

2026-2027 Fundraising Guide



A great fundraising event combines passion, purpose, and fun! If you want to create your own United Way fundraiser, here's a helpful checklist to get you started...

- 1. Create your event concept.** Themes are an effective way to get people excited about your event. What's your passion? This is your opportunity to put the fun in fundraiser! Maybe it's sports, nature, or animals! Maybe it's a type of scavenger hunt game. Catchy names and puns also work well to help you promote the day.
- 2. Confirm your event details.** Pick a date and a location. Do you need a venue? Book well in advance so you're not disappointed. Work back from your event date and make a plan that outlines all the steps to coordinate, promote, and execute your concept.
- 3. Collect your funds.** There are so many unique ways to raise money... how will you collect your funds? Silent auctions and 50/50 raffles are just two (of many!) ideas to raise money at your event, as well as event ticket sales. Some questions to ask yourself: How will people get tickets to your event? How will you track number of guests? Remember, you are responsible for collecting all fundraising and sponsorship monies.
- 4. Check your legal responsibilities.** Do you need a permit, license, or insurance to host your event?
- 5. Promote it!** Once all your pieces are in place, you'll want to promote your fundraiser so everyone knows about it. Save the Date emails, posters, and social media splashes are just three of many ways to spread the word and ignite excitement about your event. We're here to help, too... we can amplify your reach by sharing on our social channels.
- 6. Celebrate your supporters!** Celebrate your participants, volunteers, teammates, and service providers with a much deserved THANK YOU! Your gratitude and recognition of their efforts to make your event a fundraising success will be appreciated and remembered.

UNITED IS THE WAY TO IMPACT

it takes **YOU** *to be united*

Ready to raise some fun and some funds? Here are some ideas to get your brain storming!

PARTIES/EVENTS

- Lights Camera Action/Academy Awards
- Mardi Gras
- Carnival
- Show Your School Spirit
- Sock Hop/50s-60s-70s
- Casino Night
- Beach Bash
- Murder Mystery
- A Ghoulish Good Time Halloween Event

CONTESTS

- FUNNIEST HOME VIDEO CONTESTS. Create your own “home” or “work” videos. Charge an entry fee at a viewing party. Provide popcorn and candy during the viewing. Award movie tickets for winners of the best video.
- CAMPAIGN JINGLE CONTEST. Have everyone write jingles for the fundraising campaign. Charge a \$5 entry fee and voting fee for the best jingles.

FOOD

- BAKE SALE. Invite everyone to bring their favorite cakes, cookies, or breads. Sell per item or by the dozen.
- COOKOFF OR POTLUCK LUNCH. Ask folks to cook a favorite recipe and enter it into a cook-off contest. Invite attendees to pay \$5 for lunch. Have a panel of nominated experts select the official cookoff champion.
- COOKBOOK SALES. Celebrate your best chefs with a custom cookbook for sale.
- BLUE LIGHT SPECIAL. Host a weekly lunch and learn for \$5. (A salad bar or taco bar is easy and inexpensive to prepare.)
- “A TASTE OF...” EVENT. Invite local restaurants to set up their best dishes to be sampled and purchased, with all proceeds donated.
- TAILGATE PARTY. Create a sports theme to coincide with football season and party in the parking lot. Serve hot dogs, chips, soda, and peanuts. Play a game of flag football or video football with participants donating an entry fee.
- “GOOD NEIGHBOR” BARBEQUE. Join with other companies near you to have a cookout with games and giveaways.
- BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS. Form teams and mark your fundraising progress by moving the teams across a playing field poster toward the goal... decorate with athletic gear, flags, and banners and have the “coach” give a pep talk at the kickoff “Breakfast of Champions” where Wheaties is served.
- WAFFLE/PANCAKE BREAKFAST. Sell tickets for a pancake breakfast in your company cafeteria – ask management to serve and don’t forget bacon, sausage, and butter!
- ICE CREAM SOCIAL. Set up an ice cream bar with a variety of favorite toppings, and charge by the scoop or toppings. (Award a prize or announce who ordered the most scoops!)
- LUNCH BOX AUCTION. Create gourmet lunches to be auctioned off to the highest bidder. Give prizes for the most creative, nutritious, elegant, or humorous meals.

- INTERNATIONAL FOOD DAY. Team together to create tasty treats from around the world (consider decorating a “vendor booth” and being in costume). Sell tickets for trying food at the booths.
- OCTOBER FEST. Celebrate with a German inspired meal.
- JELLYBEAN JAR. The famous “guess the number of beans in the jar” cannot be forgotten. Buy a guess for 50 cents. The person who guesses closest to the number in the jar, wins the jar of candy.
- CANDY BAR/POPCORN SALE. Satisfy that afternoon snack craving by selling \$5 bags.
- PUT YOURSELF IN THEIR SHOES. Ask participants to wear a crazy pair of shoes and enjoy a wild and crazy lunch... FOOTlong hot dogs, SHOESTRING potatoes, CORN chips, and ARCHway cookies, complete with SOLE music (“Blue Suede Shoes,” “These Boots Were Made for Walking”).

