

96 Ideas for Nonprofit Fundraising Events

From Easy-to-Plan Community Activities to Mega Tournaments



NonprofitLibrary

Tatiana Morand
Wild Apricot

The background of the entire page features a vibrant scene of hot air balloons. On the left, a colorful balloon with segments of purple, red, yellow, and blue is partially visible. On the right, a large yellow balloon dominates the upper half. The bottom of the image is filled with a soft-focus field of purple flowers. A large, dark green rounded rectangle is centered over the image, containing the title and table of contents.

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Are you struggling to decide what to do for your next fundraising event? Do you have a high target to hit, and just aren't sure how to get there? Whether you're trying to raise funds for a nonprofit, club, or association, there's a lot of pressure riding on you to find the best idea and to raise enough money to keep your organization going.

To help you out, I've put together this eBook full of dozens of event fundraising ideas. You'll find ideas from easy-to-plan community activities, all the way to mega-sized tournaments. There are options to suit every organization, regardless of your type, time frame or budget.

These are all ideas I've learned through working with thousands of other organizations over the years. They are proven to generate a positive return for your organization when they're properly coordinated.

FOR EACH EVENT IDEA, YOU WILL FIND:

1. **The cost** for each idea, with the lowest-cost events indicated by \$ going all the way to \$\$\$\$ for the highest-cost fundraisers.
2. **The complexity** for each idea, which is rated on a scale of 1 to 4. 1 indicates an easy fundraiser that's quick to plan, and 4 indicates an event that takes a lot of coordination with different stakeholders to get up and running.
3. **The expected return** for each idea, also indicated from \$ to \$\$\$\$.
4. **Advice and practical tips** from a variety of fundraising experts throughout the eBook to inspire you along your fundraising journey.

Finally, I've sorted the ideas by type, so you can easily find the kind you're looking for. Dig in, and enjoy!

01 • 18 Food & Drink Event Ideas

Many of the classic fundraising ideas rely on big events. Here are all the ones we could find to help you out!

1. BAKE SALE

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 1
- Expected Return: \$

The bake sale is a classic. It's something everyone knows how to do, and your audience knows what to expect from it. Also, since you're dealing in consumables, people will always have a need for more baked goods!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Ask your volunteers to write down what they're planning on making, so

that you don't have any duplicates. You could also try to get some vegan or gluten-free options prepared so everyone can enjoy your tasty treats!

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Consider holding your sale during a larger event, such as a farmer's market.

2. CAKEWALK

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 1
- Expected Return: \$

A cakewalk can be done on its own or organized in conjunction with a community, PTA, or city council meeting, a school open house, or other gathering.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Remember, the prizes don't need to be limited to cakes! Any fun item that people might want to win and that appeals to your audience can be used.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

A larger event where there is ample foot traffic for your walk.

3. DOGGY HAPPY HOUR

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

Drinks and puppies — what more could anyone ask for? Ask your community members to bring out their cutest four-legged pals for an adorable doggy happy hour at a reasonable entrance fee. While this event is a great fit for animal-related organizations, puppies are really just a hit to raise money for any demographic.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Make sure people understand the allergy risk, and that parents sign a consent form for children under 18 if your event is open to minors.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

This is a great event to invite your SPCA chapter to partner with you on!

4. PANCAKE BREAKFAST

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

A pancake breakfast is relatively easy to pull together and it provides your community with a chance to mingle. Buy some mix, some toppings, and get cooking!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Hungry people don't like to wait too long! Ask your community members to loan you their griddles and best spatulas to get as many hands moving as possible.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Picking a day that's already associated with pancakes, such as Mardi Gras, is a great option.

5. DINNER PARTY AUCTION

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

Who doesn't love a dinner party? The excuse to get dressed up and eat delicious food will certainly attract an audience. Combine food and the excitement of bidding (as well as a little wine), and you're sure to have a winning night!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Securing donations can be a challenge, but start early and really sell businesses on your vision and cause.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Leverage local businesses who can donate items. You could potentially also partner with a local restaurant to host the night!

6. MURDER MYSTERY DINNER PARTY

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$

Get your community members to pull out their acting skills for this one! There are board games you can purchase so that your participants know what to do, or you can come up with a script yourself.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Organizing this one might be a little more difficult than some of the

others on this list because of the amount of players involved, so give yourself plenty of time to figure it out.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Partner with a local restaurant who has enough room for all of your participants and your actors. Alternatively, find a local murder mystery dinner theatre so that you don't have to organize quite as much yourself.



7. APPLEBEE'S PANCAKE BREAKFAST

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

[Partner with Applebee's](#) and start flipping those pancakes! You can coordinate a day with them and start selling tickets to your breakfast.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Applebee's will do all the cooking, but you'll need to have enough volunteers on hand to bus tables and serve pancakes.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

8. CHILI COOK-OFF

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$

This event can take place in your office, in which case you'd have your employees bring their favorite dish or item, or in the wider community. Whichever it is, get participants to bring a dish centered around the chosen theme. At lunch, charge a small fee to sample the food then have everyone vote for the dish they liked best!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Be sure to secure a space to serve food with burners ready to keep it all hot. You should also have people pay in advance so that you'll know if you have enough food for all attendees.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Consider a theme and time of year appropriate for the item. For example, a chili cook-off in winter around the Superbowl, a BBQ cook-off around Memorial Day or the Fourth of July, or pie baking around Thanksgiving.

9. BAKE-OFF

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$

With the success of shows like The Great British Bake-Off, you should find it easy to get participants for this one! Get a panel of judges (or ask the public to vote) on a variety of baking categories. You can even sell the top performing entries off afterwards for some extra funds, and hold this in tandem with the craft fair or another similar event mentioned above to boost the attraction.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Make sure the venue you're picking has enough room for all the cakes you're going to display, as well as facilities for tea and coffee (judging cakes can be thirsty work!).

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Ask your local cooking school to help promote the event to their students to boost registrations.



10. THEMED OFFICE LUNCH PARTY

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 1
- Expected Return: \$

Pick a cause, pick a theme, and get your co-workers or officemates to meet up for a charity lunch. Maybe it's the start of football season or the end of summer, charge for lunch and raffle off prizes to make a few dollars for a good cause.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Be sure to secure a space to serve food with burners ready to keep it all hot. You should also have people pay in advance so that you'll know if you have enough food for all attendees.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Try to secure donated or discounted food from local restaurants so no one has to worry about prep.

11. BEER GARDEN NIGHT

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

Coordinate with a local beer garden to co-host a happy hour or dinner where a portion of the evening's sales go to your cause. You can get also more creative with themes, specialty offerings, drink specials, and games like cornhole or horseshoes, depending on your location.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Beer gardens may be more willing to host in exchange for a drink minimum for attendees (which could potentially be included in your ticket cost).

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime, but summer could be a good bet so attendees get to sit on the patio!

