



## FUNDRAISING 101

### Introduction

As a non-profit organization, the Tavis Smiley Foundation relies on funding from a variety of sources including corporations, foundations, individual donors and special events, so we know that fundraising can be a challenge but it can also be rewarding because it helps us reach our goal to enlighten, encourage and empower young people.

Many young people have been successful at raising money to offset the cost of attending our annual Leadership Institute and we'd like to offer this guide to help you if this is your first time.

Many of you have probably already experienced fundraising for school or church projects. Honestly, the strategies are not that different for most groups or organizations. The key to success is setting a goal and following through on your plan.

We know that raising money takes time, but we also know that it can be achieved. We have created this toolkit to help you through the process of fundraising and some strategies and tactics proven to work.

In this guide you will find:

- Setting Fundraising Goals
- Fundraising Strategy
- Fundraising Tips
- Sample Fundraising Letters
- Sample Thank You Letter
- Great Fundraising Ideas
- Special Event Planner Checklist

## Step 1: Setting Fundraising Goals

The first step in any successful fundraising campaign is determining how much money you need to raise. Your goal may simply be to raise \$500 to cover your registration fee or to cover the transportation fee.

Below is a sample worksheet to help you determine your needs:

<b>Expenses</b>	
Leadership Institute Fee	\$500
Personal Spending Money	\$
Transportation to Houston	\$
Personal Items: Camera, Toiletries	\$
<b>Total Expenses (Add 1-4)</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>Contributions</b>	
Family/Parents	\$
My Savings	\$
Donations	\$
<b>Total Contributions</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>Total Remaining Funds Needed</b>	<b>\$</b>



## Step 2: Determining Your Fundraising Strategy

Now that you know how much you need to raise the next step is to help you outline a fundraising strategy and estimate a goal for each fundraising method you use. You may be more comfortable with the total amount you need to raise if you can see the way you are going to get there in "digestible pieces". In other words, take the big picture and break it up into smaller, more manageable pieces.

By getting a visual picture of your strategy and how much you expect to raise with each type of fundraising activity, you may find that your fundraising goal is more attainable than you first thought.

A word of advice: If you are using a fundraising letter think of it as the anchor of your campaign. However, prepare at least two other ideas (or more if you need them) to complement your letter campaign.

Many reach their goal with their letter campaign. It is possible. Yet, you want to be prepared with other ideas just in case. All of these ideas may not be for you, so just leave that section blank if you don't plan to use that method. Not every type of fundraiser works for every type of donor network. You know your friends and family best.

### **Fundraising Letter**

Decide how many letters you need to send out to reach your goal of \$500 for example. I will send XXX fundraising letters. Divide the number of fundraising letters into \$500 to figure out how much each letter might raise. Remember each letter might not raise the same amount and some letters won't generate any donations at all.

Total you expect to raise from your fundraising letter \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### **Fundraising Party**

The most popular means of raising money other than your letter is the fundraising party. Be sure to refer to the "fundraising party" flyer for more details on how to give a great party for the cause. Think about other ways to maximize the number of donations at your party. A drawing or auction may help bring in additional donations, possibly from existing donors. Most parties raise between \$500 and \$2,000.

Total you expect to raise with your Fundraising Party -- \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### **Fundraising Family and Friends**

How about asking a family member or friend to help you with fundraising? Think of those you know who are committed to your participation in the summit and the cause you are helping. They may not be able to donate money, but are willing to help you raise it. Ask them to be a "Fundraising Manager" with you. There is no limit to the number of people you can ask to help you.

Total you expect to raise with their help (# of people x the amount) -- \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### **Fundraising at School**

Check with your school on any possible restrictions for fundraising. It is always good to do research on Dos and Don'ts before planning an event.

Total you expect to raise from School Fundraising Activities -- \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### **Special Events - Yard Sale/Car Wash**

This is a great way to get others involved in your fundraising. You might decide to have a Yard Sale or Car Wash yourself, or ask a friend or community group to sponsor an event for you. Think of those you know who would be willing to hold a yard sale or Car Wash for you. Yard Sales and Car Washes are usually moderate size fundraising activities that can yield \$200 to \$500 per event.

Total you expect to raise from your Yard Sale/Car Wash -- \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Now add up all the totals that you expect to raise from your various fundraising methods, and compare it to the fundraising goal that you have set for yourself. Now you have a strategy and an expected total from each event to work towards.

