If so, what, if any, relationship have you had with them in the past
5. Would you be interested in collaborating with them in one of the following? (Here, we will review all options in depth before asking them to select)
 - Dollar-For-Dollar: Every unit of a product sold or service provided has \$1 out of the revenue given to the Monteverde Community Fund
 - Collaborative Fundraising Event: The Monteverde Community Fund would work with you to host some type of event that is mutually beneficial
 - Community Ambassadors: "opt-in", name a plate, donate per month,
 - Other: ie. putting a sticker in the window, putting a flier in your shop etc.
6. Would you be comfortable displaying information in the form of stickers or pamphlets in your business?

Figure 2: Questions for businesses on door-to-door survey

To circumvent any technological or linguistic barriers, in-person on paper responses were deemed most effective. When organizing the data we collected, we made sure to separate the responses from the identity of every individual we interviewed to ensure that their names were kept confidential, and all ethical procedures were followed. These ethical procedures included asking for consent, leaving their names out of our analysis, and keeping their information confidential from all entities outside of our team and the MCF. All ethical procedures were outlined by WPI's Institutional Review Board (IRB), proposed by our team, reviewed and edited by our advisor, and given final approval by the IRB (Appendix C).

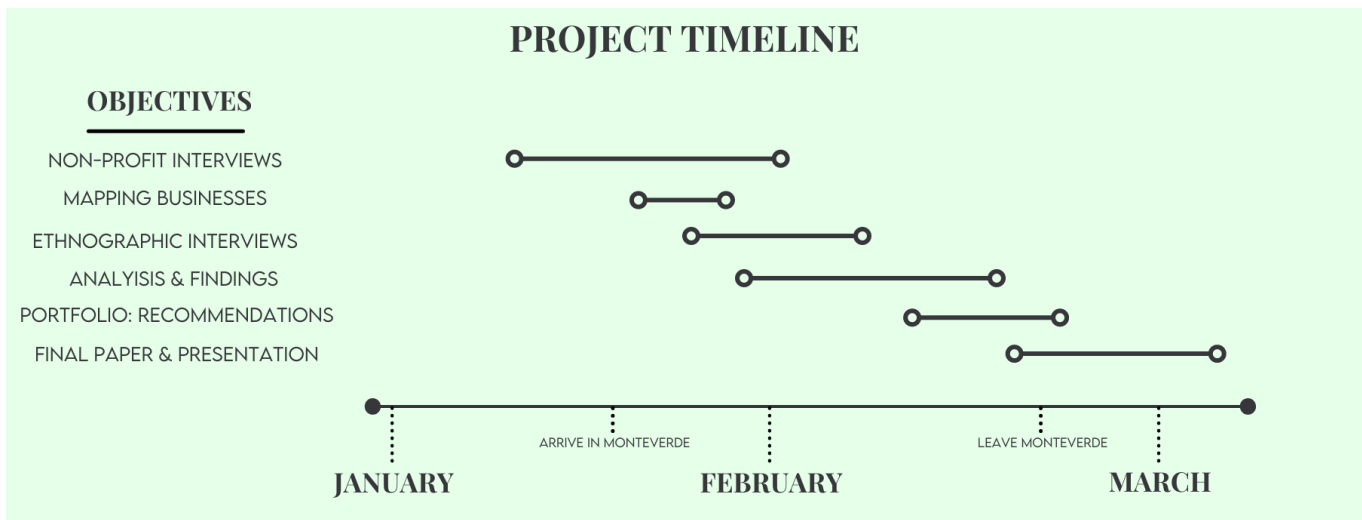
We asked if they consent to the Monteverde Community Fund contacting them after the interview regarding possible fundraising initiatives. If we received consent to do so, we asked for the name of the person surveyed, their business, their business phone number, and the business address. We then reminded them that this information will remain confidential.

2.3 Creating a Comprehensive Fundraising Portfolio

The deliverable of our project was a comprehensive fundraising portfolio, which encapsulates all of our objectives and data collection methods into a collection of findings and best practices. The main purpose of this is to offer information that could be used by the decision-makers of the Monteverde Community Fund to guide the implementation and development of these practices for future ventures.

2.4 Timeline

This project was developed over eight weeks, starting January 10, 2022, and ending March 4, 2022. The first two weeks took place in the United States from January 10 through January 22. For the following four weeks, January 22 through February 22nd, the project was conducted on-site in Monteverde, Costa Rica. Following this, the last two weeks were spent in the United States finishing the final details of the project. The timeline for completion of each of these objectives and methods is as follows:



3.0 Results

In this section, we discuss the findings from our previously described data collection methods and how they were analyzed. These findings include:

Finding 1: Trends and attributes among businesses can be used to predict likelihood of collaboration

Finding 2: Social media influencers and online donation platforms are beneficial opportunities to increase visibility and funds

Finding 3: Donor relation strategies and stewardship are crucial to sustainable fundraising.

3.1 Trends and Attributes Among Businesses Can Be Used to Predict Likelihood of Collaboration

From gathering information through short interviews with business owners in Monteverde and working with our sponsors, certain trends became apparent regarding a business owner's interest in collaboration with the fund. The data shows that most business owners are willing to work with the Monteverde Community Fund on some level, with owners demonstrating more interest in displaying information rather than financially supporting the MCF. However, our fieldwork made it clear that there was still a substantial amount of interest in forming money-based partnerships. Also, while completing these short interviews, it became apparent that having physical promotional materials as tools for conversation was useful for our short interviews with business owners in accurately expressing opportunities for collaboration.