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

A local bar or restaurant is your best bet.

12. EATING FOR A CAUSE

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

Coordinate with a bar or restaurant to co-host a regular or one-off happy hour or dinner where a portion of the evening's sales go to your cause.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Bars and restaurants may be more willing to host in exchange for a drink minimum for attendees.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

A local bar or restaurant is your best bet.

13. BREAKFAST IN BED

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$

Create your organization's version of UberEats — get people to order food and then deliver it to them, either for breakfast or for another special occasion.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

First, decide whether you're going to be preparing the food yourself or partnering with a local restaurant to deliver their food. Either way, you'll need a lot of volunteers to help you deliver and/or prepare it (or get restaurants to help you deliver and share profits).

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

This is a great activity to do in the winter when people are feeling lazy and don't want to leave the house!

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Partner with local restaurants to increase the publicity around this event.

14. POP-UP PICNIC

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

People think of picnics as being in the park, but what if everyone brought blankets and ate under the stars in the center of Main Street? Pick a non-picnic location, be sure to coordinate with local authorities, and sell tickets in advance for a community dine-together experience. The good news: they bring their own food and seating! Your responsibilities: location, parking and

transportation, bathrooms, trash, and entertainment. To make it even more fun, don't reveal the location until the same day!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Coordinate with local authorities to ensure the spot you've chosen is safe and closed to vehicle traffic. Don't forget to obtain the right permits, if you'll be allowing attendees to bring alcohol.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Over the summer, when weather permits outdoor activities.



15. TRAVELING DINNER

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

Either at homes or at restaurants, groups gather to sample a multi-course meal at multiple (walking distance, ideally) locations. This could also take the form of a local food tour for your participants, or a cafe crawl. Make sure everyone comes hungry!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Make sure you reach out to restaurants early to begin mapping out a convenient route for your participants.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Think about which restaurants are community favorites — those are your greatest resource!

16. COFFEE HOUSE

- Overhead Cost: \$-\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

This event can take place at a coffee shop (if it's in your budget), at someone's home, or your venue of choice. It's a great opportunity to share some warm drinks and snacks with community members, and for people to showcase their talents (singing, dancing, poetry, etc).

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Numbers will be limited to the size of the venue, and if you're holding your event at a cafe or arts space, you might have to book out the whole space.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime, but it's an especially cozy event to host in the winter.

17. COOKING CLASS

- Overhead Cost: \$-\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

Almost anyone can plan a cooking class (you don't have to be a chef!). If you have access to a kitchen or can rent a space with one, you can put on a cooking class fundraiser in a variety of ways: i.e learn the basics of cooking, learn to cook a specific dish, learn to make some staple holiday meals, or anything else you'd like to lead. Each student pays a small fee to be involved.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

The amount of people able to participate would be limited to the size of the kitchen.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Cooking classes in your area might be willing to partner with you and donate part of the proceeds.

18. PANERA FUNDRAISER

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 1
- Expected Return: \$-\$\$

Panera Bread cafes help you run fundraising events in their stores. Contact them to arrange the event and then distribute flyers amongst your supporters. Panera will then donate 20% of sales directly to your organization.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

You'll only get the donation back from sales that are made with a valid flyer, so be sure to distribute plenty of them, and remind people to bring them along.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.



02.

21 Active Event Ideas

The following events are all about bringing people together to get active while giving back to the community.

1. RELAY

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

Hold your organization's own version of the Relay for Life! It can be done though running, biking or even kayaking — whatever fits best with your demographic and your area.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

You'll need to have a large enough space to host the relay (whether it's outdoors or a school gym). This might also mean you'll need to work with local authorities to block off a road if you want lots of visibility for your relay.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Over the summer, when weather permits outdoor activities.

2. TREADMILL RELAY

- Overhead Cost: \$-\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

If you don't have the space to organize an outdoor relay, why not do it on treadmills instead? Get supporters to donate for each minute of running and get them to sign up for predetermined time slots. Or, turn it into a competition between teams by getting donors to sign up in groups. Assign them each a different treadmill and have small prizes for whoever goes for the longest (or the furthest!).

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

To get enough treadmills, partner with a local gym. To get them interested, offer to publicize their services as well.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

An ideal time for this event is in January, when people are already trying to get fit, but it could be held anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

A local gym is your best bet. You could also ask them to have personal trainers on hand to offer advice (for a small extra donation!).



3. BOWLING FOR BUCKS

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

Coordinate with a bowling alley to rent a group of lanes — or the entire building if you know you'll have a lot of participants — and sign up teams. Participants can raise pledges per pin or just raise donations in general.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Renting lanes at a bowling alley can be costly. Reach out early to see if you can get a discounted rate for booking multiple lanes or the entire space.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

The bowling alley, of course!

4. PUP WALK

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

You need to walk your dog, so why not walk with everyone else in your community at the same time? A pup walk can be as simple as selling a ticket, providing a goodie bag, and arranging a meetup location, or as elaborate as closing down the streets, adding in contests, and making a parade and festival out of it. Go wild!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Same as above.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

This is a great event to invite your ASPCA chapter to partner with you on.

5. POOL PARTY

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

Kids and adults alike enjoy a chance to splash around with their pals in a pool and would pay a fair price to do so. Partnering with a public pool will keep your costs down and may encourage a wide range of community members to attend.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

You'll need to pay lifeguards. You might also want a food and alcohol permit if you're going to aim for a hipper vibe for the event.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

This is the perfect "say hello" or "say goodbye" to summer event!

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

The YMCA and local public pools are great resources. If you're including alcoholic drinks, consider reaching out to hotels.

6. SCAVENGER HUNT

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$

This one takes a little bit of organizing, but if you can pull it off, there's a lot of fun to be had. Social media can make scavenger hunts even easier - have your participants take photos of the items on their lists and use a hashtag to track them.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Be sure to plan the hunt route ahead of time so that it's safe and fun for participants of all levels of ability. You'll also want to establish if participants can do it via car or on foot.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Summer is probably best — consider having an alternate day in case of poor weather if your participants will be on foot.

7. HIKING DAY

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 1
- Expected Return: \$\$

We can all use more fresh air! Bring your donors on a hike or nature walk outside your town for a small fee.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

You'll need to find a wildlife expert or guide who can lead the walk. Guests should also be made aware of any potential dangers such as bears or ticks. Depending on your area, coordinating transportation — such as a bus that will pick up and drop off registrants at an easy-to-reach location — should also be arranged.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Hold it when it's warm outside (but not too hot!) especially if you live in an area that might have snow long into spring.

8. WALK FOR THE CAUSE

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

A walk can be a great way to get people involved. Not only do the walkers have to spread the word about your cause in order to get sponsorships, but you can give away t-shirts that advertise what you're raising money for.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Make sure to keep it safe — have water and medics available just in case.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Don't forget to coordinate with local authorities to make sure the course is safe and closed.

