

DEVELOPING A CLEARER VISION

MEMBERSHIP GROWTH & RETENTION



BUILD AN ANNUAL FUNDRAISING CALENDAR

What three things (can be more if your chapter has multiple projects) does your chapter contribute to each year?

| Name | Amount Donated |
|------|----------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

CALENDAR

Take a look at your year and plot out your existing Chapter meetings, events, commitments, and fundraising projects, large and small.

| | | |
|----------|-----------|---------|
| November | December | January |
| February | March | April |
| May | June | July |
| August | September | October |

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How to Map Out Your Year

Before you skim through fundraising ideas, it's important to consider your fundraising year as a whole. This way, you can make strategic decisions about the number and types of events that you choose.

Consider Last Year's Calendar

What did your chapter's calendar look like last year in terms of events? If you're a visual person, now's the time to bust out a literal calendar or a blank sheet of paper. Jot down the events you hosted and then take a step back. Do a majority of your events take place in one season? Are your events annual?

The goal of this exercise is to address exactly what the community's opportunity to engage with your Chapter looks like in the course of a given year based on your Chapter's fundraising. For each fundraiser from the last two years, consider the following questions:

1. Was the event successful financially?
2. Did you gain community exposure with the event?
3. Could/should you have publicized the event more locally?
4. Did something underperform last year?
5. Are you fundraising outside OES or just pulling financial support from our own members?
6. Did this fundraiser give you an opportunity to build new relationships?

Once you've answered these questions, you'll have a better sense of how many events you may want to try and add in the next year. Remember—not every event needs to be the scale of a gala. There are plenty of low burden event ideas that you can use throughout the year to keep your Chapter forefront in your community and develop some new relationships.

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Consider Your Audience

To decide which events to run, you'll also want to consider your existing members and any goals to expand it. Say the vast majority of your members are between the ages of 64 and 84. Great! That's important to consider when planning your events. You need to next consider if you'd like to grow any other member age groups and how the events you plan might play into that.

For example, if you'd like to engage millennials, you might host one event catered to them, which could look different from the events that mainly attract members aged 64 to 84.

Write Out Your Plan

Once you identify some new events to throw, decide the goals for each event and its anticipated return on your Chapter's investment. Strategize your overall goals and think about whether one event will be your "signature" while others play supporting roles the rest of the year, or if you'll have multiple events throughout the year of equal size.



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CATEGORIES FOR FUNDRAISERS:

If you are building a fundraising strategy with community service and membership growth in mind, you will want to carefully select your events based on your target audience. Each of the fundraisers have been tagged with emblems which categorize their purpose and type.



Community Service fundraiser



Christmas Charities fundraiser



Health/Fitness fundraiser



Family Fun Event



Adults Only Event



Low Effort High Returns Event



Chapter Fundraiser for general fund

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50 COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING IDEAS

1. EARTH DAY HIKE



Hiking is a fun outdoor activity, but it can be even better when it's organized as a group event. Have members register for your hike ahead of time. On the day of, provide guides and goodie bags, and awards to top fundraisers.

TIP: Before deciding to plan a 5K, consider five things:

Your budget

The size of your volunteer base

Your audience's potential interest in the event

The ideal location in which to host your event

Your fundraising goals

2. HARVEST DINNER



Organize a dinner featuring local chefs and businesses. For example, serve a sample of beverages from a local brewery, or liven things up with a local musician. Sell tickets for seats at the table and attract sponsors by offering to promote their brand on event paraphernalia and on your donation and registration pages.



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3. GOLF TOURNAMENT

Golfers just can't wait to get back on the green in the spring. Host a charity golf tournament and raise the stakes for entry. Set fundraising requirements and appeal to local businesses to secure prizes for the lowest scoring participants.

