

A YEAR OF CREATIVE FUNDRAISING IDEAS

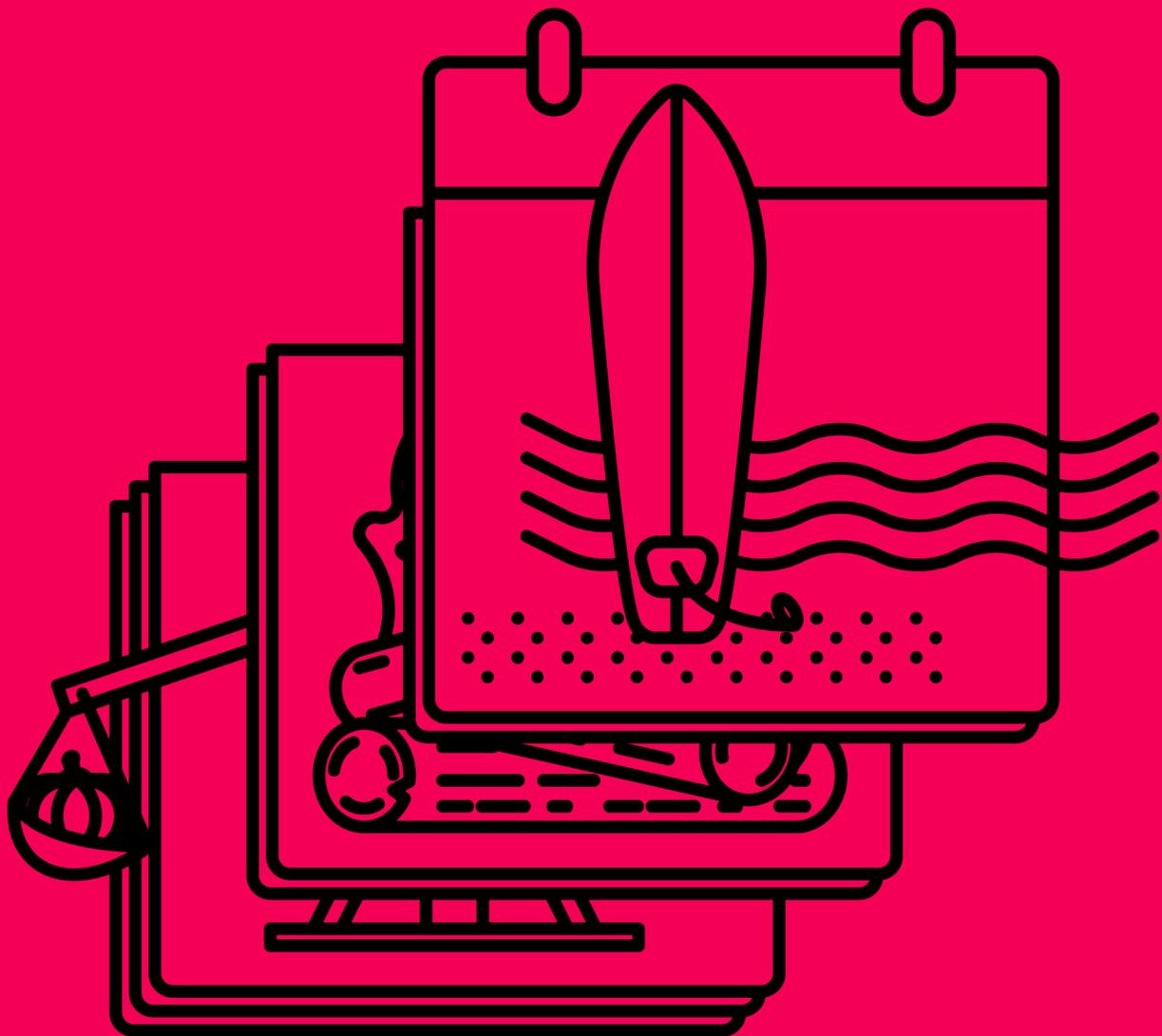


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Introduction

Timely, themed fundraising events and campaigns enable supporters to take action in ways that are relevant to their daily lives and activities. Yet, when it comes to event planning, it's not always easy to stand out and engage the crowd.

That's why we've compiled a list of our most creative ideas to help enhance your development strategy. Inspired by our four popular blog posts on seasonal fundraising, this list of 100 events has something for everyone.

As a bonus, this guide includes information on how to map out your entire year for optimal month-over-month growth.

Use this guide to identify a handful of possibilities for each season, then take them to the rest of your team. Tweak the ideas to make them your own, and discuss the most viable options for moving forward.

Let's begin!

1 | 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 organization'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? Do you only run one large event per year? Are your events annual? Are they associated with larger campaigns?

The goal of this exercise is to address what a supporter's opportunity to engage with your organization looks like in the course of a given year.

- **Are you giving them enough opportunities to remain engaged with your cause?**
- **Are there gaps in your strategy that you could fill out?**
- **Did something underperform last year?**
 - **Flag it and keep it in mind—you might replace it with one of the ideas from chapters 2 through 5.**

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 organization top of mind and develop supporter relationships.

Keep to Your Brand

While there are loads of interesting events to choose from, not every idea is going to be right for your organization. It's perfectly alright, and even encouraged, to try something different—just be sure to make the connection clear for your supporters as to why you're hosting that event and how it connects to your mission.

Some organizations use cause days or the holidays as springboards for their events. Are there any times of the year that warrant extra attention from your organization? Or perhaps there are certain qualities and ideals that your brand is associated with that you'd like to further promote. For example, if you're a health-related organization, you may choose to host an athletic event over a pie-eating contest.

Incorporate Fun

Even if your cause is serious, you don't always have to be. A lighthearted, fun event is a great way to engage your community and show them that they can combine the activities they love with the causes they care about.

Fun events are also a perfect way to engage a different audience if you feel you have a hard time relating the urgency of your cause to certain demographics. The common ground of the event experience creates an opportunity to introduce yourself and start the conversation.

Consider Your Audience

To decide which events to run, you'll also want to consider your existing audience and any goals to expand it.

Say the vast majority of your supporters are between the ages of 34 and 54. Great! That's important to consider when planning your events. You need to next consider if you'd like to grow any other specific audiences 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 supporters aged 34 to 54.

Write Out Your Plan

Once you identify some new events to throw, decide the goals for each event and its anticipated ROI. Consider if 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.

When you're ready to write your plans out in one place, [download this excel calendar](#) and tips sheet to get started.

