



Engaging Youth in Fundraising

Youth Philanthropy Initiative of Indiana



ENGAGING YOUTH IN FUNDRAISING



Engaging youth in fundraising can be transformational for organizations and a community because youth bring energy and passion to causes that are important to them. Tapping into that passion is not only life-changing for organizations and communities; it brings about a validation to youth that they have the power to be change-makers. It gives them first-hand experience in being the human resource that they are and equips them with the tools to make a difference.

For communities, the outcome of successful fundraising helps to provide dollars where there are critical needs. For youth, the process of learning “how” to conduct and manage a successful fundraising campaign or event is a skill set that can be transferred to other life situations. Also, understanding the needs of a community which are connected to the “why” of a fundraiser can be very valuable in developing a caring spirit in a young person.

Some key benefits of engaging youth in fundraising are:

- Brings fresh and new ideas from a youth perspective to the art of fundraising
- Making the “ask” is one thing youth are not afraid to do once committed to a cause
- Gives emerging young leaders practice in controlling and managing resources
- Develops a personal habit of giving
- Enables youth to see they can be change-makers
- Expands their sphere of influence beyond themselves
- Provides true experiential learning situations





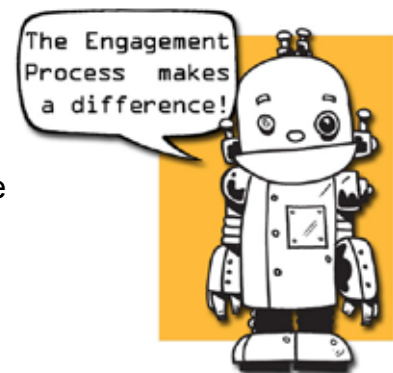
Engaging youth in fundraising can be approached from three different approaches: individual fundraising, group fundraising/event planning, and the larger picture of fund development. Approaching it this way also helps to coincide with building life skills as a young person moves along in their levels of engagement. Youth have often raised funds on an individual level but rarely are provided helpful information for them to see the benefit of their work. This is a great opportunity for skill development.

Once young people have some experience under their belt with raising funds for causes they care about on an individual level, (selling gift wrap, candy bars, plants, etc.) they can get excited about working together as a group to plan a fundraising event, (walk-a-thon, raffle, dinner, etc.). This requires a higher level of skill and organization. For teens, working together as a group is a benefit in being with friends and sharing responsibilities. Event planning gives youth the opportunity to develop leadership skills as they learn how to plan, organize, delegate and become accountable to make the event happen.

Finally, to give young people a chance to fully explore and develop skills and abilities they will need to move to the level of understanding comprehensive fund development.

Overall Engagement Process:

- Start simple and build the level of engagement in fundraising over a period of time. Begin with small, meaningful tasks which engage the young person and encourage them to take on more responsibilities as appropriate for the individual.
- Provide a clear understanding what the funds are being raised for and how they will be used so the young fundraiser can articulate this to donors.
- Assist youth in finding their passion for a particular cause by helping them understand the mission and work of the charity/ nonprofit.
- Encourage youth/adult partnerships where youth and adults serve together as equal partners and can learn from and support each other.
- Set clearly defined responsibilities and expectations for the project.
- Allow youth to use their knowledge of social media as a creative tool to get the word out about a fundraiser as motivate donations to the event.





Youth often have experience in individual fundraising by selling cookies, candy, plants gift wrap or just about any other product to raise funds for scouts, clubs, school, etc. These experiences are important for youth to see how they as an individual can help organizations.

An important aspect of raising funds at the individual level is to make sure the youth are provided with helpful information for them to see the benefit of their work. They need to know and understand where the money is going, what benefit it will have, and how it makes a difference for a particular organization and the community at-large. This is a great opportunity for personal and life-skill development.

Practical Application – Steps for Successful Individual Fundraising:

Most of the decisions regarding individual fundraising are made at the adult level. Selling cookies or candy for a particular organization or school usually fits into this category. Nearly all organizational duties are executed by adults and the same process is repeated on a yearly basis.

In spite of that, the youth who are the “sellers” need to feel involved in the decision-making process and actively engaged for them to be at a high-level of participation. Most importantly, they need to know how their work is making a difference and be able to articulate that to others.