4. SPORTS GAME/PLAYOFFS VIEWING PARTY

As members of your community gear up for the game, advertise a viewing party as a chance for your community to support their favorite team AND a great cause. Michigan residents make a big deal out of the Michigan vs. Michigan State game because of long standing rivalries. Provide comfortable seating, a big screen or projector, great snacks and beverages during the game, and your event is sure to be a smash. For an additional fundraising boost, partner with a local restaurant to get a small percentage of their proceeds donated to your Chapter/specific cause on that day, or sell tickets to get in the door.

5. FIELD DAY GAMES

In this popular school event, teams compete in a slew of activities like three-legged races or a game of basketball. Have teams of four register together and provide them with fundraising sheets. Ask local businesses and your local High School sports teams and clubs to participate. Award prizes for activity winners, most raised, or best uniforms.



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6. BIRD HOUSE-BUILDING CONTEST

People build and shop for birdhouses and seed during the spring, so take off on this idea by running a woodworking contest. Set up each registrant with a peer-to-peer fundraising page and ask them to secure “votes” for their house in the form of donations.

7. EASTER EGG HUNT

Plan this event for a Sunday afternoon a week or two before Easter. Set up at a grassy area near your lodge and charge for registration. Sell tickets ahead of time to ensure you have enough supplies for all participating kids. Bring out comfortable chairs for parents to sit and watch and provide every participant with an Easter basket.

8. SPRING BREAK VOLUNTEER TRIPS

High schools and colleges typically schedule their breaks in March or April, so plan an excursion that allows students to give back. Reach out to chapters in California, Florida, New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona to identify a specific need. Organize a trip for students to rebuild homes, distribute water filtration kits, help with a neighborhood project or clean up beaches in Florida. Charge \$50-100 more per person above the costs of hotel and travel and you’ll have raised \$2-4,000 while doing the world some good.

9. PETTING ZOO DAY

Partner with a local farmer to create a child’s dream come true. An “animal babies” theme is perfect for any time of year, though babies are much more likely to be found in the spring. Temporary donations of toddler gates and outdoor playpens will work to keep goats and pigs in their pens for a few hours, or your local farmer may have some suggestions for you. Sell tickets and have your community come out to see ducklings, lambs, and more.

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10. ORCHARD WALK

Partner with a local orchard and sell tickets for an apple-picking walk. Apple Holler and the MS Society, Wisconsin Chapter host an apple-themed breakfast and a raffle at their event as well. Think family fun, young working parents, and seniors taking a slow walking tour through an orchard and cider mill. This event could be taken in any direction you prefer!

11. HARVEST FESTIVAL

If you want to host a bigger event and attract large pools of members, a Harvest Festival can be a great way to raise awareness and gifts for your cause. Sell tickets for admission and booth space to vendors. Ask for sponsorships in exchange for brand promotion on T-shirts, merchandise, or even within the festival name.

12. WINERY TOUR

Pair up with a nearby winery in your state and sell tickets for bus tour, wine-tasting and vineyards tour. Collect donations from local businesses to raffle off items during the bus ride. Negotiate a percentage of business from the restaurant you stop at for lunch and from the sales at the vineyard during the time of your tour. This event then becomes fun for your members and their friends, offers an opportunity to include potential members, and effectively acts as a fundraiser for your chapter.

13. ADULT DAY CAMP

Give caregivers a break during the holidays or anytime and throw an afternoon day-camp retreat. Charge for admission and put on a day of arts and crafts, board games, cards and conversation. Consider partnering with a local doctor's office to arrange an afternoon of their nursing services if your chapter does not have a nurse or medical assistant within your membership.

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14. FASHION SHOW

The fashion industry follows the seasonal cycle, and spring is a great time to embrace “new.” Host a fashion show and partner with local vendors, recruit volunteers for models, and charge for entry. You can even have each model create a peer-to-peer fundraising page and compete for a prize.

TIPS: Plan this for late January or early February and focus on Prom formals for your local high school. You could even recruit your youth group to be the models.