2 | Spring Ideas

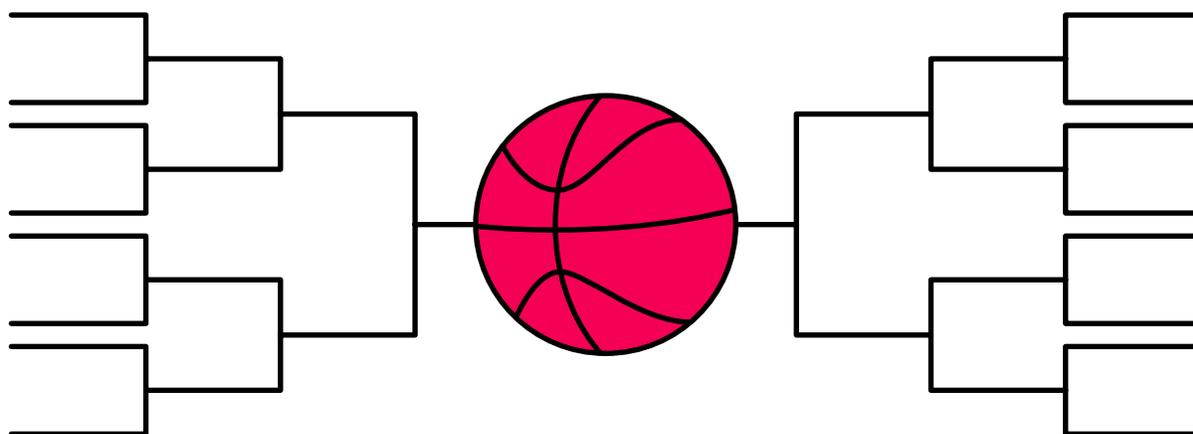
According to Classy platform data, spring not only ushers in new life, but also one of the biggest fundraising months of the year. In 2015, the month of April generated the most donations outside of year-end fundraising.

Capitalize on this energy with a fun-filled seasonal event from this list. From March Madness, to Mother's Day, to golf tournaments, there are plenty of occasions to plan around during this refreshing season.

For the Active-Inclined

1. MARCH MADNESS OPEN HOUSE

An estimated 40 million Americans create March Madness brackets.¹ Invite your community to join you at your office or other venue for a college basketball game screening. People donate to enter, and the game becomes an opportunity to meet your supporters face to face.



¹ The Columbus Dispatch, "How Many People Will Fill Out March Madness Brackets?" <http://www.dispatch.com/content/blogs/the-bottom-line/2015/03/how-many-people-will-fill-out-march-madness-brackets.html>

2. 5K OR ROAD CYCLE RACE

As the weather improves, a 5K is a great way to get people outdoors after being cooped up all winter. Still dealing with snow? Try an indoor treadmill-a-thon or Spin-a-thon®. Invite each registrant to create their own personal fundraising page and use prizes to incentivize them to raise as much money as possible.



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

1. Your budget
2. The size of your staff and volunteer base
3. Your audience's potential interest in the event
4. The ideal location and community in which to host your event
5. Your fundraising goals



The Beginner's Guide to Planning a Charity Run/Walk Event

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3. EARTH DAY HIKE

Hiking is a fun outdoor activity, but it can be even better when it's organized as a group event. Have supporters register for your hike ahead of time and create their own personal fundraising pages. On the day of, provide guides and goodie bags, and award swag to top fundraisers.

4. NBA OR NHL PLAYOFFS VIEWING PARTY

As fans gear up for the playoffs, advertise a viewing party as a chance for your community to support their favorite team AND a great cause. Partner with a local bar to get part of their proceeds donated to your organization, or sell tickets to get in the door.

5. GOLF TOURNAMENT

Golfers anxiously await the opportunity 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. The Marfan Foundation uses a four-person, best-ball format and provides goodies for their registrants, like beverage carts and raffle entry.²

6. FIELD DAY GAMES

In this popular high school event, teams compete in a slew of activities like three-legged races or a game of basketball. Have teams register together and provide them with fundraising pages. Award prizes for activity winners, most raised, or best uniforms.



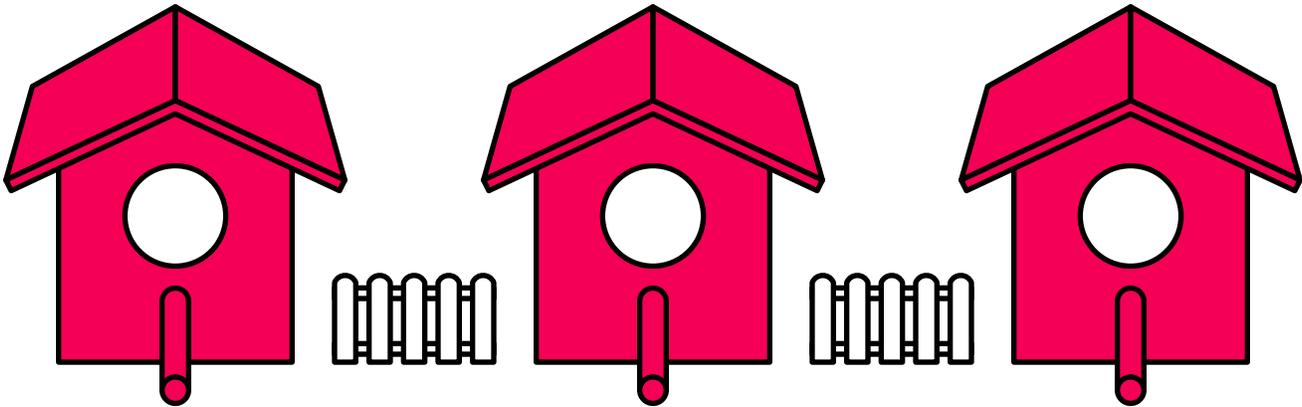
Captains can improve your team fundraising performance as they tend to receive larger gifts on average, and more gifts overall.³ Encourage your supporters to form teams and appoint captains to maximize their results.

² The Marfan Foundation, "6th Annual Golf Tournament." <https://give.marfan.org/reston/events/mid-atlantic-chapters-6th-annual-golf-tournament/e89269>

³ Blackbaud, "Understanding the Value of Team Captains." https://www.blackbaud.com/files/resources/downloads/WhitePaper_UnderstandingTheValueOfTeamCaptains.pdf

7. BIRD HOUSE-BUILDING CONTEST

People build and shop for birdhouses and seed this time of year, so jump off this activity 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.



Fun for the Whole Family

8. EASTER EGG HUNT

Set up at a grassy area and charge for registration. Sell tickets ahead of time to ensure you have enough supplies for all participating kids.

9. PETTING ZOO DAY

Partner with a local zoo or farmer to create a child’s springtime dream come true. An “animal babies” theme is perfect for this time of year. Sell tickets and have your community come out to see ducklings, lambs, and more.

Feeling Fancy

10. 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.



Stay abreast of what’s trending in the fashion world with Google’s Marketer’s Almanac. For example, “bomber jackets” were one of the hottest fashion search terms in April 2016. This type of information is not only great for a fashion show, but can also help inform your merchandise strategy.

11. HIGH TEA PARTY

This spring fundraising idea involves renting a space 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.