Final Total you expect to raise from all fundraising activities -- \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Your personal goal for fundraising -- \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Difference (if any)* -- \$ \_\_\_\_\_

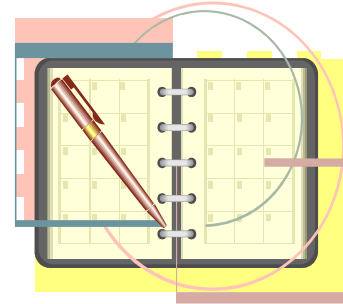
## Step 3: Implement Your Fundraising Strategy for Success

With a fundraising goal and a strategy in mind below are some tips for making your strategy a success.

1. Start by making a list of everyone you know who might be able to help. Don't leave anyone off. You never know who might be willing to help you achieve your goal. The more contributions, the better, so consider expanding beyond your inner circle of close friends and immediate family members. The cardinal rule of fundraising is that if you don't ask, you won't get anything. Ask anyone and everyone you know and even those you don't know to contribute to your cause. Collect specific **names**, **titles**, **addresses** and **telephone numbers** of every potential contributor. Keep the information together on a pad of paper or in a spreadsheet. You can then easily keep track of who you've approached, when and what you requested from them. Being organized will help you follow up on your requests.

2. Write out your goals and reasons for participating as part of the Leadership Institute and what you want to accomplish. When writing your fundraising letter, explain how their donation will make an impact.

3. Keep it short & simple (KISS). Keep your letters to one page. Too much information can alienate a potential donor. Many of your donors will not be familiar with the program; they will be more interested in contributing to a good cause (education, helping youth, etc.)



4. Identify your support system. Some people will be extremely supportive and share your enthusiasm and excitement. Talking to people and listening to their reactions will help you figure out the level of interest and support you will have for your endeavor.

5. Ask for a specific amount of money. When you say "contribution;" some people may think \$5; while others think \$500. Tell people how much you want. Let them know the total amount that you are hoping to fundraise. Established, professional adults often can contribute more money than those who are students. Don't be afraid to ask your more established contacts for \$100, \$200 or even \$500.

6. Convey a sense of urgency. This limits their time to forget about giving you a contribution.

7. Make it convenient for them to give you money and get a commitment for payment rather than a promise. Say, "If you don't have the money now ask them to fill out a sponsorship form and then get back to them at a designated time. You can even have them make their contributions online at the Tavis Smiley Foundation donor page. [www.youthtoleaders.org](http://www.youthtoleaders.org).

Explain that donation money going towards the program fee is tax-deductible.

8. Many people who contribute money simply want recognition and praise. Write a thank you letter and include a printed list of your supporters' names. Invite them to your community service project.

10. Promise a presentation about your leadership efforts and community service. Tangible evidence of your actions helps people understand where their dollars have gone. Pictures of you working can be good reminders of how their money made an impact.

## Step 4: Follow Up

If you've decided to send fundraising letters within four or five days you should make a follow-up phone call. The purpose of the call is to arrange a time to see the potential sponsor and discuss your need for funding. You also want to make sure your letter was received and that each potential sponsor is considering your request.

Be pleasant, but persistent. Be polite, confident and assertive on the phone.

The person answering the phone when you call may not be the person to whom you addressed your letter. Introduce yourself, give the reason you are calling and ask to speak to the person to whom you addressed the letter, or the most appropriate individual. Be prepared to speak with a secretary or assistant first.

### **HERE IS A SAMPLE CONVERSATION:**

RECEPTIONIST: "Good Afternoon, American Legion. May I help you?"

YOU: "Yes, good afternoon. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I recently wrote a letter to Ms. Smith about the Tavis Smiley Foundation Leadership Institute. I am calling to see if she received the letter and to make an appointment to speak with her."

At this point, several things might happen. You may be transferred to another person and have to repeat your introduction again. Your call may be placed on "Hold" while the receptionist discusses your request with Ms. Smith and then returns to you.

If you are transferred, make your introduction again to her and have in mind a date and time you would like to meet with her. Most likely people would prefer to talk with you over the phone rather than meet in person given busy schedules.

Be ready to discuss the Institute and why you want to attend.



## Step 5: Handling the Response

### If the Answer is "No"

Hearing a no is a reality in fundraising, but it doesn't mean you should give up. Remember, the worst that could happen is a "no." And sometimes, a "no" doesn't end up being a "no." If your original request is turned down, ask for something different. If they can't give \$100, could they give \$75?

If they cannot give \$75; how about \$50, and so on? If the answer you do receive is a "no," be gracious and thank them for their time and consideration. Then move to the next folks on your list!

### If the Answer is Yes"

Be sure to let your donors know about the experience you had because of their generosity. Write everyone a "thank you" note - whether a contribution was made or not - for their check, for speaking with you, for suggesting other people to call. *This is an essential step.* Even if it is brief, such a note is greatly appreciated.