3.1.1 Informational Materials and Handouts Assist in Convincing Businesses to Collaborate

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the attitude of business owners regarding supporting the MCF financially was prevalent in conversations with businesses. However, most businesses we talked to still wished to help in some way. Therefore, when discussing collaboration, having other examples of how businesses may support the MCF was appealing to many business owners. As such, informational material directed towards tourists was created including a

sticker, as shown to the right and a paper handout (Appendix B), that business owners could put in their businesses to promote the Monteverde Community Fund.

Due to the language barrier between us and the businesses, another strategy we found useful was having two handouts, (Appendix B), to use as a visual for the interviews. This enabled us to accurately describe collaborative fundraising options available and different ways that businesses could support the fund. These informational materials were also useful in how they could be used to direct conversations and assist in interview questions. We stressed in our conversations with business owners that the options we presented are only examples of the possible collaboration opportunities with the MCF and that Maria Vargas is very flexible and open to whatever the business is comfortable with.



3.1.2 Short Interviews Give Insights Into Which Business are Open to Discussions of Collaboration

There were several businesses found while mapping out the community of Monteverde outside of the businesses listed on google maps. After discussion with our sponsors, we narrowed down the businesses we attempted to interview to 70 businesses. Of these businesses, 39 agreed to speak with us and answer our questions. These face-to-face interviews enabled us to assess the level of enthusiasm regarding collaboration with the business. The business owner responses were recorded in the form of a spreadsheet and used in our final portfolio to detail which businesses our sponsors should follow up with and possibly collaborate with in the future.

We also found that tourism centers were not a worthwhile venture regarding collaboration because they could not offer financial donations or display information. This is because, rather than being part of excursion companies, they worked by contacting the companies and earning commission off bookings.

Additionally, we found while speaking with businesses, small businesses were more likely to hear us out and answer our questions. Meanwhile, businesses more targeted towards tourists with a larger crowd more often avoided speaking to us than smaller businesses, and even gave false numbers when asked for contact information. Specifically, those that we felt were more "Americanized" and didn't want to talk to us were less straightforward than Costa Rican-owned businesses, who were typically more forward and straight up with us.

For example, two of the largest restaurants in town, Taco Taco and Treehouse, were points of interest for us because of the large crowds they attract. Both of these have American owners, and when we tried to get in contact with them, gave us conflicting answers on when to return, and after 3-5 attempts of trying to reach the owner, gave us emails to follow up with. After discussion with our sponsors and our own experiences, we felt that this was an easy way to avoid contact about collaboration.

Another significant example of the larger businesses in town is one specific location, Bar Amigos. Bar Amigos is the main bar in town for tourists and locals and is the only place open late at night. The bar makes a significant amount of money on the weekends and appears to be an area of interest and an excellent place to either put up information or discuss possible financial collaboration. However, after discussing the opportunity to collaborate with them with our sponsors, we learned that, as of now, the MCF is avoiding them because of the negative reputation Bar Amigos has with the town. Our sponsor Tim Curtis didn't go into much more detail than that, but two reasons of note were the general alcohol issues that the community and Costa Rica have and how they are positioned directly across from the church in town, a violation of the local ordinance.

3.1.3 Statistical Analysis Identifies Trends Among Business Owner's Interest in Collaboration

To assess whether future businesses in Monteverde would be willing to work with the MCF, a correlation analysis was performed on the demographics of interviewees and already existing members of the Community Ambassadors program against their willingness to collaborate. The willingness to collaborate was measured against the following factors: how long a business worked in Monteverde; how long the business owner lived in Monteverde; whether or not the business owner was born in Monteverde; the type of business; whether or not the business worked with MCF in the past; and the gender of the business owner. The results indicate that some factors affect a business's interest while others show little to no correlation. The collaboration interest was designated by a ranking system: three meant the business was interested in financial collaboration and putting up information in their business about the MCF; two meant that the business was only interested in putting up information about the MCF in their business; one meant that the business had no interest in collaboration of any means.

Relevant factors were determined to be the type of business, how long the business has been present in Monteverde, whether the business has relied on the MCF for financial support or is aware of its work, and how long the owners have lived in Monteverde.

How long the owners lived in Monteverde was significant in the fact that the majority of business owners who spoke to us at all lived in Monteverde for more than 30 years or their whole life. Also, this demographic was more likely to be interested in level two collaboration than level three collaboration.

The amount of time the business has been present in the community's impact on the level of interest in collaboration is prevalent in two separate groups of demographics. One

demographic is businesses that have only been present in the community for less than five years. This particular demographic is typically interested in level two collaboration. A few of these businesses we talked to mentioned this specifically as a reason. More established businesses in the community that had been present for more than five years were more likely to consider level three collaboration, with the longer they have been present in the community having a greater proportion of them interested in level three collaboration.

Awareness of the MCF was classified in three levels: level three meant they worked with them in the past or received support from them; level two meant they knew about the MCF and its work but never worked with them; level one meant they has only heard of the MCF and was not aware of its work or did not know the MCF at all. Business owners of level two awareness were more likely to be interested in financially supporting the MCF, while business owners of level three awareness were more likely to be interested in putting up information than helping financially.

The most significant factor in collaborating with the Monteverde Community Fund is what type of business it was. Businesses owners based in a medical profession or non-food related shops were only interested in level two collaboration with the fund. Based on interviews with these types of shop owners, this is because the business models do not support any simple options that could be used to financially support the MCF. However, businesses based in the food service industry such as cafes and restaurants were much more likely to both take the time to speak with us and be interested in level three collaboration with the MCF.

Factors that had little to no correlation with a business's interest in collaboration include gender and whether they are from Monteverde or not. The gender of the business was determined to be insignificant because both men and women were split down the middle whether they were interested in level three collaboration and level two collaboration. Whether or not a business owner was born in Monteverde was deemed to have no correlation with interest level for the same reason.