12. FLOWER DELIVERY

Partner with a local florist and sell flowers for pick-up and delivery. Early May is a great time for this fundraiser as 35 percent of adults in the U.S. bought flowers for Mother’s Day in 2015.⁴

⁴ About Flowers, “Mother’s Day Floral Statistics.” <http://www.aboutflowers.com/about-the-flower-industry/holiday-statistics/mothers-day.html>

13. SPA DAY CONTEST

For some, spring weather screams rain, grey, and mud. Change that mindset by attracting supporters with mud masks and indoor spas. Partner with local facilities for donated services and then incorporate online fundraising by running a contest. You could award services to top peer-to-peer fundraisers, or enter those who donate to your crowdfunding campaign into a drawing.

Spring State of Mind



14. SPRING CLEANING GARAGE SALE

Ask supporters to donate items to your organization's "garage sale." Set up shop at your office or a high traffic public space, and sell items in exchange for donations.

15. THE LIFE-CHANGING MAGIC OF TIDYING UP SEMINAR

This best-selling book by Marie Kondo instructs readers on how to declutter their homes.⁵ Use the book as inspiration and design a seminar that helps people adopt a "spring cleaning" mindset all year long. Sell tickets for seats and ask for additional donations in exchange for food and refreshments.

⁵ Amazon, "The Life Changing Magic of Tidying Up." <https://www.amazon.com/Life-Changing-Magic-Tidying-Decluttering-Organizing/dp/1607747308>

16. SPRING FLING DANCE

Rent out a large space, ask for donations in exchange for tickets, and choose a theme for a night of old-fashioned fun. Want to put a spin on it? Host it at a roller rink.

17. SPRING BREAK VOLUNTEER TRIPS

Does your organization often work with volunteers? High schools and colleges typically schedule their breaks in March or April, so plan an excursion that allows students to give back.

18. 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. ⁶ Tomato and pepper plants are often started indoors in March, while several varieties of vegetables can withstand spring frosts. Try selling beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, and cucumbers.

19. LAWN MOWING FOR A CAUSE

With all the greens and stray branches that pop up in the spring, it can be helpful to have an extra set of hands. Jumpstart community cleanup and advertise a lawn maintenance and mowing service in exchange for donations. Recruit landscapers to volunteer their services.

20. BEACH/GROUNDS CLEAN-UP

To make it even more dynamic, couple this spring fundraising idea with another activity, like a barbecue or outdoor concert. Ask for donations and give your supporters a chance to feel like they physically made a difference and moved you closer to achieving your mission.

⁶ Urban Farmer, "What to Plant Now." <http://www.ufseeds.com/What-To-Plant-Now.html#March>

Holiday-Themed

21. ST. PATRICK'S DAY PUB CRAWL

Plan a walkable route and partner with local pubs. To kick it up a notch, give your crawl a costume theme or award prizes along the way. Charge for registration and incorporate peer-to-peer fundraising by setting up each of your participants with a page to appeal to their network leading up to the event.

22. APRIL FOOL'S DAY FUNDRAISER

Forty percent of people are adamant participants in April Fool's pranks. ⁷ Partner with local stand-up comedians or radio hosts and launch an email campaign to appeal for donations. In exchange for a contribution, comedians pull a prank phone call. The larger the donation, the more outrageous the prank.

23. MOTHER'S DAY BREAKFAST

Millennial mothers look forward to their special day as an opportunity to rest. ⁸ Give moms a hand and host a fancy breakfast where they won't have to lift a finger. Partner with a local restaurant and sell tickets ahead of time.

A Mother's Day campaign could also be a fitting idea if your organization's founding story is tied to an individual woman. For example, the Queen of Hearts Foundation runs a Mother's Day campaign to honor the woman who inspired their organization's work. ⁹



⁷ Statistic Brain, "April Fool's Day Statistics." <http://www.statisticbrain.com/april-fools-day-statistics/>

⁸ Marketer's Almanac, "Celebrating Mom: Mother's Day Gift Trends." <https://think.storage.googleapis.com/docs/mothers-day-gift-trends.pdf>

⁹ Queen of Hearts Foundation, "About the Queen of Hearts Foundation." <http://qohfoundation.org/>

24. PASSOVER DINNER

Meals can be tricky when you're observing Passover. Ease the stress for many by hosting a dinner full of acceptable foods and traditional recipes. Partner with a local restaurant and charge per plate.

25. ARBOR DAY COMMUNITY GARDEN

A community garden is a plot of land, public or private, that is gardened by a group of individuals. Identify a location and ask your supporters to fundraise for the opportunity to plot in the garden. If you have, say, 10 plots, set a fundraising minimum and then award plots to the 10 people who raise the most money. To give others a chance to use the garden, make it an annual event and renew the competition each year.

Whether you choose an idea that's tried and true or more outside of the box, make it extremely clear to your audience how it ties into your organization's mission.

Now that you've noted possible ideas for spring, you're ready to move on to sunny summer.

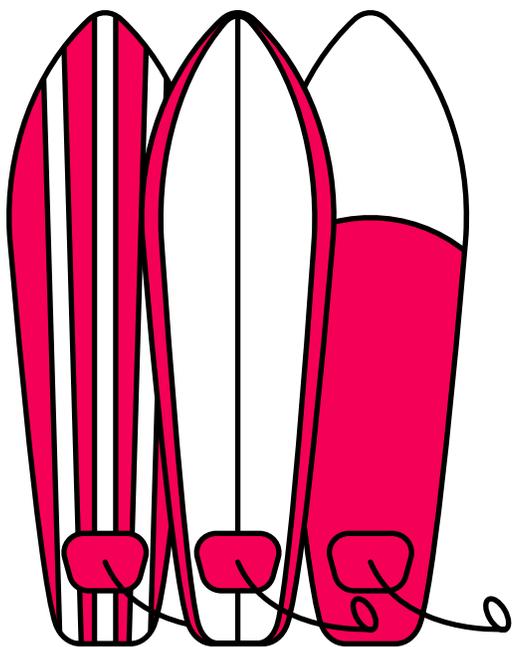
3 | Summer Ideas

Near the end of June, summer arrives and with it come many opportunities for your community to give back. Disc golf, pool parties, cornhole competitions—these event ideas are as fun as the seasons come.

For the Active-Inclined

1. BEACH VOLLEYBALL

Set up a tournament and ask teams to fundraise to enter. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Monmouth and Middlesex Counties used their volleyball tournament in New Jersey to raise over \$26,000 for their organization.¹⁰ They offered tiered incentives and prizes for those who met their fundraising goals and required participants to raise a minimum of \$75 to enter.



2. SURF COMPETITION

Hold a surf competition and ask participants to fundraise for entry. Or, host a surf-a-thon, like Urban Surf's annual event and open the day up to all levels of expertise.¹¹ Surfers can secure pledges from their family, friends, and local businesses for each wave they catch throughout the day.