FUN WITH YOUR EXECUTIVE TEAM

- CHILDREN’S DRAWING CONTEST. Give employees photographs of one or two top executives to take home for their children 12-year-old or younger to draw. Charge a \$5 entry fee to vote for the best portraits. Display the winning portraits as part of the organization’s permanent art collection.
- GOAL-SETTER. Have your executives pledge to “take a pie in the face” or “kiss a pig” if a certain fundraising goal is met.
- MENTORSHIP AUCTION. Bid out or raffle off a one-hour coffee meeting with a senior executive.

GAMES

- MATCH ME. Guess who belongs to the baby photo, pet photo, etc.!
- KARAOKE CLUB. You can pay to nominate someone else to sing. That person must sing or pay a fee not to sing! (Only one rule... don’t talk about Karaoke Club.)
- TREASURE HUNT. Sell daily clues to a mystery location where a treasure is hidden. The first person to guess the location wins the treasure.
- A SPELLING BEE! Enough said.

BACK TO THE BASICS

- YE OLDE CAR WASH. Employees pay to get their cars washed in the parking lot during the workday by the volunteer washers.
- SPIRIT WEEK. Consider a Silly Hat Day, Crazy Hair Day, Favorite Team/Jersey Day, Opposite Day, Fun Zoom Background Day, or Ugly Shoes Day.
- INFORM. Post signs around your space highlighting the need: “For the cost of a cup of coffee or a soda, you can make a difference in the life of a handicapped child who needs therapy, provide shelter to a victim of domestic abuse, or give a warm meal to a homeless person.”

FEATS OF STRENGTH

- WALK OR BIKE-A-THON. Charge an entry fee and collect pledges for the number of miles the participant logs.
- BOWLING TOURNAMENT. Get a bowling alley to reduce normal fees. Charge participants the regular price with proceeds going to United Way. Participants can get pledges for the number of pins knocked over.

- CHAIR RACE. Set up a relay course for all your office warriors to attempt. Let observers “bet” on their favorite contestants.
- TOURNAMENT. Plan your golf, tennis, basketball, racquetball, dodgeball, pickleball, or other tournament and charge players to enter. (This even works with a miniature golf course!)
- OFFICE OLYMPICS. Set up an obstacle course in the lunchroom, several offices, several floors of offices or outside. One station can be for typing a couple of paragraphs, another station for filing, another for photocopying, etc. The contestants pay an entry fee and the winner gets a prize.
- MINI-INDY 500. Rent or borrow remote controlled cars and set up an “Indy 500” race. Use office supplies to make the track more interesting. Teams can be sponsored to compete. Spectators can place bets on the winner.
- SUMO MANIA. Call a local company and rent the Sumo Wrestling package. Have teams pay to play.
- HEALTH EVENT. Encouragement departments host events such as yoga class, stress reduction workshops, or nutrition and consultations. Charge to attend each event.

DONATE/SELL SOMETHING

- RUMMAGE FOR GOOD. Bags, cooking equipment, new or used toys, books, movies, or video games, glassware, jewelry, plants or flowers, white elephant, etc. One person’s trash is another’s treasure!
- BALLOON-GRAMS. Pay to have messages attached to helium balloons delivered (for \$1, \$2, or \$5 a balloon).

VIRTUAL EVENTS

- BOOK CLUB. Enter for \$10 (what you would have spent on snacks anyway!) and meet weekly to talk about a book of choice.
- TOURNAMENTS. Some sports tournaments can be done remote – bike riding, golfing, etc. United is the way we do not lie about our scores!

INCENTIVES

- *Brag board*: Post the names of the overall top giver, early-bird giver, biggest gift increase, etc.
- *Double the break*: If employees normally get a 30-minute lunch, make it an hour.
- *Create a holiday*: Set a goal for participation (ex. 80% company participation). If that goal is reached, a day off will be awarded to the company. (Or some other prize.)
- *Jersey Day*: Wear your favorite sports team jersey.
- *Coupons/gift cards for company cafeteria*
- *Company coupons*: Casual Friday/J Jeans Day, Flee @ 3 (leave work early), Call in Well (day off), Sleep In (arrive late).
- *Prime parking space*
- *Company T-Shirts*
- *Vendor Donation Raffle*: Hotel Getaways, Gift Certificates, Tickets to Games/Movies/Sporting Events/Plays
- *Trophy for Department with Highest Participation*
- *Pizza party or movie break for top-giving teams*
- *Corporate match*