3.2 Social Media Influencers and Online Donation Platforms Are Beneficial Opportunities to Increase Visibility and Funds

Through our brainstorming sessions with sponsors, and our interviews with non-profit professionals, we became aware of various opportunities to expand the MCF's online influence through connecting with various influencers, integrating social media donation platforms, and creating an effective donation portal in the MCF's website.

3.2.1 Social Media for Visibility and Integrated Fundraising

One of the common themes of our interviews, which was supported by what we learned in our background, was that having a strong online presence through several social media platforms is essential for an organization's success in the online world. Through our interviews and work, we found that focusing on four main platforms, Instagram, Facebook, Tik Tok, and Twitch, would

be an effective strategy to increase the visibility of the organization while raising funds through integrated or customized fundraisers.

The most established platform that the MCF makes use of is Instagram. In an interview with Laura Roberts, a WPI faculty member with experience in online fundraising, one of the first clarifying questions presented to us was if the Monteverde Community Fund had a presence on any platforms, particularly Instagram. There is already a very strong presence on the app, so our findings specific to this platform gave us strong ideas of how to improve upon and utilize this presence. The first thing we discovered about Instagram, relating to visibility and audience, is the demographic of the page's users and the need to grow the number of followers. Specific to their page, there are close to 1,000 followers, made up of predominantly younger people according to our sponsor, and there is a desire to grow and broaden this audience to make their online fundraising more effective and increase their visibility. The next finding related to Instagram, common among many popular platforms, is the feature of integrated fundraising which provides a registered non-profit account the ability to start a fundraiser through the social media platform. This was recommended by Laura Roberts and is an easy way for the MCF to raise money with relatively little effort and attention required.

The next platform of interest was Facebook. It is similar to Instagram in the way that it is one of the larger platforms available, and it can be leveraged by the organization to accomplish very similar goals. After conversing with our sponsor, our first finding related to Facebook was that contrary to Instagram, Facebook targets a much older audience. However, this difference is positive, as it allows the MCF to target separate demographics of people simultaneously. Another finding, suggested in an interview with Laura Roberts, was that Facebook has a highly effective and popular approach to integrated fundraising. Unlike Instagram, Facebook's approach to integrated fundraising is based on several events that center around days of giving. One of these popular integrated fundraisers is "Giving Tuesday" which allows money to be raised by a non-profit organization through Facebook on a set date every year. Another example is individual users' "birthday fundraisers", which allow them to create a fundraiser on their birthday, where their friends can participate by donating to the non-profit that was specified. Both of these options require relatively little organizational effort but have the potential to collect a large number of funds for the MCF.

Additionally, we decided to direct some of our focus to one of the biggest, and certainly the most trending apps in social media, Tik Tok. Through working with our sponsors, we developed the idea that Tik Tok would allow us to take advantage of a trending platform where any video has the potential to rapidly gain thousands, or millions, of views. This finding caused us to draw more focus towards this approach and start to develop ideas of how we could leverage the app and its networks, which is detailed in the following section.

The final, and most unique social media platform that we decided to incorporate into our project was Twitch. Through our daily work with the sponsors, Twitch was brought up as a potential platform to utilize, and upon further investigation, we started to develop ideas as to how the unique features would be especially helpful. The first finding was that Twitch has a

unique and close relationship between its content producers or streamers, and content consumers or viewers that would be especially useful for raising funds. Twitch streamers release content and interact with their followers in real-time, which has created a dynamic where viewers must donate money to the streamer to get noticed. This particular dynamic suggested to us that the viewers are more accustomed to giving money and that each streamer has a more intimate relationship with their followers compared to other platforms. Therefore, the idea of raising funds through Twitch is based upon the idea that its viewers are inherently more likely to donate to a cause that is promoted by a particular streamer. Another finding of Twitch is that it has many built-in features, like noticeable donate buttons and enticing donation perks that directly promote fundraising. These features also allow for events like "charity streams", which have the potential for large amounts of donations to be directed to an organization within a specific streaming period.

3.2.2 Utilizing Social Media Influencers

After connecting with one of our sponsors, Maria Vargas, and discussing opportunities to increase the MCF's social media following, we developed a plan to connect with major social media influencers using connections Maria has in the community. The idea first came through us mentioning the idea of an influencer, and Maria realizing her connection to a popular Costa Rican TikTok account, @lalo.belmar. Lalo posts a variety of videos, most of them with a comedic theme, and has about 200,000 followers on the platform. Throughout our time onsite, we helped Maria brainstorm ideas for what this could look like and offered her the perspective of four college students in their early 20s who are active on social media. We helped her navigate platforms she was unfamiliar with, such as Twitch, and offered advice on what strategies would be most effective in captivating an audience and drawing them to the MCF. Through these conversations and connections that Lalo has, a very beneficial partnership was developed. As a popular influencer, Lalo was able to tie in two other social media presences, Malcolm Hill and Paula Monge. Malcolm is popular on Instagram (@malcolmlhill) with 54,000 followers and TikTok (@malcolmhil89) with 595,000 followers. The other, Paula Monge, is another popular influencer with around 48,000 followers on TikTok (@mongepapauli_), 62,000 followers on Instagram (@mongepapauli), and about 2,000 subscribers on Youtube. These three influencers collaborated with the MCF to post a scripted video on TikTok where they tell a story about Monteverde, describe the giveaway, and urge people to enter.