9. FUN RUN

- Overhead Cost: \$-\$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

From a city-spanning, timed marathon to a quick family one-miler, a fun run can be as easy as gathering on the local track or as complicated as you want to make it. The good news: runners like to run, and they're growing in numbers. Be creative and get people out moving!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

See above.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

10. THEMED FUN RUN

- Overhead Cost: \$-\$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

Pick a theme! Pick a season! Pick a location! Costume contest run through the cemetery at sunset? Ugly sweaters at the holidays? Red dress for Valentine's Day? Be creative, pull together some swag and a party at the end, and turn exercise into a festive experience.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

See above.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

11. INNER TUBE WATER POLO

- Overhead Cost: \$-\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$

Two competitive teams are pitted against each other for an exciting game of water polo. The catch: the participants must wear ridiculous costumes and always be inside of their polka dot inner tubes! Sell tickets to this crazy game, pump the music, and be sure to stack the first row of seats with super soakers and water cannons and sell 5-minute slots in the “penalty box” so audience goers can torture their favorite players!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Location is everything for this event! You’ll want a pool that has seating for viewing, like those used to watch competitive athletes.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime works, but warm weather months will be better if you’re hosting at an outdoor pool.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

The YMCA and public pools used for school competitions are good options.



12. ARMCHAIR OLYMPICS

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$

Sign up teams of four to compete in a series of off-the-wall “Olympic” events of your design. Teams pay to enter and spectators come to cheer them on (and purchase food and drink!). Tricycle races, inflatable raft paddle, hamster wheel run, sponge toss, frisbee throwing, and more can all be part of a fun, messy afternoon.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

You’ll have to come up with original and fun events for participants, especially when considering different ability levels. You’ll also want to make sure you have a large enough space to host everyone, whether it’s outside in a field or indoors in a larger event space.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime (although summer might be best if you’re hosting it outdoors).

13. DISH SMASH

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 1
- Expected Return: \$

Collect old and chipped dishes your community no longer uses and hold a dish smashing event. It’s a wonderful way to let anger out!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Keep an eye on the health and safety — make sure no one is standing in the way of flying bits of broken crockery, and potentially provide safety goggles for your participants.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

14. TREASURE HUNT

- Overhead Cost: \$-\$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

Post clues on social media leading up to the big day, and get teams to participate by following the clues. Apps like Actionbound can also help you create an experience that teams won't forget!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

The main difficulty of this event lies in making sure your clues are hard enough to figure out that teams can't do it immediately, but not so hard that no one gets them. Consider having volunteers on hand to help answer questions if need be.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime!

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Try to get a local business to donate a prize, or have a couple of different ones set up for first, second and third prize.

15. COLOR RUN

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

Set up coloured powder stations, get participants to wear white t-shirts, and let the colourful mayhem ensue! If you hold it in a populated area, you're bound to get intrigued passersby stopping to learn about your cause.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

There's no getting around it — this will be messy. As well as considering the clean up, you may have to partner with your city to block off a road for your route, or find a large field available for use.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Since this is an outdoor event, try to plan for a summer weekend when you're likely to get good weather.

16. STEP CHALLENGE

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 1
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

Get people to pledge to walk a certain amount per day in exchange for donations (or have people pledge a certain amount for every 1000 steps).

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

To keep track of people's steps, you could encourage them to download a free pedometer app, such as Apple Health and Google Fit, that allow you to count your steps. You could even make this an internal competition within your office to get more people to join in.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Make the most of the January health kick when people are focusing on fitness after the holiday season.

17. SILENT DISCO

- Overhead Cost: \$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$

If you haven't heard of a silent disco before, it's an opportunity for people to dance while listening to their own music through headphones (or for several DJs to play music at once). There are companies such as <https://www.silentevents.com/> that rent everything you need to run a silent disco, so setting up doesn't need to be difficult. Because there's no noise, the disco can be held almost anywhere that there's enough space. Popular with teenagers particularly!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

You'll need to get enough participants interested to cover the costs of renting a space — and to make sure they don't feel silly dancing alone!

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime, but summer is best if you want to hold it outdoors.

18. MINI-GOLF TOURNAMENT

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$

Everyone loves this relaxing, low-pressure “sport”. Ask donors and local businesses to sponsor players or to donate based on player scores.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Renting the course could be very expensive, so start inquiring early. You may also want to try slightly off-peak months to curb costs.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Most outdoor mini-golf courses open in the spring and stay open until early fall.

19. POLAR BEAR PLUNGE

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

This is a chillingly good fundraiser for colder locales! Have donations based on whether or not your participants are brave enough to jump into the water, or charge a small entry fee that goes to support your organization.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Obviously, this event must be in a cold location or occur during a cold weather month. You’ll definitely need to have someone on site for safety emergencies just in case! You could also consider selling warm treats like hot chocolate or coffee for participants once they’re out of the water.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Depending on where you live, winter is your best, coldest bet!

20. COMMUNITY CLEAN UP DAY

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$

Participants can ask for pledges for each bag of trash they collect as they walk around the community. Prizes can be offered for the individual or team that collects the most bags of trash. All you'll need to prep is big, durable trash bags and some gloves.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Make sure all participants wear gloves. If you are working with

children, make sure they understand what sorts of things they should NOT pick up.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

The ideal time to do this is in spring, once snow has melted and you can see just how much garbage there really is! Earth Day might be the perfect date.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Check with the Sierra Club, WWFN or any ecological organization to see if they can provide any resources or programming to support your event.



21. HISTORY WALK

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

If there are buildings with an interesting history in your town, why not share the historical facts with the rest of your area?

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

This walk can work equally well as an architectural tour. You'll need knowledgeable guides, or at least people who are willing to follow a script!

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

History is good any time of year!

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

A museum or historical society is your best bet. You could also consider partnering with an architectural society if you're interested in the way buildings were constructed or designed.

03.

29 Social, Community & Other Events

These event ideas include some classics, plus fresh ideas for social ways to fundraise.

1. CAR WASH

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 1
- Expected Return: \$

The community car wash is a classic! People love the idea of buckets and sponges for a worthy cause. This is also a great time to talk to participants about your cause, and potentially recruit some new volunteers!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

You'll need to pick a location with access to water source. Holding it in

a busy parking lot can also help you get new supporters.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Spring or summer is best for this event — you don't want your volunteers getting cold!

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

You may be able to partner with a local gas station to use a part of the lot. It's a great place to rope in clientele and easy clean up for you!

2. ORGANIZE A PLAY

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 4
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

There are lots of scripts that are free to use, costumes can be sourced from thrift stores, and amateur dramatics societies are often looking for their next showcase. Sell tickets, programs, and concessions at the play you've put on, and give people a great evening out. You could even use it as a community project, or an opportunity for aspiring young actors to star on the stage for the first time (especially if your organization works with children or teenagers).

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

You'll need to make sure you find enough actors and publicize it thoroughly to make the effort of organizing a play worth it.