¹⁰ Big Brothers Big Sisters of Monmouth and Middlesex Counties, "9th Annual Beach Volleyball Tournament." <https://www.giveeffect.com/campaigns/1029-9th-annual-beach-volleyball-tournament>

¹¹ Urban Surf 4 Kids, "Surfathon." <http://www.urbansurf4kids.org/surfathon/>

3. SUMMER FIELD DAY

Parents will be thrilled for the chance to tire out their kids at an old-fashioned field day this summer. Ask for a minimum donation and be sure to host classic events like a wheelbarrow race, sack race, three-legged race, egg-and-spoon race, water balloon toss, and games of capture the flag and tug-of-war.

And who's to say you can't host a field day for adults? Use team-based registration to create a throwback-themed event.

4. SWIM, BIKE, OR RUN-A-THON

As an example, Breathe California's Bike For Breath event offers three route options to engage multiple skill levels.¹² Fundraising isn't a requirement, but participants are encouraged to raise \$250 and offered incentives to shoot even higher.

Raise funds to earn Great Incentive Prizes!

Fundraising Level	Prize
\$50+	Bike 4 Breath Water Bottle
\$100+	2016 B4B T-Shirt
\$250+	Bike 4 Breath Cycling Socks
\$500+	2016 B4B Cycling Jersey & Express Check-In
\$750+	Bike 4 Breath Cycling Shorts
\$1,000+	Reserved Parking at Start/Finish
\$2,000+	\$50 Gift Certificate
\$2,500+	Additional \$25 Gift Certificate

Prizes are cumulative.
For example, if you raise \$1,000 you will be awarded all prize levels up to and including the \$1,000-level prize.

Breathe California outlines several prizes that participants can earn through different fundraising levels.

¹² Breathe California, "25th Annual Bike 4 Breath." <https://www.classy.org/events/-/e67062>

¹³ St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, "St. Jude Disc Golf Charity Invitational." http://fundraising.stjude.org/site/TR/TAEvents/Events?pg=entry&fr_id=56716_e67062

5. DISC GOLF

Also known as Frisbee golf, this increasingly popular sport has new courses opening all over the country. St. Jude Children's Research Hospital recently developed a partnership with the Professional Disc Golf Association and the greater disc golf community to host a Disc Golf Charity Invitational.¹³ Bring this summer fundraising idea to your own town, mirror the Invitational's registration with fundraising event model, and offer prizes for top performers.

6. SUMMER FUN RUN

While you can organize a 5K any time of year, the summer weather is bound to boost race attendance. Be sure to start earlier in the morning to avoid the heat and have volunteers hand out water, ice, and popsicles to keep everyone cool.

7. 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 organization and can switch off hosting classes.

8. 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.

“Food, Glorious Food!”

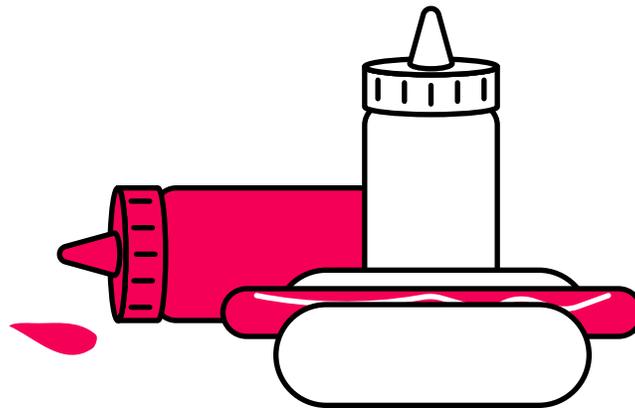
9. BBQ DINNER OR CONTEST

Rent or have equipment donated and host a BBQ dinner in your organization’s parking lot. Sell tickets for meals, and spice up the event by having participants pay a fee to compete for the best local BBQ sauce in town.

Another option is to take a note from Anthony Rizzo’s Cook-Off for Cancer and gather local restaurants and chefs to compete against each other. ¹⁴ Sell tickets for guests to eat and vote for their favorites.

10. EATING CONTEST

Look no further for event inspiration than Nathan’s Hot Dog Eating Contest, where the 2015 top male and female participants ate 62 and 38 hot dogs, respectively. ¹⁵ Get creative with the food of choice and ask entrants to raise a minimum dollar amount to compete. Strawberry pie, hot dogs, popsicles...the possibilities are endless.



¹⁴ Cubs Charities, “Welcome to Cubs Charities.” <http://chicago.cubs.mlb.com/chc/community/charities/cookoff.jsp>

¹⁵ Nathan’s Famous, “Nathan’s Famous International Hot Dog Eating Contest.” <http://www.nathansfamous.com/hot-dog-eating-contest>

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. SUMMER SOLSTICE CLAM BOIL

A clam boil is just one of the many possible summer fundraising ideas to honor the summer solstice, 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.

For the Arts-Inclined



14. 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*.

15. SUMMER CONCERT

Work with local venues and musicians to build a lineup and sell tickets. The Love Hope Strength Foundation's Red Rocks ROCKS event offers swag bags to anyone who fundraises \$500 or more, as well as a guitar signed by all performing artists for those who raise over \$2,000. ¹⁶



Concessions and T-shirts are additional ways to make money at a benefit concert. Create an event T-shirt that attendees can purchase as a memento.

16. SANDCASTLE CONTEST

Sand sculpture competitions are another great way to host a beach event for organizations who call the coastlines home. Ask contestants to pay and register for the event ahead of time, and give them a set amount of time to complete their entry during the actual contest. If possible, work with city officials to block off parts of the beach. Serve drinks and snacks and let attendees vote for the winner.

17. ARTS SHOW

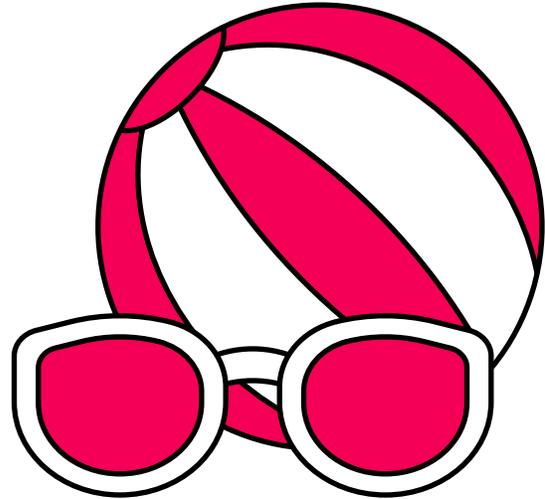
Ask local artists to donate pieces and then host an art walk or auction, where people can donate and browse your exhibit. Artists who don't want to donate their work may feature it for a showcase fee. You could also partner with a local food vendor, such as a food truck, to draw and accommodate a larger crowd.

¹⁶ Love Hope Strength Foundation, "Red Rocks Rocks." <https://secure.donationpay.org/lovehopestrength/redrocks.php>

Summer Staples

18. POOL PARTY

Whether you partner with a local YMCA, hotel, or cause champion, a casual pool party can be a great summer fundraising idea that gathers your supporters. Charge for entry and plan a fun event for your guests. For example, you might arrange a pool volleyball tournament and partner with your venue or a local business to offer a prize to the winning team, like a free night at their hotel or a gym membership.



