

STEP-BY-STEP:

Planning a fundraising strategy

Congratulations on becoming a FundEd subscriber! Whether you're a fundraising pro or a complete novice, these tips should help determine your plan of action. Good luck!

1 What's your goal? Identify your school's focus areas and prioritise your immediate needs. Be specific about what you want to achieve and by when. If you're working towards funding a specific item, what is the total cost and will there be any ongoing maintenance fees? Can the project be broken down into stages? Agree a contingency should you fall short or exceed your target.

2 Who can help you achieve your goal? Your workforce should consist of your leadership team, plus any additional volunteers you can muster. Work out who can do what, how much time they have available, and what specific skills or expertise they can offer. If you have a PTA, communicate your plans and get them on board. Leverage your assets – for example, if a member of staff is in a band, a musical festival may be a feasible event.

3 Set a timeframe. Some goals will be long-term, like building a new playground, while others may be more immediate. Draw up a schedule, working backwards from your optimum end date. Input grant application deadlines and allocate at least an hour per week to compile supporting documentation and complete bid paperwork. Check school calendars to avoid clashes with existing commitments, while exploring the option to piggyback activities that are already planned, i.e. by running a silent auction at the carol concert or a sponsored read-a-thon for World Book Day.

4 Brainstorm fundraising ideas. How you fundraise will depend on the level of funding required and the timeframe involved. Many grant-giving trusts will want to see evidence that you are already actively trying to raise funds yourself. Break down your total target into smaller, more manageable chunks as this helps spread your risk and – if you can delegate different initiatives to others – your workload! Consider grants, crowdfunding, special events such as quiz nights, sponsored activities, corporate sponsorship and ongoing, passive sources of income such as shopping affiliate schemes. Put a monetary target against each activity to track how it will contribute to your goal. Refer to funded.org.uk and pta.co.uk for fundraising ideas, advice and guidance on running successful events and boosting profits.

5 What resources are needed to help you achieve your goals? If time and skills are in short supply, then consider employing the services of a bid-writing expert, or investing in a part-time member of staff on a trial basis with a view that they cover their costs. Speak to your local Council for Voluntary Services or District Council as they often have information on local grants, regular networking events or upcoming fundraising workshops. Cut costs by making the most of existing assets, like school facilities or equipment. See if you are able to borrow items from other schools or community groups – you might be surprised to find what people will contribute in support of your cause, so don't be afraid to ask!

6 Consider your support base for donations, sponsorship or attendees at fundraising events – are you tapping up the same audience time and again and what level of support are they likely to be able to offer? Aim to engage existing supporters, but also seek ways to reach new ones. Think about who else may want to see your project succeed, such as local companies or sole traders working in a relevant interest area to your project. For example, a local catering company or hotel may be interested in a project to fund cookery equipment at your school, while a local engineering firm might be keen to support a new DT facility.

7 Create a marketing schedule and communicate your plans as far in advance as possible so supporters can factor this into their diaries and budgets. Explain what you are raising funds for and the impact that contributions will have. Consider breaking down the cost of your project to show supporters how their donation will make a difference, e.g. 'A £100 donation will help us purchase X number of books for our new library.' Remember to schedule regular updates and progress reports for all supporters.

8 Create a buzz! Promote your fundraising initiatives on social media, your school website and in newsletters, with a call-to-action, i.e. a link to your crowdfunding page or how to buy tickets to an event. Give deadlines if possible so people will be encouraged to donate quickly. Follow up with reminders.

For ideas and advice on securing funding, visit funded.org.uk