The video starts when Paula asks if Malcolm knows about Monteverde. Malcolm says he knows about how beautiful Monteverde is, and that there is an opportunity for the audience to take part in. At this point, there is a transition to Lalo who describes how the MCF is funding a two-night stay in Monteverde. He then pans the camera to show the Monteverde skyline before describing how to join the raffle, all while conveying the importance of the MCF's work. Finally, he directs them to the description of the video, where there is a link to follow the MCF on Instagram. Maria Vargas, the primary organizer of the project, said that her goal for this is to raise \$250, but we all agreed this has the potential to be much larger.

Outside of this specific collaboration project, Maria Vargas mentioned a twitch streamer who was interested in helping with the Tik Tok named Julian Valverde who had a significant Twitch following. Although he backed out of the Tik Tok, our interest as students in their early twenties who frequent the platform ourselves was immediately peaked. After we explained the functionality of Twitch and how it is the most ideal social media platform for fundraising, we discussed the possibility of looping Julian in on a charity stream. We showed Maria Vargas statistics about how successful charity streams can be and she was very interested in making this happen, but at the time of writing this, there is nothing concrete.

3.2.3 Optimizing an Online Donation Portal

In an interview with Laura Roberts, we learned about the usefulness of channeling most donations through one centralized online donation portal. This provides many benefits including full control over donor data, having donation records in one place, and being able to fully control and optimize the platform. This shifted our perspective on the topic, as it became clear that this centralized donation portal already exists within the Monteverde Community Fund's website but is far from optimal.

From here, it became clear that our role would be to optimize this donation portal which already exists, which we planned to do by building on ideas presented by interviewees. All of the ideas presented revolved around the theme of having a centralized online space to donate that is enticing, easy to use, and straightforward. Some of the findings that surfaced included being very "in your face" about donating, making the transaction in their page, avoiding redirection to another website for payment, and presenting the donation option in a profound way.

An example that perfectly encapsulates all of these findings comes from Oxfam America's donation portal, which is included to the right. The end goal of this area of findings was to incorporate all of these aspects into the MCF's website to ensure that potential donors are more likely to make a donation once being directed to the donation portal.



3.3 Donor Relation Strategies and Stewardship Are Crucial to Sustainable Fundraising

Through interviewing non-profit professionals that have had success with sustainable fundraising, we gauged what makes an organization's efforts successful, how to integrate these ideas into an organization to attract and retain donors, and how it could be implemented within the Monteverde Community Fund specifically.

The acquisition of additional sources of funds is fundamental in broadening the reach of the MCF, which is done by engaging with potential donors. One strategy for attracting potential donors is appealing to their emotions. One example of an emotionally appealing topic is climate change. While climate change may affect countries globally, how do we get people to donate to the climate change efforts of the MCF? We would need to stress that cloud rainforests are deteriorating, or species such as the golden toad that are specific to the area have become extinct due to climate change (Anchukaitis and Evans, 16 Mar. 2010). This is stated by Paul Sienko in the following quote "what is happening on the ground or in the air or in the water in Monteverde...Being very specific with what the problem is will help your cause."

Emotional appeal can also be effectively presented using quotes from people that have been affected positively by the work of the MCF, as stated by Margareta Andrews of the Community Foundation for Nantucket "that's where the testimonials come in, where you can turn around and say...somebody gave \$5000 three years ago. We awarded it to this program two years ago, and here's the result...we've been able to give these grants out to the Community." Additionally, portraying a sense of urgency for charity in Monteverde incentivizes possible donors. The urgency for donations can be presented by stating that potential donations can help save another species from extinction "today" (Laura Thomas-Walters, June 21, 2018).

While attracting new donors is important, the MCF must also maintain its lasting donors. Presenting what it has done with previous donors' money, and what projects the MCF is currently working on is a beneficial strategy for donor retention, or as Laura Roberts puts it "if you're raising money for a specific project or for a specific purpose...keep track of who gave to that particular project...communicating with them the results of that project at the end, or updates throughout the project on its progress." When informed how their money is being used, a donor understands their impact and is incentivized to donate again. This can be done in multiple manners, such as emailing a monthly newsletter depicting the effects of their donations in the community or utilizing social media to do the same. Moreover, by conveying a more personal interest in donors, for example by sending a birthday card or reaching out monthly, these donors become interested in donating and engaging in the MCF's work continually. As Thea Marcoux said in our interview "What are some of the activities that you can do to keep the donors engaged with Monteverde? Something as simple as acknowledging a birthday by sending a birthday card or a small and meaningful gift can create excitement about Monteverde and encourage future philanthropy." It's also important to have the option to sign up for a recurring donation on the MCF donation portal, allowing donors to make automatic payments, increasing the total amount they donate over time (Langstrom, A. 2018, June 25).

An interesting way to incentivize both previous donors and new donors alike is to promote stewardship. In fundraising, stewardship is the obligation to reward donors for their donations. This may come in the form of a sticker, shirt, or other forms of rewards. Say a donor donates \$5, they may receive a sticker. However, if they donate \$50, they may receive a sweatshirt. This strategy of rewarding donors incentivizes both previous and new donors to not only donate but donate more money for a greater reward. This is exemplified by a quote in one of our

interviews by Paul Sienko, "what makes people come back: Generally, it's the donor experience in what we call stewardship. Once a gift is committed, that will oftentimes bring donors back to the table to continue their giving" However, one drawback to consider is the cost per dollar raised. If a non-profit spends \$30 on a sweatshirt that raises \$50, it only raised \$20 and therefore was not very efficient.

4.0 Discussion

The findings we have gathered here help us assemble a comprehensive fundraising portfolio for the MCF to adopt for optimizing their fundraising strategies. Through our research and work on the ground, we made numerous findings, as listed above. To briefly restate them, we found that having handouts detailing fundraising opportunities was useful in communicating options to business owners. This is likely due to the MCF having a clearer definition and understanding of these options and a significant language barrier existing.