19. FOURTH OF JULY PARTY

For this summer fundraising idea, host a house party and ask your supporters to bring a friend. Charge an entry fee and accept donations at the door for anyone who joins in.

20. THE COUNTY FAIR

Reach out to local fair officials to see how you can get in on the festivities. Could your organization 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 organization and ask your staff to volunteer in exchange.

21. CORNHOLE COMPETITION

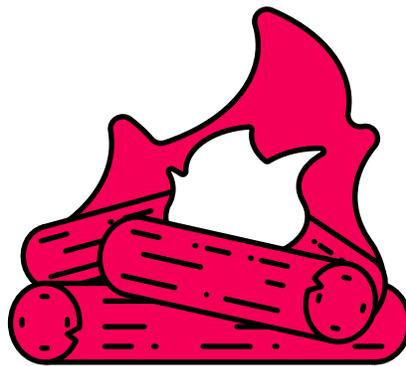
The High Fives Foundation asks cornhole enthusiasts to come out to watch or compete in their Cornhole and Cocktails event.¹⁷ Their competition consists of 32 teams in a single, timed elimination-style game. All registrants are also entered in a raffle for the chance to win a series of prizes, including a cornhole set.



Teams can create their own peer-to-peer fundraising pages and compete for an additional prize leading up to the event. Use the combined total of each cornhole duo and announce the winner at the end of the tournament.

22. DAY CAMP

Give parents a break and throw a day-camp retreat. Charge for admission and put on a day of arts and crafts, swimming, hikes, and a campfire. Consider partnering with a local day camp to arrange a day of their services that is donated to your organization.



¹⁷ High Fives Nonprofit Organization, "Cornhole and Cocktails." <https://secure.donationpay.org/lovehopestrength/redrocks.php>

23. SUMMER ADVENTURE SCAVENGER HUNT

This summer fundraising idea might take a bit more planning on your part, but with the right preparation, you can deliver an experience your supporters will never forget. Work with local businesses to set up an “Amazing Race”-style quest and leave clues and challenges around your city for contestants to hunt down and complete. Ask registrants to sign up in teams and raise a minimum amount to enter.

24. SUMMER-THEMED BAR CRAWL

Run a bar crawl with local breweries and put a summer spin on it. Entice participants to come out and find their new favorite summer brew by advertising the stops and featured beverages ahead of time. Charge for entry and ask registrants to secure pledges from donors who agree to contribute a certain amount for each stop that a bar crawler makes it to.

25. CAR WASH

Advertise your event ahead of time on social media to let the local community know what hours your staff and volunteers will be accepting customers. Request a suggested donation and offer different levels of service, such as wax or a towel-dry.

Up next? You guessed it—fall!

4 | Fall Ideas

If you think a turkey trot is the only fall-themed event out there, you're in for an awakening. From orchard walks, to bonfires, to graveyard tours, this list has it all (we even have an entire category for pumpkin-themed events for all you pumpkin-crazed).

Choose a handful of events from the list below to take to your team, and plan the perfect way to kick off your year-end fundraising season.

Harvest Ideas

1. 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.



The Guide to Throwing Third-Party Events

Learn how to set your fundraisers up for success with the tips and tools they need to raise money for your cause.

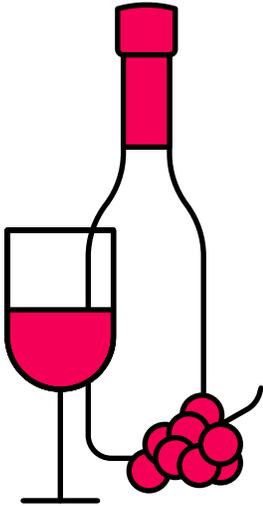
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Your supporters can put on harvest dinners on their own, too. Provide them with how-to information and a peer-to-peer fundraising page and give them an opportunity to raise money for your cause on your behalf.

The Emilio Nares Foundation does a great job of promoting these perks to potential sponsors.

¹⁸ On their Harvest for Hope event page, they outline exactly what sponsors will receive in exchange for their different donation sizes.



2. GRAPE STOMP OR WINERY TOUR

Pair up with a nearby winery and sell tickets for both a tasting and entry into a grape-stomping competition. According to the Sonoma County Harvest Fair, which hosts the annual World Championship Grape Stomp, the contest consists of teams of two. ¹⁹ While one team member uses their feet to squish grapes in a barrel, the other assists the flow of the juice into a jug by cleaning skins away from the screen and pushing juice to the pipe. The first team to fill the jug is the winner. Empower participants to leverage their network for donations and ask stompers to fundraise a minimum amount for entry.

3. 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. ²⁰

4. HARVEST FESTIVAL

If you want to host a bigger event and attract large pools of supporters, 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.

¹⁸ Harvest for Hope, "12th Annual Harvest for Hope." <https://www.classy.org/san-diego/events/12th-annual-harvest-for-hope/e43339>

¹⁹ Sonoma County Harvest Fair, "World Championship Grape Stomp." <http://www.harvestfair.org/grape-stomp>

²⁰ Apple Holler, "Events." <http://www.appleholler.com/event-calendar/event/ms-orchard-walk-fundraiser#>

If your city already puts on a festival, reach out to the festival officials to form a partnership, or rent a booth and design an activity related to your cause to engage the crowd and ask for donations.

5. CORN MAZE

Partner with a local farmer and sell tickets to a “haunted maze.” Ask for volunteer actors to lurk behind the turns as the bravest of your supporters line up to solve this larger-than-life puzzle.

Pumpkin Everything

6. GIANT PUMPKIN REGATTA

Believe it or not, you can have contestants race in giant, hollowed-out pumpkins on a body of water for a prize. We’re not kidding. The West Coast Giant Pumpkin Regatta takes place every fall in Tualatin, Oregon. They sell food and souvenirs at the event, and ask participants to compete in costume. ²¹

