

Fundraising Fundamentals

With ever-tightening school budgets, fundraising has become a necessary part of student activity programs. To avoid cutting back on programs, FCCLA chapter advisers often search for ways to provide money to support chapter activities. Putting chapter members in charge of organizing fundraisers is a good opportunity to not only raise money for chapter activities, but also provide leadership development and career skills for members.

Start your fundraising effort by setting up a fundraising committee with a reliable and energetic member of the chapter to head the entire project. This committee could be a standing committee that is charged with all fundraising efforts for the year, or it could be a special committee that works only on one particular fundraiser. Once you establish a committee, follow these steps to organize a successful fundraiser:

- **Determine how much you need to raise.** Your members should discuss why they want to raise money and how much they need. Set a specific dollar target. The goal you set will be a critical factor in determining the type of fundraiser needed. If your chapter needs to raise \$3,000, you're not likely to choose a bake sale as your project.
- **Brainstorm ideas.** Brainstorming with the committee is a great way to start getting ideas for how to raise the money and gives everyone a chance to contribute. Remember to keep the chapter goals in mind. Rather than simply conducting a sale of some item that is unrelated to your goals, consider how you could raise money and accomplish your goals at the same time.

For example, if one of your goals is to strengthen family ties, brainstorm a list of fundraisers that could be related to that goal. Relating your fundraising efforts to already established group goals enables you to get double the value for your efforts—raise funds and accomplish goals at the same time!

- **Make sure the activity is worth the effort.** Consider how much time and energy will be invested in the fundraiser and what the profit margin will be. There's no sense in putting in a huge effort for a small payoff.
- **Attain chapter approval.** The committee should select the best fundraiser idea and present it to the entire chapter at a meeting. Involve members in a discussion of the proposal and vote on it. If all members of the chapter are going to be expected to participate, it's important that they all support the idea.
- **Select a date for the fundraiser** that won't be in competition with another activity that expects to draw the same crowd you hope to attract. Check the school's master calendar to avoid scheduling conflicts.
- **Obtain administrative approval.** Take whatever steps need to be taken at your school to receive approval to conduct your fundraiser.
- **Develop a plan.** Determine the steps involved in organizing the fundraiser you have selected. A product sale will involve different steps than a service or activity. Using the FCCLA Planning Process can help members work through the various elements involved in planning any project and help them consider aspects they might not think of on their own.

Put your plan into action by having people sign up for the various subcommittees or tasks such as making posters, creating tickets, selling tickets, setting up, cleaning up, and so forth. Once chapter members have done this, student leaders should create a master schedule of tasks, deadlines, and member responsibilities.
- **Work up a budget.** It usually costs money to put on a fundraiser—for merchandise, supplies, equipment, advertising, invitations, prizes. Based on the projected income from the event, estimate how much the group can afford to spend to

organize the fundraiser. Set a limit and stick to it. Keep costs low by relying on volunteer help, free donations, and monetary contributions wherever possible.

- **Get students excited about the project.** The more you publicize your fundraiser, the more people will participate. Use attention-grabbing announcements, dynamic posters, fliers, bulletin boards, and other creative publicity techniques to draw attention to your efforts.
- **Keep your goal in mind.** Post your objective in a clearly visible spot and regularly update your progress. Help members see that their efforts are having the desired effect or, if the effort seems to be lagging, develop some incentives to motivate members to work harder. You might want to set aside a portion of the profits to establish individual and group incentives for reaching the goals. For a fundraiser in which products are sold, prizes for students who sell the most, for every student who reaches the goal, or for students who exceed the goal can help motivate students to higher sales levels.
- **Remember the details.** Keep accurate records of inventory, individual sales, money turned in, and so forth. Be sure to conduct an evaluation of the fundraiser when it is completed and file project report forms for future reference.
- **Thank everyone who helped in the effort.** When the curtain has fallen on the event, the receipts have been tallied, and the bills paid, send thank-you notes to every person and firm that contributed in any way to your success. Even the most altruistic volunteer workers and helpful business firms like to be recognized for their contributions.
- **Celebrate your success!** After the sales period or event is over, take time to celebrate your accomplishments. Remind yourselves what the money will be used for and congratulate yourselves on achieving your goals.

Portions of this article were excerpted from *The Bucks Start Here: Fundraising for Student Activities*, by Lyn Fiscus & Earl Reum. Available from Leadership Logistics at www.leadershiplogistics.us.

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