The Best Time to Do This:

Anytime!

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

You'll need a venue (as well as some theatrical advice) so partner with your local theater, drama society, or even an area school.



3. COUNTY FAIR

- Overhead Cost: \$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 4
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

Rather than organizing your own event, this is a chance to hop on someone else's bandwagon. Partner with the organizers of your local county fair to get a portion of the proceeds donated to your organization, or a portion of the earnings from one activity. You could even organize your own fair if you're feeling ambitious!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Of course, this event only works if there's a fair happening near you. You might also need to be a fairly (pardon the pun) well-recognized organization so that the fair is willing to partner with you, and be able to provide volunteers who can help with ticketing or running events.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

County fairs are generally held in the fall, so plan for that.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

You'll need to partner with the city hall in your area or whatever local organization is arranging the fair.

4. REVERSE RAFFLE

- Overhead Cost: \$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

Instead of just selling tickets, make a party of it! In a reverse raffle, you set a fixed number of tickets to draw folks into a larger grand prize (for example, 200 tickets for \$100 grosses a \$10,000 prize and \$10,000 for your org!) Then get some food, drink, music, and games and start drawing numbers. Instead of the FIRST number being the winner, the LAST number is! Watch the tensions rise as people's odds increase. But wait! Save out a special ticket and auction it off when there are just four numbers left...people might pay upwards of \$500 to get that 1-5 chance of winning ten grand!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

This isn't a raffle, it's an event! Make it a party, make it fun, and look for ideas to get people to donate more throughout the evening.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

5. ART AUCTION

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 4
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

Ask members of your community or their kids to donate art, coordinate with a local shop to have them framed, and then auction them off. Pump up the hype by adding a theme like "come dressed as your favorite art or artist" and make a little extra cash for your charity by selling concessions.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Getting art from local artists who already have some recognition in your community might help with sales.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

You could also partner with an art gallery to get proceeds from sales at an opening.

6. OPEN HOUSE

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

Collaborate with a local landmark or venue that isn't normally accessible to the public, and arrange a day when visitors can get a guided tour. You can sell tickets, and also offer a concession stand.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

You'll have to work closely with the venue to meet any security requirements they might have, and keep

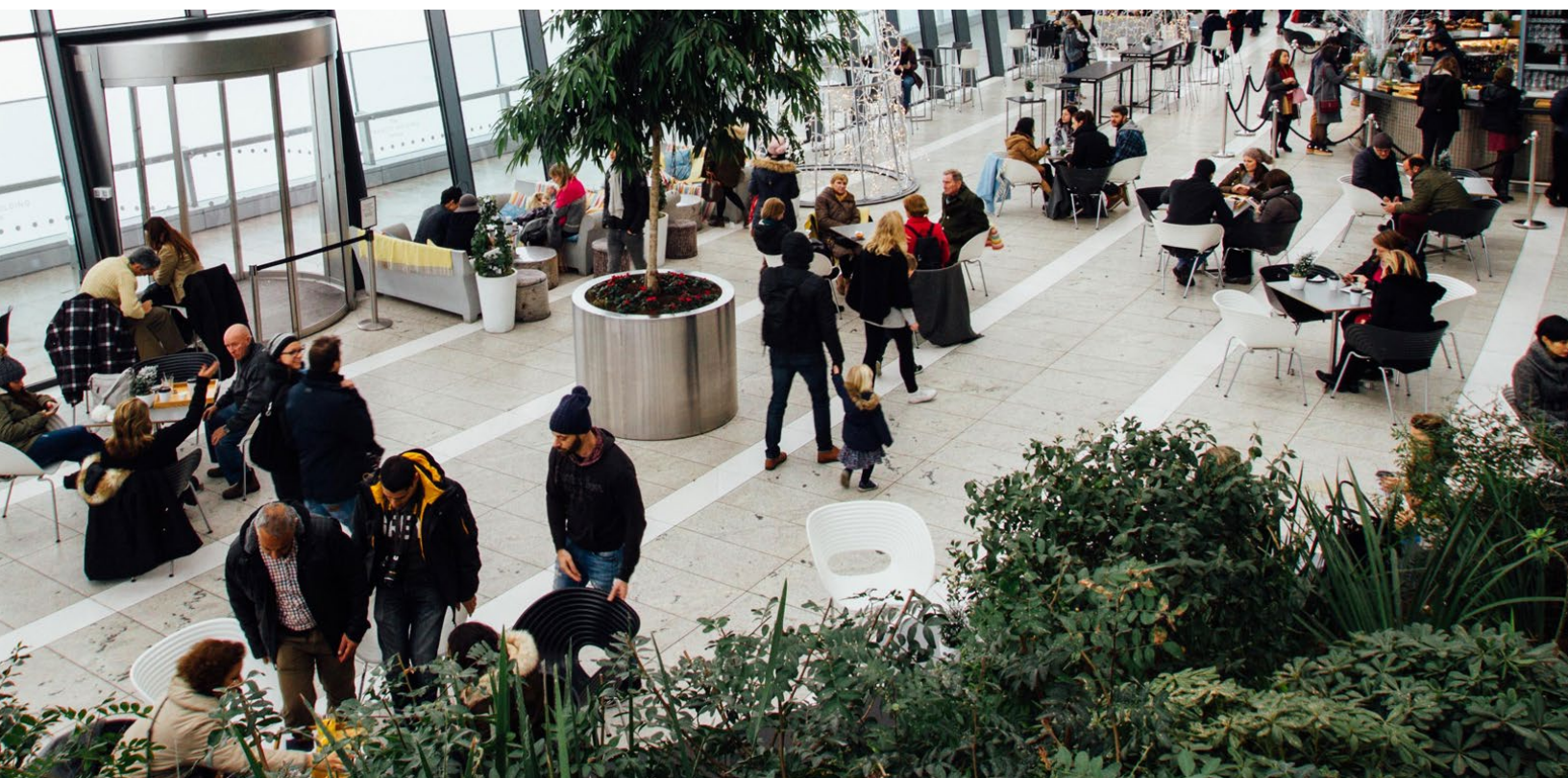
in mind ways to make this event accessible to as many people as possible. You might also need to split proceeds with them, particularly if their staff are the ones giving tours.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime, although if the venue requires any outdoor walking, the dead of winter might not be ideal.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

You'll need to partner with the venue, such as a governmental building or museum.



7. MOVIE NIGHT

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$

Everyone loves a good movie night! Hold it at your local community centre (or school gym) and charge admission. You can also have a concessions stand for a little added boost.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

There are several factors you'll need to consider with this fundraiser, including movie licensing, renting a projector and/or a screen, and how you'll get sound. Choosing a comfortable location is also key.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Since you'll be inside, you can do it anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Consider partnering with a local movie theatre to split proceeds — you might not get quite as many donations, but you also won't have to handle the challenges mentioned above.