7. OKTOBERFEST PUB CRAWL

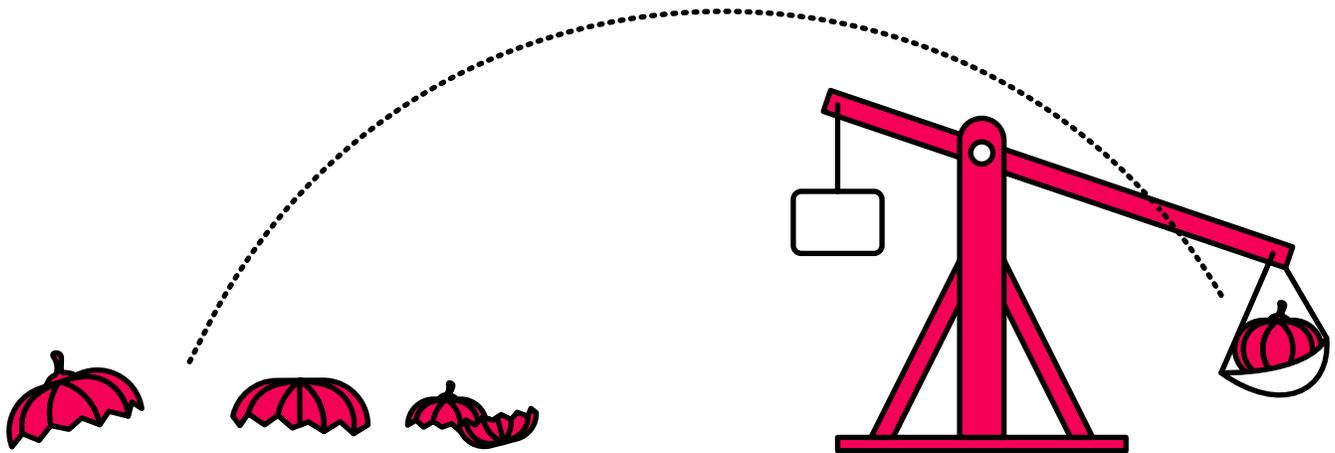
Work together with a handful of breweries and charge for participation in the crawl. Consider selecting pubs already embracing a fall theme with their drink menu (think pumpkin ales, ciders, mulled wine) and ask participants to break out their lederhosen to put a fun spin on this classic event.

Create T-shirts branded with your organization’s logo to help raise awareness for your cause while participants make their way through the route.

²¹ City of Tualatin Oregon, “West Coast Giant Pumpkin Regatta.” <https://www.tualatinoregon.gov/pumpkinregatta>

8. 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 entry fee, and incentivize participation with an awesome prize, like branded swag and tickets to your next event.



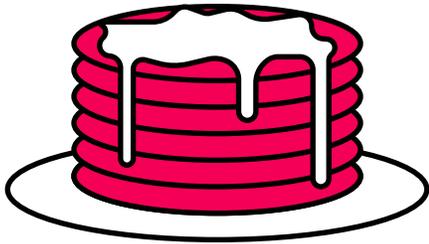
9. PUMPKIN CARVING CONTEST

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, the GUTS pumpkin-carving competition raises money every year to support the Make-A-Wish Foundation through a silent auction and food, drink, and merchandise sales.²² They also receive donations outside of the event, asking those who can't attend to make a donation online.

²² GUTS, "About GUTS." <http://www.gutscharlotte.com/about/>

10. PIE EATING CONTEST

Appeal to a local bakery for donated pies, and offer publicity for their business in your communications, pamphlets, and online event page. Recruit a volunteer MC to amp up the theatrics and ask participants to enter for a minimum gift amount.



11. BACK TO SCHOOL PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Does your organization 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.

Gatherings

12. HOUSE PARTY

Host a costume party, set up a haunted house, or organize a fall foods potluck. Sell tickets, snacks, and refreshments for donations. Attendees can even donate to enter an apple bobbing or best-dressed competition.



You can also ask your supporters to host house parties to fundraise on your behalf. With their help, your organization will be introduced to new, third-party donors.

13. 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 evening.

14. FALL CLOTHING SWAP

As the weather cools down, out come the flannel, vests, and layers. Get your community excited about fall fashion with a fall clothing swap. Supporters can donate their gently used items and for a contribution, select alternative items to take home with them.

15. 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 your supporters to compete for the chance to participate in your parade float. Set competitors up with peer-to-peer fundraising pages, and let them know that the first 10 people to raise X amount will get free swag and can get onboard.

16. 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.

Contests

17. CHILI COOK-OFF

Sell tickets to cook-off competitors and attendees who simply want to sample the chili. Appeal to prominent chefs 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. The Chili for Charity Cook Off awards a number of different titles including a “People’s Choice,” “Best in Show,” and “Judged Chili.”²³ Be sure to fork over a trophy and bragging rights to first place.



18. FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

With the football season underway, ask participants to start a team and recruit friends to play and fundraise on your behalf. Expand your event’s potential by creating multiple divisions.

The Alex’s Lemonade Stand Foundation, for instance, asks participants to register for the competitive, casual, or kids division. They also establish a minimum amount supporters must raise to compete:²⁴ “We strongly request that each team raise a minimum of \$1,000. If each team has an average of 10 players, each individual needs to raise only \$100.”

Or, instead of traditional football, hold a powderpuff tournament with female players and male cheerleaders, or even a quidditch tournament for Harry Potter fans. Don’t forget about your spectators—sell hot mugs of butterbeer to warm up the crowd.

²³ Wabash, “Chili for Charity Cook Off.” <http://www.chiliforcharity.com/index.html>

²⁴ Alex’s Lemonade Stand Foundation, “Lemon Bowl Flag Football Tournament.” <http://www.alexlemonade.org/campaign/lemon-bowl-flag-football-tournament>

19. HOMECOMING-INSPIRED DANCE-A-THON

Host a high school-themed dance and have everyone dress up for “homecoming.” Single dancers or partners can sign up and get sponsored to dance by the minute or hour. Keep energy levels high with snacks and refreshments so dancers can raise as much money as possible.



When you combine registration with fundraising, you can maximize the number of donations each dancer receives. Dancers create their own fundraising pages and can quickly distribute it to their networks ahead of the event. Not to mention, a mobile-friendly event page is perfect for those who want to donate at the event, and even on the dance floor.

20. FALL TRIVIA NIGHT

Rent a sound system and hold this event at a local pub. Create a registration page so teams can sign up ahead of time, and give prizes to the team with the most correct answers and the team that raises the most money through their peer-to-peer fundraising page. You can ask questions about “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” the history of Halloween, pie ingredients, or movie and song quotes. Example: What are Adam Sandler’s favorite kind of pants in his famous Thanksgiving song?



How Northwestern University Dance Marathon Powers Tradition With Modern Fundraising Technology

Read how Northwestern Dance University takes their annual dance-a-thon to the next level with software.

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21. HALLOWEEN OR THANKSGIVING FOOT RACES

A well-organized run/walk could be your most successful event of the year. Raise money for your organization with a spook-tacular 5K or a turkey trot.



You can even organize a virtual 5K with an online fundraising platform. Virtual 5Ks ask participants to register to run a certain distance on their own. To make it exciting, this is often in exchange for a T-shirt or finisher's medal. This is a great way to scale the impact of a physical event and give runners the option to participate no matter where they are.

Arts-Inspired

22. EDGAR ALLAN "POE"TRY NIGHT

Coffee shops and quaint pubs are great locations for this type of event. Appeal to community favorites for event space and sound equipment. Charge for entry and invite volunteers to sign up and read frightening classics. Have a competition for the best performance, and take a poll or determine the winner through the crowd's response.

Increase the event's reach by encouraging each performer to create a peer-to-peer fundraising page before the event and raise a certain amount before the show.