1. Determine the target audience for the fundraiser.
2. A primary goal is set for the amount of sales and money to be raised.
3. Individuals make their own personal contribution (no matter the amount) so they are initially connected & committed to the fundraising. (We really can't ask someone else for money when we ourselves have not contributed.)
4. Develop timelines and responsibilities for those doing the fundraising.
5. Training and talking points are established for all members -- related to the purpose of the fundraiser. (They should fully understand the impact of where the dollars are going).
6. Through role playing as a “seller” and “customer”, good examples can be given for successful fundraising of the product.
7. Hold a debriefing meeting soon after the fundraiser --- review the success and address what could be better for the next time the event is held.
8. Send thank you notes where appropriate to donors for their support.
9. Celebrate success as a group!



Individual giving may progress to being involved in a youth philanthropy council, club, school or congregational fundraising effort. The habit of the heart of making a personal contribution will help a young person to encourage his/her friends to do the same and become involved in a larger group event. Youth can easily learn the skill sets needed to have a successful fundraising event and combine it with their natural energy and enthusiasm if it is connected to a cause they really care about.

It takes concentrated effort and discussions for the preplanning of a fundraising effort. All youth should fully understand the mission of the organization, where the funds are going to be placed and what the fundraising event will look like. The why, what and how it will be carried out with a consensus being established will lay the groundwork for success.

****Family Connection** -- Encourage youth to engage their families in the fundraising event as this helps connects families to the mission of the organization and begins to expand the community spirit. Youth can serve as great motivators to the adult audience.

Practical Application – Steps for a Successful Fundraiser Event:

- 1. Point Person** - A point person or Chair will be needed and the committee should decide on specific meeting times.
- 2. Scribe** - committee member volunteers to serve as a scribe and keep notes to review at various stages of the project.
- 3. Audience** - determine the audience for the fundraiser – sometimes it may help to build partnerships and relationships with a larger organization to build a greater diversity of the audience.
- 4. Budget** - a budget is developed by the committee for expenses and income.
- 5. Fundraising Goal** - a primary goal is set for the amount of money to be raised.
- 6. Personal Contribution** - all committee members make their own personal contribution (no matter the amount) so they are initially connected & committed to the event. (We really can't ask someone else for money when we ourselves have not contributed.)
- 7. Responsibilities & Timelines** - develop timelines and responsibilities for each task, for example: reserving a facility, obtaining sponsors, securing donations for door prizes, contacting media.
- 8. Marketing Plan** - develop a marketing plan.
- 9. Talking Points** - talking points are established for all committee members -- related to the purpose of the fundraiser. (that they fully understand the impact of where the dollars are going)
- 10. Walk-Through Meeting** - final meeting before event is a walk-through of how the event will look and operate.
- 11. Day of event** - all committee members should be well versed at this point of their exact responsibilities for the event. Be calm and have fun!
- 12. Debriefing** - hold a debriefing meeting soon after the fundraiser --- review the success and address what could be better for the next time the event is held.
- 13. Thank you** - Thank you notes to all sponsors and donors for their support. (this aspect cannot be over emphasized as all donors like to receive a thank-you).
- 14. Celebrate** - Important to celebrate the success of the event as a group!



The next step after youth have been involved with the success and challenges of several fundraising events is to participate in the bigger picture discussion --- Fund Development. This topic is really about developing a variety of revenues and creating sustainability (such as endowment building) for their organization, program or community foundation.

Fund Development involves an extended effort over a period of time with the timeline being a one or two-year plan. Youth/adult partnerships can be very beneficial at this level and learning the skill sets related to this longer term effort can be very valuable to youth for future involvement as board members on a nonprofit board.

Some of the key elements of a fund development plan:

- Aligning the plan to the mission of the organization
- Knowing who the stakeholders are
- Setting attainable goals
- Building relationships with the donors

Practical Application: Tactics/Strategies for a fund development plan

- Writing Proposals for Grants
- Fundraising Events
- Annual Campaign with Individual Giving- often through a letter writing campaign
- Corporate Sponsorships
- Online giving
- Annual donor lunch/dinner
- Board members including youth members making personal contributions

Challenges:

As with any project involving people there will be challenges. This is not to deter the engagement of youth, but to help understand and avoid pitfalls along the way.

- Be aware of a possible gap between vision and execution (what the group wants to happen and what actually happens. Dreaming is usually easier than implementation! Practical, measurable steps will help make the goal attainable.)
- Having the youth buy into the expectations and accepting the responsibility is critical.
- The current generation is highly scheduled so it is sometimes difficult to find a meeting time that works for everyone.
- The adults working directly with the youth have to have a true understanding of their role: mentoring, supporting and assisting but not taking the lead in decision-making.