8. MOVIE ON THE LAWN

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$

Stage your movie night with a summertime twist. Tell everyone to bring a blanket and you'll be able to accommodate a lot of people. For a more nostalgic feel, organize a drive-in in a local field or park. You could do free admission and just charge for concessions, or ask for voluntary donations. Make it extra fun and provide games for the kids to help pass the time until dark.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

It's important to consider the technology you'll use to show the movie, like a projector, large screen, etc., as well as making sure you have the proper movie licensing for a larger audience. It's also wise to have a rain date in case of nasty weather.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Spring and summer are prime outdoor screening times.

9. COMMUNITY YARD SALE

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

One person's junk is another person's treasure... so why not raise money for something good with it, right? With even just a few neighbors clearing out those messy basements and clutter closets, you can turn a decent profit.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

A few key logistics to consider are the location of sale (make sure you've got ample space for those larger items), as well as a convenient location where donations will be collected prior to the sale.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Yard sales are best around April, when people are doing their spring cleaning and looking to get rid of things!

10. DUNK TANK

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$

Who doesn't love seeing someone humiliate themselves for a good cause? Rent a tank from a party supply company and get dunking! This event would go well with a larger summer fundraising day — consider having ice cream on hand for spectators to buy.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Try to think of community members that attendees would love to dunk (e.g. local elected officials, favorite teachers, board members, etc.) to generate some buzz, and don't forget to plan your event with a water source in mind to fill that tank!

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

This event is best during the summer, so your brave volunteers don't freeze!

11. CRAFT SHOW

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

You may be surprised at the talent your community members have up their sleeves. From the secret woodworker to the prolific jewelry-maker, this kind of event is especially effective right before the holidays. Use your space and “sell” tables. Your profits will be fixed and you don’t have to do much besides rent tables and chairs!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Make sure you have enough space to display all of the items that

people bring in. You’ll also want to know what people are bringing in beforehand, so you can arrange their stalls without competing products side by side.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Hosting during the holiday season will surely boost the success of this event.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

You could potentially partner with an organization that runs art classes (such as a pottery studio) to get their students involved.

12. GARDEN AND PLANT SALE

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

Get started early to grow plants, or purchase them if you're short on time. If you're a garden club, have your members donate some of their favorite starts.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

You'll need either a nursery to make a donation or to grow your own seedlings or flowers to sell. Either way, you'll need to start planning early! Catch people in spring or early summer, when they're beginning to really think about their gardens.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

To incentivize a nursery to donate, offer to give attendees applications to their loyalty or rewards programs.

13. HOST A DISCUSSION

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

Every community has someone who has a great story and a high profile. Find that person and host a discussion with them, moderated by another notable figure in the community. Who knows, you might even be able to turn it into a whole lecture series...

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

You'd need to get a moderator, an expert, and a venue. Consider also selling refreshments for a little extra boost!

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

A local restaurant with a discussion space, a library, or a local bookstore — the latter two are particularly good if the expert also has a book for audiences to read.

14. KARAOKE

- Overhead Cost: \$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

Karaoke can be a terrific icebreaker and community builder. You can have a general “open mic” or even do a full-on singing competition!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Getting the right location and equipment could be a challenge. Simply renting out a karaoke bar that already has all you need may be the best option.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

15. SILENT AUCTION

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

People love to win things, and it's fun to come to see what others are bidding on. Since it's a silent auction, it's a little more freeform than some other events and your participants can come and mingle while putting in their bids. You can also include a mix of services and items (or focus solely on one or the other) depending on the demographic you're trying to engage.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Securing donations can be a challenge, but start early and really sell businesses on your vision and cause.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Leverage local businesses who can donate items.

16. EDUCATIONAL CLINIC

- Overhead Cost: \$-\$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

If your nonprofit is filled with experts, leverage their knowledge to host a clinic, conference, or workgroup. Paid registration required helps fill your coffers, but be sure to offer discounts for those who may not be able to afford to come.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

If your nonprofit doesn't have any experts that people would pay to see, consider reaching out to someone

else who's well-known in your community who can offer some skills to share.

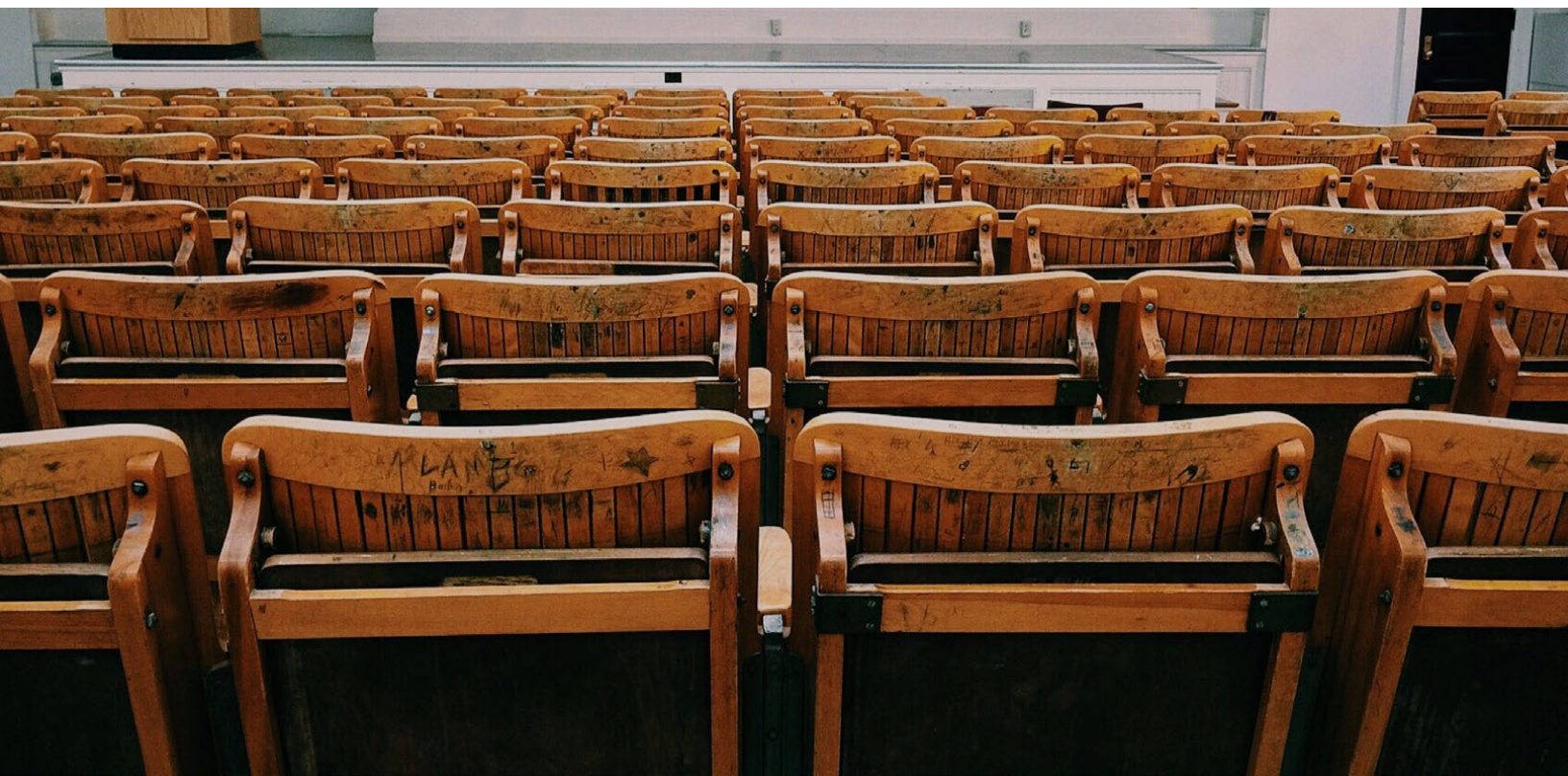
THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