15. HIGH TEA PARTY

This spring fundraising idea involves converting your dining room into an area to host high tea. Sell tickets in exchange for a seat, tea, scones, and finger sandwiches. Be sure to ask attendees to look their best.

16. SPA DAY COMPETITION

For some, spring weather screams rain, grey, and mud. Change that mindset by attracting members with mud masks and indoor spas. Partner with local facilities for donated services and then incorporate online fundraising by running a contest.

17. SPRING CLEANING GARAGE SALE

Ask members to donate items to your Chapter’s “garage sale.” Set up shop at your office or a high traffic public space, and sell items in exchange for donations.

18. THE SPRING CLEANING ALL YEAR SEMINAR

Act as the inspiration that helps people adopt a “spring cleaning” mindset all year long. Sell tickets for a \$10 donation for lunch and ask for additional donations in exchange for food and refreshments.

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19. SPRING DANCE

Decorate your lodge, ask for donations in exchange for tickets, and choose a theme for a night of old-fashioned fun.

20. PLANT SALE

Many gardeners plant seeds indoors in the colder months so they're ready to transport into the soil when the ground gets warmer. Tomato and pepper plants are often started indoors in March, while several varieties of vegetables can withstand spring frosts. Your chapter members could each volunteer to grow three seeds packets as starters and then you could try selling tomatoes, peppers, herbs, beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, and cucumbers.

21. CORN MAZE

Partner with a local farmer and sell tickets to a "Fairy tale maze" and a "haunted maze." You can host one for children in the afternoon and dress as Mother Goose or Disney characters and then transition to the haunted maze by adding purple lights, fake spider webs, plastic weapons, and ketchup in the evening. Ask for volunteer actors among your Chapter to dress up in costume and then lurk behind the turns as the bravest of your community members line up to solve this larger-than-life puzzle.

22. BACK TO SCHOOL PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Does your Chapter work to help children or education programs? Serve up some pumpkin-flavored flapjacks to raise money for your cause and celebrate the back-to-school season. Ask local grocers and farmers to donate ingredients and materials and rally your volunteers to participate as chefs. Use the proceeds to pay for classroom materials and supplies for teachers at your local school.

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23. BONFIRE EVENT

There are a lot of great reasons to host a bonfire in the fall: the homecoming football game, s'mores, Guy Fawkes Night. Collect pallet donations from local businesses and be sure to partner with your local fire department for safety regulations. Sell tickets ahead of time and recruit volunteers to ensure a safe, fun-filled family evening.

24. FALL CLOTHING SWAP

As the weather cools down, you see more flannel, vests, and layers. Get your community excited about fall fashion with a fall clothing swap. Members and participants can donate their gently used items over the course of three days. Spend one day organizing your donations into gender and sizes and then display for "Sales". Charge \$1 for admission. They can then choose if they want to select 2, 4, or 5 items each for \$5, \$10 or \$20 donations.

25. THANKSGIVING DAY PARADE

Inspired by Macy's iconic Thanksgiving Day parade, this idea involves working with local town officials. If your community already hosts a parade, look into how you can get involved. And if not, find out what it would take to get one started. A fun way to turn the parade into a fundraising event would be to invite participants to make a donation for entry, with all proceeds going to a needed community item/project.

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26. GRAVEYARD TOUR

Get in touch with the local cemetery and arrange a spooky and informative holiday tour. Host it in the twilight hours, sell tickets to attend, and look for a volunteer actor to be your tour guide.

27. CHILI FOR CHARITY COOK-OFF

Sell tickets to cook-off competitors and attendees who simply want to sample the chili. Appeal to prominent members to register for the competition or to sit on a judge panel. Large sponsors could also sit on the panel, or you can ask attendees to cast votes. Award prizes from admission prices for “People’s Choice,” “Best in Show,” and “Judged Chili.” Be sure to fork over a trophy and bragging rights to first place.