When gauging how interested businesses were in having a conversation with us, we found that smaller businesses were more receptive to conversation, and larger businesses, like Treehouse and Taco Taco, avoided us when they could. We theorized this is because they have a detached sense of community and the fact the owners are from America, where the business culture and community involvement standards are much different.

Our analysis of the data we collected through ethnographic surveying showed that business owners who had been present in the community for more than thirty years were more interested in level two collaboration than level three. This is because more owners were interested in information than a financial commitment as a result of the pandemic, regardless of any demographics. Another finding we had was that businesses that had been present for less than five years in the community were much less likely to be interested in collaboration. This is most likely because they are new, and not financially secure enough to consider supporting the MCF with their revenue. More established businesses in the community who had been in business for more than 5 years were more interested in level three collaboration, likely due to a stronger sense of community and sense of responsibility to give back. When evaluating their awareness of the MCF, we found that those with level two awareness were most likely to want to financially collaborate. Those with level three awareness, meaning they had worked with the MCF in the past, were less likely to financially collaborate and more open to putting up information. After our conversations with these businesses, we got the sense that they were struggling financially and relying on the MCF for financial support in the past, meaning they don't have a stable enough business model to offer money. The most significant factor in determining collaboration likeliness was the type of business. Small shops and medical stores were the least likely to collaborate financially, most likely because their business models don't support options the MCF offers.

Through our interviews with non-profit professionals, we received a lot of information on the utility of various platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and Twitch. After learning all this, we believe that the MCF should step into these platforms that they have yet to reach, such as TikTok and Twitch, even if it doesn't mean creating accounts themselves. Collaborating with influencers and popular names on these platforms elevates the MCF's name higher than they ever could with their account. Building upon the existing relationships Maria Vargas has already begun with people like Lalo will only continue to be beneficial for them.

Optimizing the donation portal on the website of the MCF to have a clean and concise one-page design is essential to creating a straightforward and enticing way for users to donate money. Although it will have no initial monetary impact on the organization, this change aims to make the overall donation experience more pleasant for donors, and more beneficial for the MCF. Through our interviews and conversations with sponsors, we determined that emotional appeal is one of the most effective ways to captivate the attention of potential donors. The MCF needs to incorporate more imagery and quotes regarding climate change, people affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, and helping youth in the area. We believe they should explore the potential for a stewardship program as well, to further incentivize donors. We will go more in-depth in the next chapter on these and other recommendations we have for the MCF and future projects.

5.0 Recommendations

This section outlines the actions we recommend to the MCF moving forward, following our period of field work and collaboration with the organization. This includes the three major areas that align with our objectives: collaborating with community-based businesses, social media and online fundraising, and donor relations and stewardship. In addition to this, we bring forward project ideas for future groups of WPI students that would work with the Monteverde Community Fund.

5.1 Recommendations for Collaborating with Community-Based Businesses

The first component of our recommendations regards advising the MCF in advancing and establishing relationships with community-based businesses. The first aspect of advancing relationships with local businesses is to reach out to a portion of the owners we surveyed, with the intent of establishing a formal agreement that directly raises funds or creates visibility for the MCF. Businesses that have shown a higher potential for fundraising, easier access, and more interest in an agreement should be prioritized. Additionally, unsuccessful interviews that did not show explicit disinterest that may prove lucrative should be followed up on. An example of this would be a very popular restaurant in the area that generates a lot of income, where we could not get into contact with the owner after multiple attempts. Finally, we recommend that the MCF reach out to reform agreements with businesses that have been partners in the past. We predict that these businesses will be easy to get ahold of, more likely to reach a deal, and more likely to choose some form of monetary involvement.

Regarding future relationships, we advise that the MCF utilize findings generated by our data collection to aid any attempts of surveying for interest in collaboration. For example, the analysis showed that higher levels of interest are likely from owners who had lived in the community for more than 30 years, had their business for more than 5 years, were moderately aware of the MCF, and owned hotels and restaurants. With this information, the MCF could target businesses that have a higher potential for collaboration, which would lead to an overall increase in efficiency. This increase in efficiency is crucial to the MCF, as their small organizational size makes it hard to carry out time-consuming projects like the general interest surveying our group completed.

5.2 Recommendations for Social Media and Online Fundraising

The next group of recommendations focus on the intersection of social media and online fundraising practices, which starts with planning for the online giveaway that the MCF will be collaborating on with several social influencers in the area. There are several components of this fundraising event that will be decided and lead by the group influencers, but several things on the back end of the project that were researched at by our team, starting with the online space where participants would enter the giveaway. Following the principle of a simple donation process, our group decided that the best option to support the potential surge in popularity would be a Wix, a platform for designing websites, integrated feature for forms.

Since the MCF already hosts their website using Wix, it would be easy to create a page specific to the event containing a form asking for name, email, Instagram and an upload showing proof of donation. This functionality would allow the MCF to ensure that all participants follow their Instagram, send proof of donation, and have their email on record. Following this procedure, the benefits of the fundraising expand past gaining revenue, as the MCF will gain a significant amount of Instagram followers, while “owning” their donors’ contact information, a fundamental concept for nonprofits. Finally, it is crucial that future events are considered, so it is recommended that the MCF does a full reflection of the event, so it can aim to repeat a similar, but refined version of their giveaway 1-2 times per year.

In addition to this, we advise that the MCF continues to utilize and grow its core presence on Instagram and Facebook. For example, one way they can utilize these platforms is by registering as a non-profit on both, allowing them to take advantage of platform-specific integrated fundraisers, like Facebook’s giving Tuesday and birthday fundraisers. In addition to this, they can continue to grow the number of followers on both platforms by employing many strategies including additional giveaways, post optimization with hashtags, and collaboration with other local organizations with similar themes.