A local bookstore might be a good location for hosting (particularly if your expert has written a book they can sell!).²¹ Clothing Swap

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 1
- Expected Return: \$



17. TRIVIA NIGHT

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$

Tons of people already pay for trivia at bars and restaurants, so leverage this interest by inviting them to pay an entrance fee to play at your organization. Consider making the questions specific to your cause or community for added fun!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

You can always make your own questions and display them with a simple projector to cut costs, but there are also plenty of trivia rental companies that will come prepared with all you need to make your event a success.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Ask around for bars and restaurants that may be willing to host in exchange for a drink minimum for attendees.

18. VOLUNTEER AUCTION

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

Have members of your community volunteer their services, anything from handyman to web design, and then auction off those services and put the money toward the charity. Not only are people able to get some of their much-needed things done, but your community members can get to know each other better.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Be sure to follow up with the volunteers to make sure the services go smoothly for the auction winners.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

19. GHOST TOUR

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

Does your town have some haunted places? Organize a haunted walk to showcase them — or make the stories up yourself!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

You'll need to get willing guides who will rehearse their stories beforehand (and dress up in a spooky costume).

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Ghost walks can be good anytime of year, but might perform even better around Halloween.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

If you're not familiar with the history of your area, consider partnering with a museum or historical society to help you out.

20. BINGO NIGHT

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

It is what it says. BINGO!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Bingo sets are generally pretty affordable and worth buying if you plan to repeat the event, but if not, party rental suppliers are a good option. Consider selling refreshments as well — Bingo can be thirsty work!

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Consider partnering with a local Bingo hall to have an ongoing event where part of the proceeds go to your organization.

21. COLOR AL FRESCO

- Overhead Cost: \$\$-\$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

Just like a pop-up picnic, color al fresco is a pop-up dining experience in a unique location - but the twist is that everyone wears the same color! Often done in white, these dinners are gaining in popularity. Consider renting tables and chairs so the colorful centerpieces, outfits, and decor can be on full display!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

As above, you'll have to coordinate with local authorities to make sure everything goes smoothly. You'll also have to decide if you want to provide food to attendees or if they need to bring their own.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Over the summer, when weather permits outdoor activities.

22. HAND-ON-THE-PRIZE

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

A throwback fundraiser! You've secured a big donation, and auctioning or raffling just won't cut it? Sell tickets and the "winners" get a chance to sit all together in a room with their hand-on-the-object. The last one to break contact wins!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Securing a donation item can be a challenge, but start early and really sell businesses on your vision and cause.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

23. LIVING ROOM SOCIAL

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$

Everyone has something to offer, and most folks are excited to share. Whether it's a knack for Greek cuisine, a best friend who owns a bakery, overnight preparation of meat in the backyard smoker, or just a pool. Encourage a group of "donors" to each plan a party for 4-8 "strangers". Sell tickets to each party online or at your silent auction. You keep the proceeds, but don't have to actually host any guests!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Reach out to potential hosts early to make sure they have a plan and are comfortable talking to strangers.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

24. SINGLES CHARITY NIGHT

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 4
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

You can choose to run this event as a typical speed dating night, or to run it in a way that directly benefits your organization (for example, asking singles to help make care packages for your shelter). Either way, sparks are sure to fly!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

You'll need a decent volume of single people to sign up to make the event a success.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Consider holding it around Valentine's Day.

25. FLOATING LANTERN NIGHT

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

Get participants to make a wish, and send their lantern up into the sky (just like in Tangled!).

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Decide whether you want participants to make the lanterns themselves, or you can purchase them beforehand. You'll also need to have a plan to dispose of them afterwards — you wouldn't want your fundraiser to turn into a polluter.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

The Spring Lantern Festival is a Chinese holiday celebrated specifically to celebrate a Chinese legend. It takes place on the fifteenth day of the first month in the lunisolar Chinese calendar, and you can easily look up when it's happening this year — or simply incorporate this idea into another event.

26. PET WASH

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$

You've heard of a car wash... now try the same thing, but for pets!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Some animals can be sensitive to new people. Make sure all your volunteers have some familiarity with animals, and that everyone has signed a liability form just in case.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Consider partnering with your local SPCA, pet store, or pet grooming store to get pet washing advice.

27. SPA DAY

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$

How can you turn something everyone already loves into a fundraiser? Add-ons and markdowns. By partnering with a local spa, your event attendees will pay to enjoy the basic services — sauna, hot tubs, champagne, snacks — and a portion of any add-ons they schedule can go to your cause. Be sure to book in time slots so you can maximize your time at the spa (and make sure they understand that the service providers

aren't working for free and still require a tip!).

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Getting free services is always a challenge, but work on selling your mission and vision in a compelling way to engage donors.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

You'll need a spa to agree to partner with you.



28. WORLD RECORD ATTEMPT PARTY

- Overhead Cost: \$-\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$

Make a list of world records you think your audience could break, and invite people to participate in doing so! Charge a small fee for the privilege.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

It might take some combing through the Guinness World Record Book to find one you can actually break.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime, depending on the record.

29. MUSEUM AFTER DARK

- Overhead Cost: \$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

Open up your local museum for a night of fun past normal opening hours. This could work just as well at a zoo or aquarium — any spot people are interested in attending.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

You'll need to get catering and a liquor license, as well as potentially a DJ or other entertainment if you want to get really fancy.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

The museum you're partnering with is key.



04. 28 Mega Event Fundraising Ideas

If you're hoping to raise a lot of money (and have a lot of volunteers on hand to help!) consider organizing one of these massive fundraising ideas.