23. SHOWTIME

Put on a play featuring local talent, or have a smaller backyard show featuring your staff or volunteers as the actors. Macbeth is often a crowd pleaser this time of year, with all the "toil and trouble, fire burn and cauldron bubble." Sell tickets to the show and concessions at intermission.

You could also have a “Double, Double” Film Feature. Host a double feature screening at a local theatre, drive-in, or your own venue with donated equipment. The fall favorites list is endless.

Dead Poets Society, When Harry Met Sally, It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown, Scream, Hocus Pocus—take your pick.

For the Nature-Inclined

24. 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.²⁵ While you can reach out to donors and homeowners by going door to door, an online fundraising platform would allow your organization to collect donations ahead of time and help you organize your list of lawns to rake.

25. TAKE A HIKE

National Take a Hike day falls in November. Organize an afternoon adventure and ask participants to register ahead of time. Provide goodie bags, traveling guides, and event T-shirts that feature sponsors.

After fall, the next season is crucial to your fundraising success. December, the most lucrative fundraising month of the year, kicks off winter and arguably requires your most strategic game plan of all.

²⁵ Habitat for Humanity, “Habitat Rake-a-Thon.” <http://cvillehabitat.org/rake-a-thon>

5 | Winter Ideas

Development teams share a core mantra with the Stark family of HBO's popular show *Game of Thrones*:

“ *Winter is coming.*”

That's because **29 percent of annual fundraising tends to occur in December alone.**²⁶

Afterwards, it's essential to your organization's financial health that you retain these donors. This makes January and February the perfect time for donor cultivation events and other opportunities to develop your relationships.

Check out the list below with a fresh lens. Which events would be best for your organization for not only fundraising, but also relationship-building?

Holiday-Inspired

1. WINTER SOLSTICE SOUP EVENT

The winter solstice, otherwise known as the shortest day of the year, 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.

¹⁸ Network for Good, "The Network for Good Digital Giving Index." <http://www.networkforgood.com/digitalgivingindex/>

2. NEW YEAR'S EVE COCKTAIL EVENT OR GALA

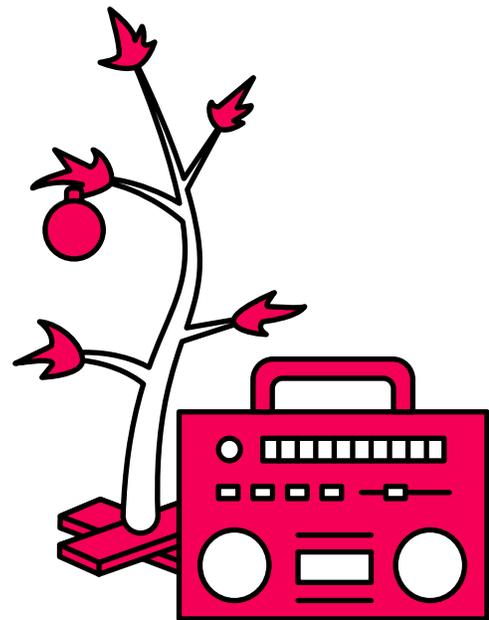
Eggnog, hot chocolate, mulled cider and wine—need we say more? Invite your supporters to dress to impress and fundraise for entry to your event. Motivate fundraisers with prizes like VIP seats or tickets to a future event.

3. HOLIDAY LIGHTS TOUR

If your town members put up holiday lights every year, why not throw a block party or lights tour? Charge per ticket, rent horse-drawn wagons, cover them with jingle bells, and serve cocoa onboard as your guests take in an evening display of holiday cheer.

4. CHRISTMAS MUSIC DANCE-A-THON

While Christmas music is a pretty polarizing (pun intended) topic, a Christmas music dance-a-thon can delight supporters in the middle of the season. Play hits from past and present and ask event registrants to create personal fundraising pages. Don't forget to award prizes for the longest dancers standing.



5. CAROLING FOR DONATIONS

Gather your team for some caroling and go door to door to collect donations. Bring flyers that include a QR code to your online fundraising page so people can easily connect with you online after they meet you in person.

6. PHOTOS WITH SANTA

Work with a local shopping mall, or use a public space to arrange a meet-and-greet with Santa and his elves. Parents can line their children up for a photo-op with Kris Kringle himself and have their photos printed on the spot for a contribution.

7. CHRISTMAS TREE DISPOSAL SERVICE

Rent a truck and offer to pick up old Christmas trees at the end of the season in exchange for donations. Confirm where you can take the trees that are ready for disposal. Some cities have locations for mulching the trees so they can be reused in some fashion. ²⁷

8. GIFT WRAPPING

Partner with a local store, like a bookstore or gift shop, and set up a gift-wrapping station. Ask for volunteers to man the station in hourly shifts and wrap presents in exchange for donations.



²⁷ Better Fundraising Ideas, "Christmas Fundraisers." <http://www.better-fundraising-ideas.com/christmas-fundraisers.html>

9. CHRISTMAS MOVIE NIGHT

National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation, *Elf*, *Home Alone*, *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*— there's no shortage of holiday classics to use for a winter screening. Partner with a local movie theater or venue with space for a projector and sell tickets to a holiday movie marathon.



Want to hold your movie night with a twist? Recruit a few local comedians to attend the film and sit in the front row. Give them microphones and let them crack jokes about the classic film for an extra layer of entertainment.

10. CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Ask local bands to put together a set of holiday songs and rent out a local bar or venue. You can sell tickets to the event and even ask participating bands to create team fundraising pages. Then, they can compete to raise the most funds for your cause from their fans.

11. UGLY SWEATER PARTY

An increasingly popular themed party in the last decade, an ugly sweater party is an easy way to engage your supporters. Rent out space at a local bar or restaurant and sell tickets, or invite guests to come in to your office for libations and holiday snacks.

²⁸ Classy Blog, "12 Fundraising Ideas Based on Search Trends." <https://www.classy.org/blog/infographic-fundraising-ideas-search-trends/>

12. VALENTINE'S DAY

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 by partnering with a local restaurant and selling tickets to a romantic set course menu.



Valentine's Day is the second largest holiday for last-minute gifts.²⁸ Use this to your advantage and couple your event experience with eCards that make it easy for participants to let their loved ones know a donation was made on their behalf with the purchase of your event ticket.

Athletic Events

13. POLAR PLUNGE

People love to do crazy things for a good cause—like jump into freezing cold water after running three miles. This winter, organize a 5K race that finishes in the local lake.