Finally, we recommend that the MCF spend time to optimize their donation portal, which could be a component of a small re-organizing project for the website. As mentioned in previous sections, the donation portal on the website could be optimized to make the donation experience more straightforward and enticing. Specifically, some changes that should be made are making the link to the donation page more visible, making it more appealing to emotion by adding strong images, reducing the amount of unrelated information on the page, and prompting the user to select their country of origin to simplify the process. If all of these changes were to take place, the page would be simplified to include the title, “Impact Monteverde Today”, with a convincing image and simple interface to allow the user to donate. In addition to this page, the whole website would benefit from some re-organization and simplification, as it currently contains a large amount of information aimed at multiple audiences, which can cause confusion at times.

5.3 Recommendations for Donor Relations and Stewardship

Concerning donor relations, the recommendations the group has for the MCF come in three sections. First, the MCF must acquire new donors. We advise that, in addition to diversifying and expanding social media as outlined in the subsection above, they instill a sense of urgency in the potential donors. While their ongoing and past projects are depicted on their Instagram, there is little sense of urgency for the needs of the Monteverde community. Being extremely biodiverse, it is essential to emphasize the effect of global warming on the area. Appeal to emotion is necessary for attracting new donors.

Secondly, as stated above, optimizing the donation portal allows for people to make repeated donations without needing to put in their information every time they want to donate. Moreover, while a monthly newsletter is currently put out by the MCF, personalization of all

donors is fundamental for retention. Not only that, but the donor must personally be notified to what project they helped specifically. If a donor can see what impact they have had in the past, they are more likely to donate in the future.

Lastly, stewardship could be a helpful tool that the MCF may not have considered in the past. As stated in sections above, stewardship is a reward system for donors. If they donate a certain amount, they will be rewarded with material objects, such as a sticker or shirt. Having this kind of merchandise available to ship to donors may make them more likely to donate again and in higher amounts. However, the MCF must remain cautious of the cost per dollar raised, as the key goal is raising as many funds as possible.

5.4 Future Projects for WPI Students

The group, in this subsection, outlines additional ways that they could assist the MCF with their organization. The main focus of teams going forward would be project implementation. Our group had an intense focus on organizing fundraising of the MCF for the purpose of project implementation, therefore laying the foundation for future IQP teams.

Such endeavors could include a number of things. One example of this is to survey the same businesses we have surveyed, and additional businesses that may be created by the time of the next project group, in their interest in small grant programs. Small grant programs are ones in which a small amount, usually between \$300 - \$600, would go to organizations in need, or to fulfill community needs for grassroots projects (such as the children's library or garden that were created in the past). Groups in the future could also survey the interest of community members and businesses in different possible projects (or categories thereof). By surveying the community for what projects they would want to donate to, the groups could report back to the MCF on where their money, gathered through fundraising, would be best spent. The final section will summarize all of our recommendations developed through our findings.

6.0 Conclusion

Our sponsors, the Monteverde Community Fund, sourced our team from WPI to assist in developing their fundraising methods. After losing a multi-year grant from the Costa Rican government that assisted in their mission, and facing a global pandemic which caused revenue to decrease, additional sources of funds are necessary. Through interviewing non-profit professionals in the United States, and successfully interviewing 39 businesses in Monteverde, our group was able to execute the project goal of improving the Monteverde Community Fund's fundraising efforts.

During our interviewing process, we found that the MCF needs to increase their visibility and outreach to the community. Additionally, we found that social media is a great tool to spread information regarding the practices of the MCF. Using this information, we reached out to a social media influencer to raise money and generate followers for the MCF. Moreover, we were able to share best fundraising practices utilized by other successful non-profits, and how these

practices can be used within the MCF. Lastly, our group was able to reach the community and gauge interest in collaboration with the MCF. With this information, the MCF will be able to follow up with said businesses and create new, sustainable relationships. We believe that the information our group has found and shared with the MCF will help them will help them increase their fundraising portfolio and have successful fundraising campaigns in the future.