1. GOLF TOURNAMENT

- Overhead Cost: \$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$\$

Like a fun run, golf tournaments can be simple to coordinate with an experienced golf course manager, or as complicated as a PGA event. And, just like runners, golfers love to golf! Set up drink stations around the course and have the tips go to charity. Be sure to do longest-drive competitions, hole-in-one on the greens, and even

raffle off some golf swag. Go big or go simple, but golfing for a cause is always a good bet.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Renting the course could be very expensive, so start inquiring early.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Most outdoor golf courses open in the spring and stay open until early fall. Just try not to have it at the same time as another golf tournament, or your potential attendees will be too busy watching to play!

2. FASHION SHOW

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

Give a platform to local, up-and-coming designers and also get the word out there about your cause. Be sure to have clothing for purchase where a portion goes to you, to fully leverage your social media channels to preview the event, and to get your models out there selling tickets to the fashion show!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

You will need a runway, dressing room, and audience area as well as concessions.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Local designers are your greatest resource! Your local theatre might also be willing to provide a venue.

3. HOUSE PARTY

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

Host a good old-fashioned party! For a slight fee, participants can get one free drink or snack and then can pay for more. For extra fun, it can be themed or done at a specific time of year.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Make sure volunteers are prepared to cut people off if it's getting too rowdy, and get people to register in advance so you know how much food and alcohol to have on hand. Licensing laws might also apply.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Consider partnering with a local bar or brewery to get kegs at a discounted rate.

4. BEER / WINE / FOOD FESTIVAL

- Overhead Cost: \$-\$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$\$

Hook people with what they love: delicious food and drinks. Rent a large lot and sell space to local vendors (food trucks are great for festivals) with an array of yummy offerings to give your attendees a taste of the community. Adding a stage and engaging musical guests encourages people to stay and keep eating and drinking throughout the day.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Space is key with festivals. Make sure you pick an area with ample room for

all your vendors. Festivals also tend to get really messy, don't skimp on the trash bin rentals. You always need more than you think you will. Having water readily available is also key, especially if you're selling alcohol.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

People love to hang out at festivals whenever the weather is nice, so late spring, summer, and early fall are all solid options.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

You'll need to secure lots of different vendors with diverse food or drink offerings.

5. CONCERT

- Overhead Cost: \$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$\$

We're not just talking a big name benefit concert here. Even small organizations can ask talented community member or local band that your target demographic will be excited by and ask if they would donate some performance time. Also consider asking a children's performer, because kids love concerts and parents love getting their kiddos out of the house and moving.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

The cost of a venue may be high, but try asking a local bar or restaurant if they'll donate their stage for the evening.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Bars may be more willing to host in exchange for a drink minimum for attendees.

6. CHARITY THEATER EVENT

- Overhead Cost: \$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$\$

Join forces with a local theater to host an event surrounding a new show. You can build hype for the theater, the show, and your charity all at once!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

This is a slightly easier option than organizing your own play, but you'll need to work closely with your partner organization.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Connect with a local theater to share your vision and cause.

7. CARNIVAL

- Overhead Cost: \$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$\$

Carnivals are one of the most fun events for the whole family. With great food, rides, games, contests and performances, a carnival's got something for everyone. Ride, bounce house and other attraction rentals can be expensive, so consider asking local performers and community members to lead activities to lower some costs.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Depending on the activities you plan to offer, safety of the rides and games is major concern. Make sure you are working with reputable carnival attraction rental company with a solid insurance policy.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Carnivals are typically best in late spring and throughout the summer.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

You'll be working closely with local food vendors and performers. To make it easier on the organizational front, consider partnering with a carnival happening in your area.



8. CASINO NIGHT

- Overhead Cost: \$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$\$

A casino night provides a great reason for people to come and cut loose for a great cause. The possibility of winning a little cash won't hurt ticket sales either.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Most people don't just have casino games laying around, so you'll likely need to use a party rental company. Some offer off-peak rental prices. You'll also need to organize a large enough space, such as a community centre, and figure out which food and drinks you're offering. Local gambling laws in your area might also affect this event.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Consider partnering with a local restaurant to host.

9. BLACK TIE BBQ GALA

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

Instead of your average formal gala with fancy food, host an event with inexpensive food and decor. You can still have your attendees dress up for the evening, but the decorations and dishes will be low-end. You can tell your donors that you're putting as much of the money as possible towards the cause.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Getting people to pay gala prices for low-end food isn't easy, so make sure your messaging really sells the heart of your cause and impact the proceeds will have.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

You can save even more money, by asking a school, community center or religious institution to host for free.

10. LIP SYNC COMPETITION

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

A lipsync competition is bound to be silly fun. Give your community a chance to show off their performance skills for a group of local judges and provide a prize donated from a local business and you'll be packing 'em in.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Remember you'll have to host somewhere with a good sound system. Consider also including small prizes for categories like "Best Dancer".

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

11. POKER TOURNAMENT

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

A little friendly competition can boost your event to a whole new level with cash buy-ins and a cash prize. You can take a portion of the ticket sales as well as sell concessions and if it comes down to a real nail-biter, your event could become the stuff of legends.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Check out the gambling laws in your state...you wouldn't want to be surprised!

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

12. BOARD GAME TOURNAMENT

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

Get a great event host and make sure your rules are clear, and you're sure to have a great time at your tabletop game tournament. Charge an entry fee, and you could even make a game library the grand prize!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Ask community members to donate board games to keep costs low. Make sure you've arranged for some fun