Special Olympics New Jersey recently saw a great deal of success with their Polar Bear Plunge. They asked teams and individuals to fundraise for their cause and created a personal fundraising page for each registrant.²⁹

²⁹ Special Olympics New Jersey, "Get Freezin' For a Reason." <http://www.plungeseaside.org/>

³⁰ Tidewater Physical Therapy, Inc., "24-Hour Treadmill Challenge "Still Easier Than Chemo." <http://www.tpti.com/24-hour-treadmill-challenge-still-easier-than-chemo/>

14. INDOOR RUN-A-THON

Think it's too cold to run outside? Take your race indoors. Still Easier Than Chemo regularly hosts 24-hour treadmill running challenges to raise money for their cause.³⁰ This winter fundraising idea gets registrants to run for one hour on a treadmill and encourages them to ask their friends and family to sign up too. Each participant receives a personal fundraising page, and the top fundraiser is awarded top-of-the-line running gear.

15. SLEDDING/ICE-SKATING EVENT

Winter fundraising ideas can come from family-oriented events like ice-skating nights or sled races. Charge for entry to the event, or collect donations in exchange for sled/skate rentals.

16. SKI-A-THON

The High Fives Foundation hosts an annual Ski-A-Thon where participants complete laps up and down the chairlift.³¹ The organization also provides snacks, lunch, and drinks, also sets up personal fundraising pages for entrants upon registration.

17. SANTA RUN

If thousands of Santas running down Main Street doesn't get your nonprofit some extra media attention, we're not sure what will. The Great Santa Run San Francisco gives registrants a five-piece Santa suit, runner goodie bag, and medal for participating.³² Ask your runners to create personal fundraising pages and give awards to the Santas who raise the most.

³¹ High Fives Foundation, "5th Annual FAT Ski-a-Thon." <https://support.highfivesfoundation.org/warren/events/5th-annual-fat-ski-thon/e68637>

³² Great Santa Run San Francisco, "Register Now." <http://www.greatsantarunssf.com/#register-now>

Contests

18. SNOWMAN/SNOW FORT-BUILDING CONTEST

This winter fundraising idea asks supporters to register for the competition while guests vote for their favorite snowy creation. Don't live somewhere cold? Try a sandcastle contest instead.



19. EATING CONTEST

Pie, chili, sugar cookies...there are plenty of winter snacks you might ask people to consume in exchange for some serious bragging rights. Ask contest participants to recruit pledges for each snack they eat, and gather the rest of your community to watch the fun.

20. 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.

21. 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 office. This is a perfect opportunity to casually meet with your supporters, learn more about them, and provide details about your cause.

22. SNOWBALL FIGHT

Arrange a tournament where teams compete in an ultimate snowball showdown. Set each team up with a fundraising page and give the top fundraising teams advantages in the competition. For example, you might allow the top team to bring one of their players back from the sidelines after they've been hit.

Winter Classics

23. SLEIGH RIDES

Host open sleigh rides at your local park or Christmas tree farm in exchange for donations. Make it a day event for a family-fun feel, or sell tickets for evening rides under the stars for a more romantic setting.

24. 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.

25. 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.

That’s a wrap! You’re ready to take all your ideas and start narrowing down the list. Read on to get started.

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:

Round 1. Note everything and anything on this list that catches your eye.

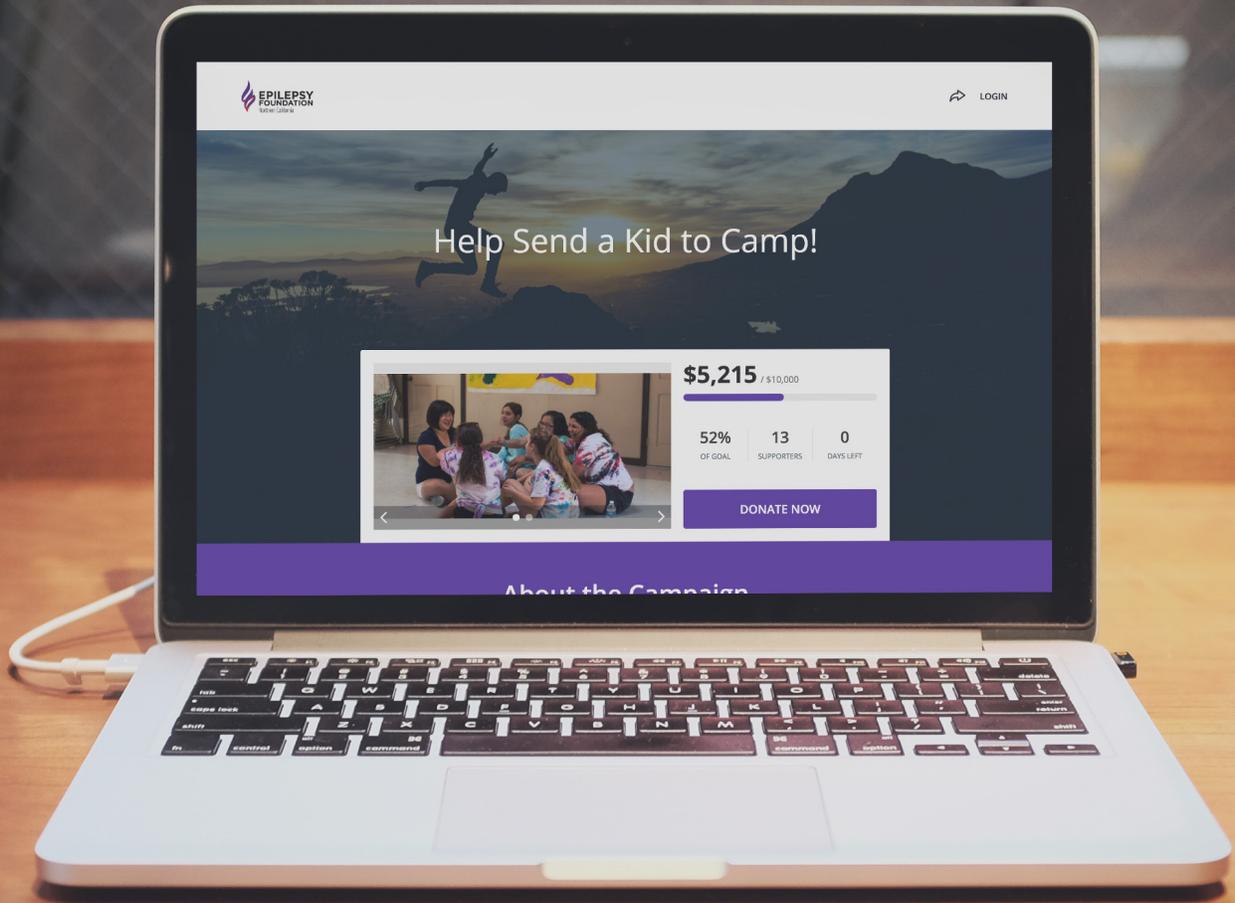
Round 2. Take this new list and go through it again with your specific development goals in mind. Remove anything that doesn't fit.

Round 3. Take that shorter list and consider your intended audience for every event. Remove anything that's not appropriate or as engaging.

Round 4. Elicit feedback from other members of your team or committee. Have them vote for their favorites.

Round 5. Still have a toss-up? Contact a handful of trusted supporters 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.



Classy

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