Organizations are always impressed with courtesy and they will remember your thoughtfulness. Also, you'll pave the way for the next student raising funds for a worthwhile project. Your donors will be glad to hear from you and you can take pride in a job well done.



# SAMPLE REQUEST LETTER #1

May 5, 2009

Jane Doe  
Urban Planners Association  
3442 Pine Street  
Wilmington, DE 23450

Dear Ms. Doe: (Be sure to personalize the letter)

I have been accepted to attend the Tavis Smiley Foundation's Leadership Institute.

The Leadership Institute is a four-day conference set for August 7-11, 2009 on the campus of UCLA in Los Angeles, CA. The conference will include workshops on leadership development, goal setting, decision-making, a Teen Town Hall meeting and sessions conducted by Tavis Smiley.

I am contacting you to request your support in the form of a tax-deductible donation.

The Tavis Smiley Foundation is a non-profit organization founded by Mr. Smiley in 1999 with a mission to enlighten, encourage, and empower youth by providing leadership skills that will promote and enhance the quality of life for themselves, their communities and our world. Each year Mr. Smiley hosts a Leadership Institute that brings young people together from around the country.

I want to attend because (give your reasons why and what you hope to accomplish.)

I hope I can count on you for a generous donation of \$50, \$100 or \$125 -- whichever is easiest. I have already raised (what amount?) Any amount you can provide is greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request. I look forward to whatever support you can provide.

If you require additional information on the Tavis Smiley Foundation, please contact me or you may visit their official website at [www.youthtoleaders.org](http://www.youthtoleaders.org) or call the office at 323-290-1888.

The deadline for my registration fee is July 11, 2008, so if possible return the donation in the enclosed, stamped and addressed envelope by (insert date here).

Thank you for your consideration and generosity.

## SAMPLE RESPONSE LETTER #2 (Funding Denied)

May 02, 2009

Jane Doe  
Urban Planners Association  
3442 Pine Street  
Wilmington, DE 23450

Dear Ms. Doe:

I received your letter stating that you will be unable to assist me financially with registration fees for the Tavis Smiley Foundation Leadership Institute's program fees.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and for the consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Stan Student

## SAMPLE RESPONSE LETTER #2 (Funding Approved)

Mr. Craig Nelson  
President  
Georgia Activity Club  
6789 Spring Street  
Atlanta, GA 40405

Dear Mr. Nelson:

I am so happy to hear that you have generously agreed to donate to my registration fee for the Tavis Smiley Foundation Leadership Institute in the amount of \$350.

I feel confident that I will be able to continue developing my skills and talents to become a community leader. During the program, I will update you on my activities and experiences.

As I noted in my initial letter, I would also be pleased to share my experience in a presentation upon my return. All donations to the foundation are tax-deductible.

I am truly grateful for your generosity, your commitment to my future and to the future of our community.

Sincerely,

Stacey Student

## GREAT FUNDRAISING IDEAS

**A Letter-Writing Campaign** is one of the simplest and most effective fundraising methods you can use. Send letters to friends and family, clubs, churches or temples, local banks, foundations and charitable organizations in your area. Don't forget to mention that all donations toward the program fee are tax-deductible.

**Grant Proposals** are one of the most common ways to raise money is through grant proposals. Though a grant proposal is very simple to write, getting it accepted is difficult. The Ford Foundation receives more than 1,000 proposals daily requesting money! Also, grants are often time sensitive in that foundations have deadlines and funding cycles.

**Local Businesses** are far more likely than large corporations to make a contribution to your cause. The key is to make a link between the owner and you or someone close to you. You may want to approach the business with a letter first, enclosing all relevant materials and a pledge form, and then follow up with a phone call.

**Service Clubs** such as Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, and Optimists, fraternal organizations such as Kappa Alpha Psi and Delta Sigma Theta, Masonic lodges, and religious groups such as churches and temples are excellent sources for fundraising. Follow the "Who Do You Know" principle; is someone you know a member or a friend of a member?

Contact as many clubs in your area as possible and ask if you can give a presentation to their club. Many clubs have breakfast, lunch or dinner meetings where you can ask to speak for 15-20 minutes to present your request and explain what you will be doing. After the meeting, write a follow-up letter thanking them for letting you speak and reiterating your request for money. Be specific about how much money you are requesting and how it will be used. Be realistic about the amount you are requesting. A total of \$200 - \$400 is probably reasonable.

**Sales** - One traditional way to raise money is through bake sales, arts and crafts sales, candy sales, garage sales, etc. Do you know someone who is a great baker, an artist, or a published writer? Ask them if they might donate their creations to you so that you may allocate the sale towards your program.