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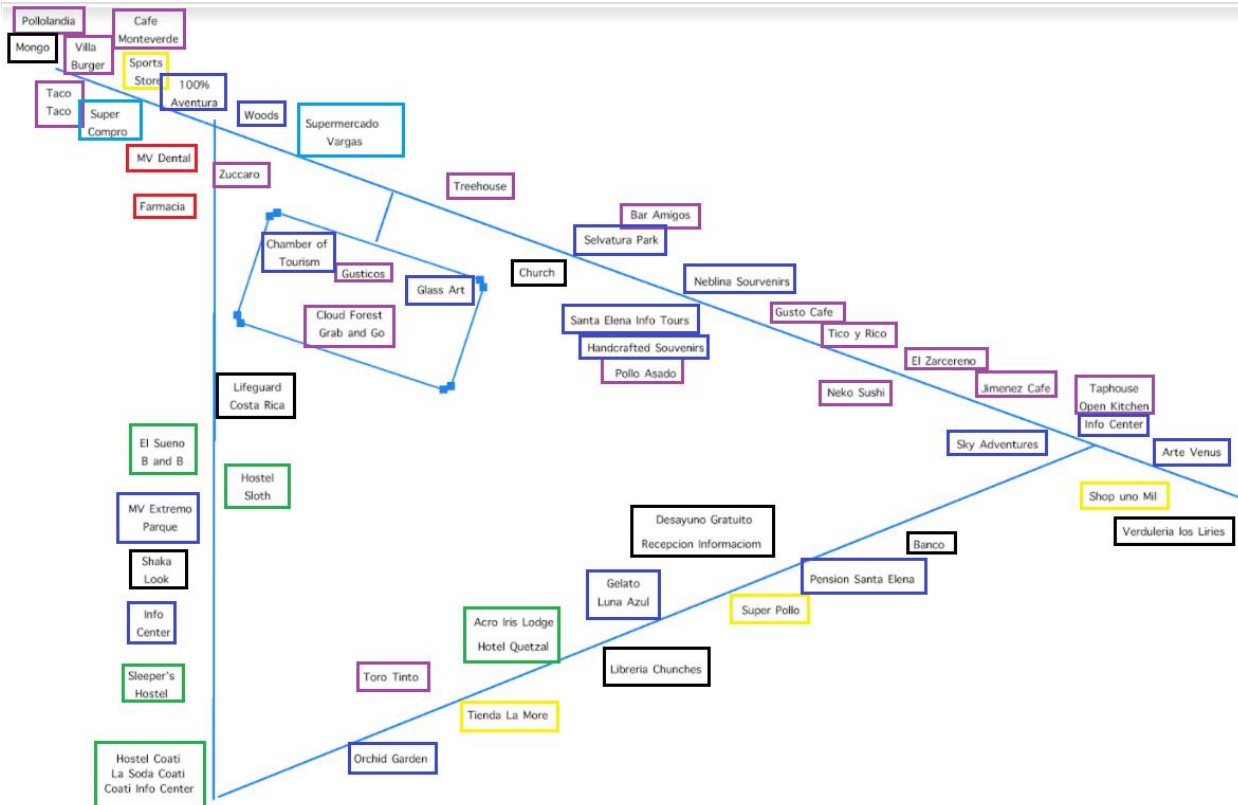
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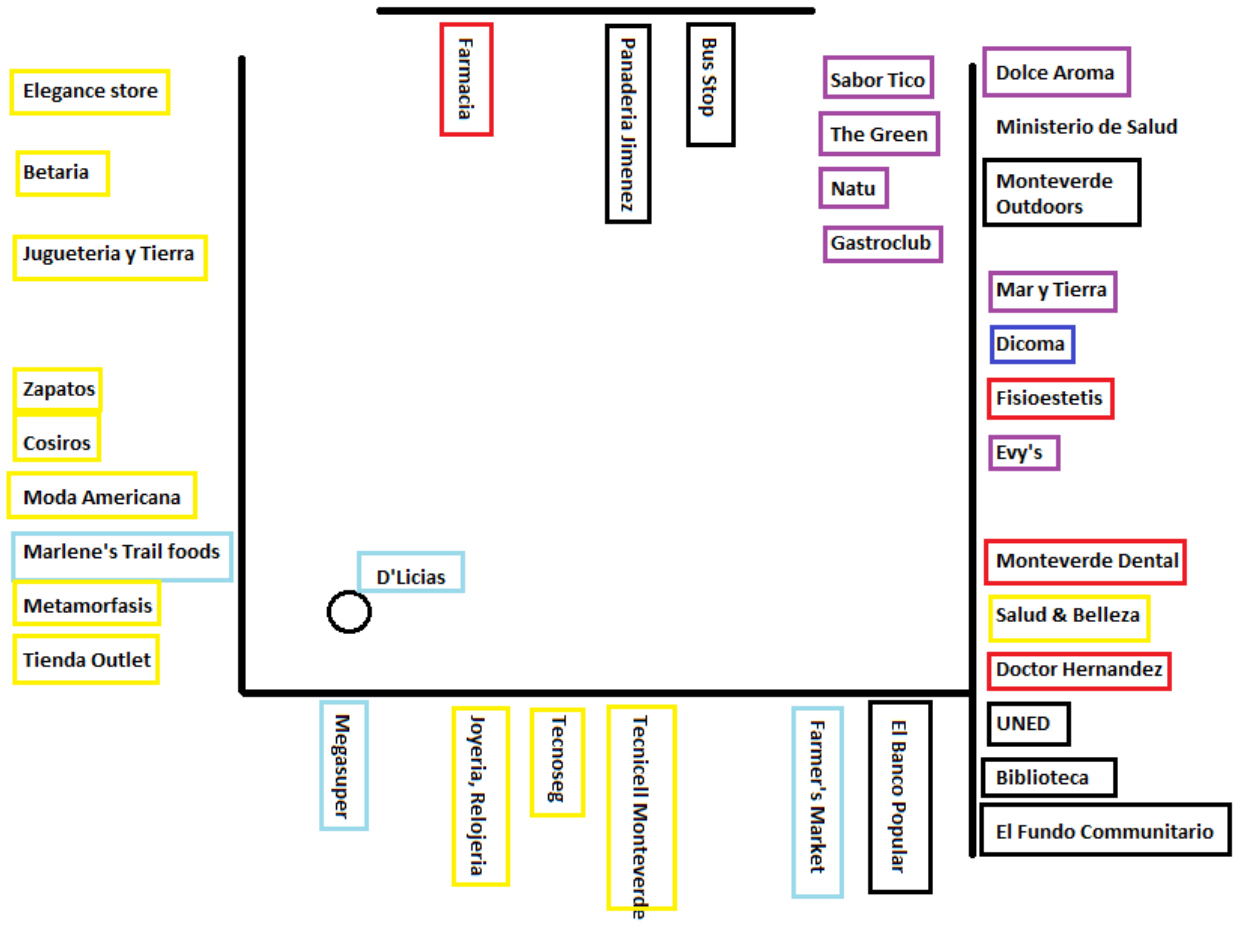
APPENDIX A: Maps of Businesses in Santa Elena, Monteverde color coded according to type. Main Area (1) and Centro Commercial (2)

Business Type
Shop
Restaurant
Tourism
Grocery
Medical
Hotel
Other

(1)



(2)



APPENDIX B: Handouts for businesses

Targeted for tourists to take, front (1) and back (2)

To comprehend Community Fund collaboration options (3-5) (5 is the spanish version of 4)
(1)



Responsible tourists
leave more than a footprint.