28. RAKE-A-THON

Made popular by several Habitat for Humanity chapters, a rake-a-thon typically involves asking for a suggested donation in exchange for volunteers to rake your yard. While you can reach out to donors and homeowners by going door to door, an online fundraising platform would allow your Chapter to collect donations ahead of time and help you organize your list of lawns to rake.

29. TAKE A HIKE

National Take a Hike day falls in November. Organize an afternoon adventure in your community for a small donation and ask participants to register ahead of time. Advertise the event in your local schools and provide goodie bags, traveling guides, and event T-shirts that feature sponsors.

30. VALENTINE’S DAY

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When the holidays pass along with the largest giving time of the year, many will still be left with an unrelenting winter chill. Arrange a heartwarming Valentine's Day experience and deliver soup and heart shaped bread.

31. GINGERBREAD HOUSE CONTEST

Set up long tables with all necessary items, and have teams of two compete to construct the most creative house in a set period of time. Ask local businesses to donate supplies or sponsor a team.

32. WINTER SOUP EVENT

The beginning of winter is a great opportunity to celebrate the turning of the season over some soup. Charge per bowl, or you could even host a soup-off where registrants compete and guests taste test and vote. Just be sure to follow any local food serving laws.

33. PUNKIN CHUNKIN FUNDRAISER

Traditionally held in early November, a "Punkin Chunkin" is an opportunity to get one more use out of that holiday jack-o-lantern. Competitors build trebuchets and enter them in a competition to see who can launch their carved pumpkin the farthest. Charge a team one entry fee, and incentivize participation with an awesome prize, like a chance to win an IPAD and tickets to your next event. Make sure your lodge has room for this event.

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34. PUMPKIN CARVING CONTEST

Working parents are often too busy to take the time to honor old-time traditions which really shape the holidays in our memories. Ask local businesses to sponsor their own pumpkin carving team. Participants pay a registration fee to enter this contest. Then, either partner with local farmers for pumpkins or ask guests to “Bring Your Own Pumpkin (BYOP).” On top of registration fees, other events like this one raise money through a silent auction and food, drink, and merchandise sales. It’s even possible to receive donations outside of the event, asking those who can’t attend to make a donation online.

35. MICHIGAN BEACH/GROUNDS CLEAN-UP

To make it even more dynamic, couple this spring fundraising idea with another activity, like a barbecue or potluck. Ask for donations for each hour of service donated and give your members a chance to feel like they physically made a difference and moved you closer to achieving your mission.

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36. MOTHER'S DAY BREAKFAST

Millennial mothers look forward to their special day as an opportunity to rest. Give working moms a hand and host a fancy breakfast where they won't have to lift a finger. Partner with a local school PTO and sell tickets ahead of time. Use the event to donate to a specific need for local area schools and it will be much easier to garner support for the event from the school and parents.

37. CHEESECAKE CONTEST

Luckily for you and all of your taste testers, there are countless ways to make cheesecake. Charge for entry into the contest and ask participants to submit their favorite recipe. You can even host the event at your lodge. This is a perfect opportunity to casually meet with your new members, learn more about them, and provide details about your chapter.

38. WINTER CRAFT WORKSHOP

Host a class and charge an entry fee to cover supplies and collect donations. Whether you sew Christmas tree skirts, arrange wreaths, or bake cookies, a craft event can attract families looking for an afternoon of fun.

39. SUPER BOWL PARTY

Sell tickets to a Super Bowl screening. You can even create your very own "Super Bowl commercial," and use it to promote your event and fundraising campaign.

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40. OUTDOOR EXERCISE CLASS

Use a public park or beach to arrange an outdoor fitness class, like yoga or a boot camp. Recruit a volunteer to lead the exercise and ask for donations from attendees. In fact, you could even create a series of events throughout the entire summer. Consider tapping into a network of local fitness instructors who might be interested in donating their time and skills to your Chapter and can switch off hosting classes.