**Raffles** - This works better for groups raising funds. Often groups can get items donated to them from local stores, companies, and restaurants, which they can raffle off, usually at a larger event such as a dance. If there are no large items to raffle off, sometimes groups buy something like a television. That is fine as long as the proceeds are well over the purchase price.

**Parties, Dances, Music** - These can range from black tie affairs to simple pizza parties. Do you have a friend in a band? Do you know the owner of a bar or a restaurant? Some simple events include having a band play at a club where you get the cover charge or a percentage of the drink sales. Or perhaps a restaurant will allow you an evening offering an all-you-can eat buffet for \$15 where you get \$7.50 and the restaurant gets \$7.50. You can even throw your own party and ask that your guests pay a cover charge, provided the cover is well over the cost of the party.

**Garage Sale or Yard Sale** - Your family, friends and even neighbors might donate their junk to help out. Even if they have already donated, they can help a second time by adding to your sale.

**Drawing or Door Prizes** - Getting items donated and selling chances in a drawing can produce big bucks. Items or services are great for prizes.

**50/50 Drawing** - A drawing where half of the money collected goes to the winner.

**Silent Auctions** - Even 10 items can produce a great donation to your fundraising. Gather items or services from local merchants and have a silent auction at your party. Check with the TSF staff to teach you some of the dos and don'ts.

**O-Grams** - Everyone loves deliveries in class or at work. Sell Balloon-O-grams or Flower-O-Grams and spend a day delivering them to lucky recipients. \$25 or \$30 gets your bouquet of balloons delivered to the person of your choice. Work with a florist to the balloons or carnations donated.

**House Party** - Have everyone over for a party and let them donate. Have the party yourself, or get a friend to have one for you. Multiple parties with different groups of friends, family or friends of friends are great ways to increase your potential donors.

**Night at the ballpark** - Check with your local sports team. You may be able to get a block of tickets donated to sell for your fundraising. Or you may get them at a much discounted price and put what you get above the ticket price towards your goal.

**Benefit Night** - Get a local business or restaurant to donate a percentage of their profits on a certain day. Then get all your family and friends to stop by. It's a win-win for the business and you!

**Donations Rather Than Gifts** - Ask friends and family to donate to your fundraising rather than buy you a gift for a special occasion like your birthday.

**Host a Tournament** - Put together a tournament for golf, softball or volleyball ... whatever. The entry fee helps your fundraising goal. You may be able to get the space and officiating donated if you let people know it's for charity.

**Ask Businesses**- If you do business there, they may appreciate your loyalty enough to donate. Give them an incentive by advertising their generosity in your update.

**Spaghetti Dinner** - If you plan ahead, you may get the food donated.

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# SPECIAL EVENT PLANNING CHECK LIST & TIMELINE

## 5 Weeks Before Event

- Consider preferred and alternative event locations
- Request facility reservation and setup
- Order any special promo items (if applicable)
- Assign responsibilities (find location, recruit volunteers, design publicity, etc.) to committee members (if applicable)

## 4 Weeks Before Event

- Publicity (design posters, table tents, etc)
- Design program outline as needed
- Arrange speaker or performer's travel (airfare, ground transportation)
- Make arrangements for food donations, catering services (if applicable)

## 3 Weeks Before Event

- Invitations to special guests (alumni, supporters, sponsors)
- Send news release to media
- Complete contract for service agreements with facility.

## 2 Weeks Before Event

- Determine "Day of" responsibilities (meet performer/speaker, hospitality, setup, cleanup, etc)
- Grassroots publicity with flyers, posters
- Have programs printed
- Email announcements
- Confirm performers/speaker itinerary with agent
- Recruit volunteers
- Hire or assign photographer, videographer

## 1 Week Before Event

- Compose performer/speaker introduction(s)
- Confirm schedule of workers/volunteers/security
- Confirm performer/speaker travel

## 1 Day Before Event

- Check media equipment
- Check parking
- Confirm "Day of" responsibilities and run through volunteer assignments
- Check facility to ensure proper room arrangements and special equipment is in place
- Check on payments

## Day of Event

- Give payment to performer/speaker after performance
- Meet speaker/performer upon arrival
- Unload and set up performer's equipment
- Initiate clean up upon conclusion of event
- Hand out and collect evaluation forms
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## 1 Week After Event

- Complete and submit reimbursement forms with receipts
- Send thank you notes to special guests and performer/speaker/agency
- Send thank you notes to workers, volunteers, etc.
- Summarize event evaluations