Impact
Monteverde

Why?

"As a **community**, we welcome visitors opening our homes & hearts to you.

As a **visitor**, we hope you will care for our community & its environment and invest in its future.

As **hosts**, we invite you to learn how you can give back during your trip!"

 Monteverde Community Fund
Investing in Sustainable Community Development

DONATION AND PROGRAM DETAILS →

(2)

Our Impact

The Monteverde Community Fund creates impact by capturing resources to invest in projects and programs that nourish the community. Your contribution helps:



Protect the environment



Support Youth & Culture



Promote a Circular Economy



Mitigate Climate Change

Support the Community

Donate



Our Partners



More About Us

monteverdefund.org



@fondocomunitariomonteverde



@fondocomunitariomonteverde

(3)

SU IMPACTO



Protección del Medio Ambiente



Apoyo a la Juventud & Cultura



Promoción de la Economía Circular



Mitigar los efectos del Cambio Climático

Proyectos Apoyados desde el 2012



La primera Biblioteca Interactiva en Español en la zona.



Jardín Comunitario de Cerro Plano

- **Manejando las aguas residuales (2017)**
- **Celebrando musica local (2019)**
- **6 Ediciones de los 200KM por Monteverde**


  @fondocomunitariomonteverde
 info@monteverdefund.org
 www.monteverdefund.org

(4)




El Fondo Comunitario Monteverde ha canalizado más de **\$400,000+** para Organizaciones sin Fines de Lucro

Además, ha hecho inversiones directas de más de **\$120,000+** en años recientes para proyectos comunitarios.




Usted y sus clientes pueden ayudar a conservar nuestro entorno natural, preservar nuestro patrimonio cultural, alentar a nuestros jóvenes y apoyar nuestra economía local convirtiéndose en Embajadores hoy.



HOTELS, B&B'S, AIRBNB HOSTS

-  • Opción "Opt out". Incluya una donación de \$1.00 por noche por habitación al Fondo Comunitario. Los clientes siempre pueden elegir "optar por no participar" en esta donación.
-  • Aceptar y publicitar que el Hotel ha designado \$1.00 por noche por habitación al Fondo Comunitario y solicita a los huéspedes que igualen esta donación.
-  • Estamos abiertos a discutir otras opciones con usted. Nuestros Embajadores son nuestros socios de inversión en la construcción de una comunidad más resistente, responsable y sostenible.

RESTAURANTES

-  • Designar un día por mes donde un porcentaje de las ganancias de ese día se dedique al Fondo Comunitario.
-  • Especificar un platillo, bebida o postre cuya venta genere una donación automática al Fondo Comunitario, por ejemplo un "Aperitivo Bosque Nuboso" o "Pasta a la Monteverde".
-  • Designe una cantidad específica por mes que el Restaurante dona al Fondo Comunitario e invite a los invitados a igualar.

(5)

The Monteverde Community Fund has channeled more than **\$400,000+** to local Non-Profit Organizations, and has made direct investments of more than **\$120,000+** in recent years to community projects in Monteverde.

You and your clients can help conserve our natural environment, preserve our cultural heritage, encourage our young people and support our local economy by becoming an Ambassador today.



HOTELS, B&B'S, AIRBNB HOSTS



- “Opt out” option. Include a donation of \$1.00 per night per room to the Community Fund. Clients can always choose to “Opt out” of this donation.



- Agree to and publicize that the Hotel has designated \$1.00 per night per room to the Community Fund and requests guests to match this donation.



- We are open to discuss other options with you. Our Ambassadors are our investment partners in building a more resilient, responsible and sustainable community.

RESTAURANTS



- Designate one day per month where a percentage of the profits from that day are dedicated to the Community Fund.



- Specify a dish, drink or dessert whose sale generates an automatic donation to the Community Fund, for example an “Altruistic Appetizer” or “Pasta a la Monteverde”.



- Designate a specific amount per month that the Restaurant donates to the Community Fund and invite guests to match.

APPENDIX C: IRB Approval

WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

100 INSTITUTE ROAD, WORCESTER MA 01609 USA

Institutional Review Board

FWA #00030698 - HHS #00007374

Notification of IRB Approval

Date: 10-Jan-2022

PI: Sarah Strauss

Protocol Number: IRB-22-0325

Protocol Title: Monteverde Community Fund Crowdsourcing

Approved Study Personnel: Strauss, Sarah~Burke, William G~Mullin, Emily~Wojtas, Max~Dougherty, John~

Effective Date: 10-Jan-2022

Exemption Category: 2

Sponsor*:

The WPI Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed the materials submitted with regard to the above-mentioned protocol. We have determined that this research is exempt from further IRB review under 45 CFR § 46.104 (d). For a detailed description of the categories of exempt research, please refer to the [IRB website](#).

The study is approved indefinitely unless terminated sooner (in writing) by yourself or the WPI IRB. Amendments or changes to the research that might alter this specific approval must be submitted to the WPI IRB for review and may require a full IRB application in order for the research to continue. You are also required to report any adverse events with regard to your study subjects or their data.

Changes to the research which might affect its exempt status must be submitted to the WPI IRB for review and approval before such changes are put into practice. A full IRB application may be required in order for the research to continue.

Please contact the IRB at irb@wpi.edu if you have any questions.

*if blank, the IRB has not reviewed any funding proposal for this protocol