41. INDOOR SENIOR'S EXERCISE CLASS

Use your own lodge to arrange an indoor fitness class, like senior aerobics or beginner's yoga. Recruit a volunteer to lead the exercise and ask for a small donation from attendees. In fact, you could even create a series of events throughout the entire winter. Consider tapping into a network of local fitness instructors who might be interested in donating their time and skills to your chapter and to seniors in your community.

42. FARMERS MARKET BOOTH

Reach out to local farmers markets for the opportunity to host a booth at one of their events. This popular summer outing could increase your exposure and give you a chance to engage with your community face to face. Sell raffle tickets, distribute materials, and collect donations as you educate shoppers on your programs.

43. THE COUNTY FAIR

Reach out to local fair officials to see how you can get in on the festivities. Could your Chapter help run one element or event in exchange for recognition and possible donations? For example, the fair might accept entry fees to a specific show or competition on behalf of your Chapter and ask your staff to volunteer in exchange.

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44. FILM SHOWING

Host a screening in a public park, or work with local businesses to secure a large enough area to host a drive-in. Sell tickets, popcorn, and candy and ask for a suggested donation at the gate. Possible summer blockbusters include: National Lampoon's Vacation, Guardians of the Galaxy, and Marvel's The Avengers.

45. SUMMER HIKE AND CAMPING EXCURSION

Hikes or camping excursions are great events that can have less upfront costs. Lead your participants on a guided tour and camp as a group at a public camping site. Ask event registrants to bring their own equipment and pay a registration fee. In exchange, provide an informative tour and things like goodie bags, event T-shirts, and dinner.

46. FOOD AND/OR DRINK FESTIVAL

Host your own version of the famous wine, beer, and food festivals around the country. Perhaps there's a certain type of food or beverage your geographic area is known for that you could highlight. Coordinate with local restaurants, chefs, supermarkets, wineries, breweries, and beverage distributors for sponsorships and sell tickets in advance.

47. SUMMER SOLSTICE CLAM BOIL

A clam boil is just one of the many possible summer fundraising ideas to honor the summer break, which takes place on the longest (sunlit) day of the year. Break out the fire pits, large pots, and melted butter, and charge a donation fee in exchange for good eats and a good time. Speak with local vendors for food and equipment donations.

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48. CORNHOLE COMPETITION

Ask cornhole enthusiasts to come out to watch or compete in a Cornhole and Cocoa/Coffee event. Host a competition consisting of 16 teams in a single, timed elimination-style game. All registrants are also entered in a raffle for the chance to win a series of prizes, including a cornhole set.

49. PIE SALE

Ask members to set aside one full day in the middle of November or December to bake Apple, Pecan, and Pumpkin pies. Sell each pie for \$10 each and publicize your sale everywhere.

50. BUY US A DRINK

Ask your local coffee shop to sponsor your chapter for a “Buy us a Drink” Monday morning. Choose a charitable effort in advance and let them know you’ll be working together to accomplish that goal. Find a member who is competent at marketing to create a flyer advertising the event and hand-outs for the event for each donor.

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CONCLUSION

Like a good brainstorm, a lot of great ideas in one place can be very helpful to the event planning process. On the other hand, when you have so many ideas to choose from, it can feel a little overwhelming. Start off with the knowledge that you're going to go through multiple rounds of ideas. For example, as you build your event calendar, your rounds might look something like this:

1. Highlight everything and anything on this list that catches your eye.
2. Take this new list and go through it again with your specific development goals in mind. Remove anything that doesn't fit.
3. Take that shorter list and consider your intended audience for every event. Remove anything that's not appropriate or as engaging.
4. Elicit feedback from other members of your committee. Have them vote for their favorites.
5. Still have a toss-up? Contact a handful of trusted members in your event's target audience for their input on what they'd most enjoy.

Once you've decided and built out your calendar, it's time to gather your resources and turn your ideas into action. Fundraising software is an example of a resource that take events to the next level.