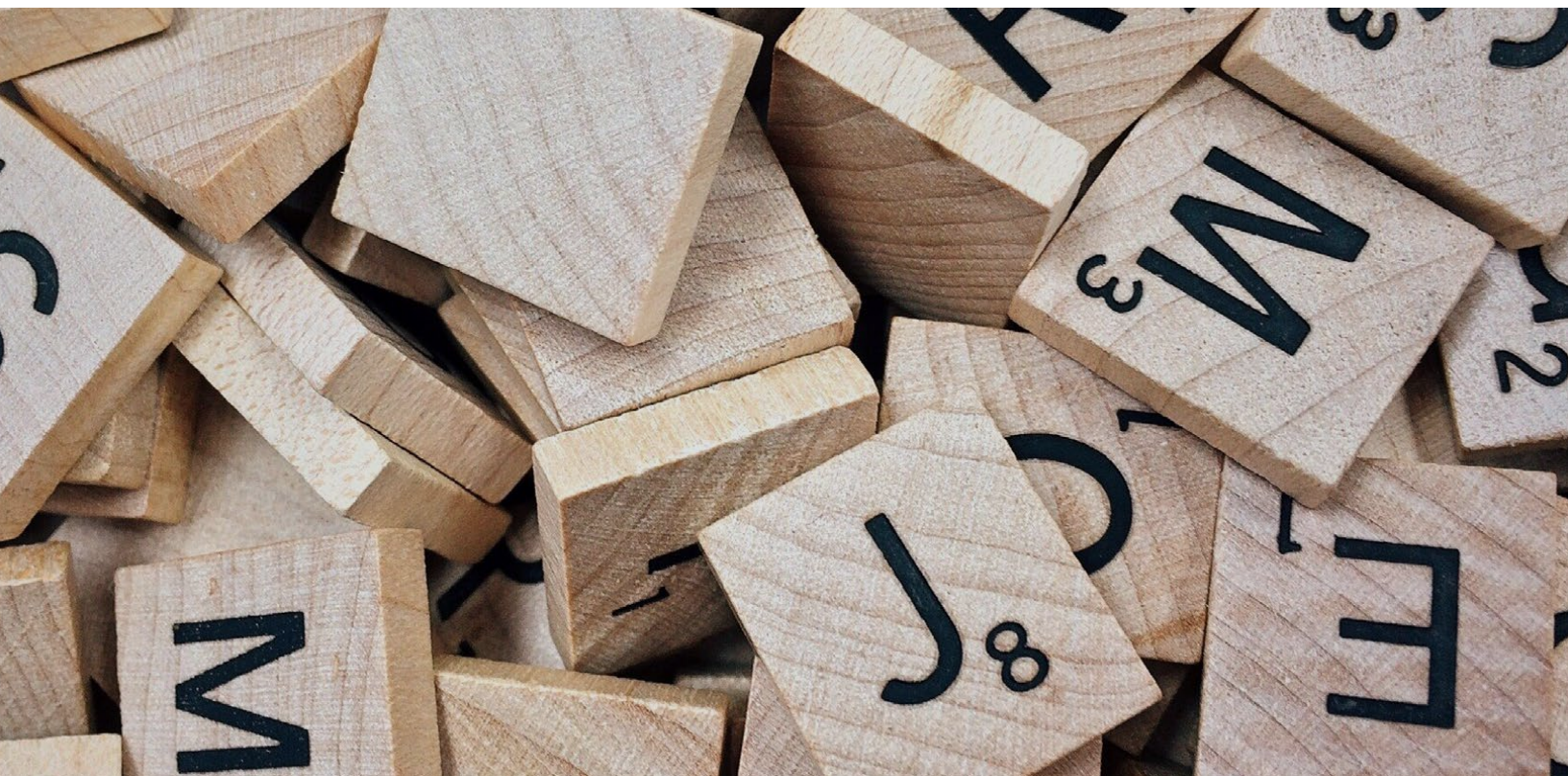
judges to determine the winners at each station. Rather than hosting a tournament, you could also just have a casual board games night where community members can drop in to play whatever they want.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Consider connecting with a board game cafe or bar since they'll already have everything you need of the event — and sweeten the pot with a food or drink minimum for attendees.



13. VIDEO GAME TOURNAMENT

- Overhead Cost: \$-\$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

Get a variety of games and systems together and start playing! Make sure you have a good variety of games, including some new ones that your audience might not have tried (if anyone has a VR set, now's the time to pull it out!).

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Ask community members to donate video games and loan you some controllers to keep costs low. You'll also need to make sure you have enough gaming systems to support attendance, which could also be loaned by community members.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Your community might already have some unwanted games to donate (or loan).

14. CELEBRITY JEOPARDY NIGHT

- Overhead Cost: \$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

For a twist on the typical trivia night, get local celebrities to participate and charge admission to watch them struggle! As an added bonus, have one of the categories relate back to your mission so that the audience gets to know you a little better at the same time.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Consider arranging a partnership with a local bar to host it. You'll also need to arrange it far in advance to compensate for your participants' busy schedules.

15. NEWLYWED GAME NIGHT

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

Separate couples at the beginning, and have half of each couple stay in the room while the other half leaves. Get their answers to a variety of questions, and then have their partner try to guess the same answer! Depending on how many questions and couples you have, this can go on all night.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

A bar or restaurant might be your best bet for a venue.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

16. DANCING STARS

- Overhead Cost: \$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

Gather 10 of your town's "most famous" residents and pair them up with local dance and theater groups to learn a dance number (ballroom, group, musical theater, it doesn't matter). Sell tickets to the event and watch the mayor bust a move!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Be sure to reach out to local celebs early to get yourself time in their busy schedules.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Partnering with a local dance or theatre organization on ticket sales might help you boost attendance (and give you an opening act before your celebrities come on stage!).

17. HOLLYWOOD SQUARES NIGHT

- Overhead Cost: \$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

Two contestants compete in a giant game of tic tac toe where each of the 9 squares is occupied by a local celebrity. One contestant is represented by X, the other by O. They take turns selecting a square, and the host asks the relevant celebrity a question. The contestant must then guess whether the answer they give is true or a bluff. If they get it right, they can claim the square; if they get it wrong, their opponent claims it instead.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

You'll need to find enough local celebrities who are willing to participate — meaning you'll have to start planning far in advance. You'll also need to have contestants who aren't shy about speaking in front of an audience.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

A hosting space with a lot of room such as an event space (or even a local theatre, so participants can be onstage) is your best bet for a location.

18. LET'S MAKE A DEAL NIGHT

- Overhead Cost: \$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

In this classic game show-inspired night, audience members are randomly selected to try and make a deal with the host — without knowing if the item they're potentially trading for is of lower or higher value.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Make sure everyone who attends knows they have a chance of being selected as the trader.... and that you have a lot of wacky prize ideas!

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Ask local businesses to donate items in exchange for publicity.

19. CAR SHOW

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

Set up a car show to raise money in a few different ways. Auto exhibitors will pay a fee to display their cars and you can add on raffles, prize drawings, and concession stands. Consider charging participants a fee to vote for their favorite car(s), and then present "People's Choice" awards to the exhibitors.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

You'll need a large venue conducive to showing lots of cars, and permits for selling food and alcohol. This event might also take a lot of volunteers to take tickets, sell food, and coordinate with the car vendors.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

This event may be best at a large outdoor lot, so consider warmer months.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Auto exhibitors and owners are your key partners for this event!

20. HAUNTED HOUSE

- Overhead Cost: \$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

It's not difficult to transform even the most friendly of homes into spooky haunted houses with the right decorations and frightening actors. Ask community members to help you hang some spiders and then put on their creepiest costumes to help with your event.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Your volunteers will have to be well briefed on how to be scary (but not too scary!). You'll also need to gather enough costumes and supplies to make the haunted house truly terrifying.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Before Halloween, of course!

21. RUBBER DUCK RACE

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$

Is there a river running through your town? Get permission to have a "rubber duck race" where you sell numbered ducks and dump them all in the river. The first one to the end is the grand prize winner!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Be sure to get the proper authorization from your town and coordinate ducky-clean up after the event to make sure you are have good, clean eco-friendly fun!

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime but winter.

22. MY FAVORITE THINGS NIGHT

- Overhead Cost: \$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$

Remember when Oprah gave away her favorite things and audience members went wild? Well, gather your local business community and have them donate 1-50 of their “favorite things.” Sell tickets to this special event where under every chair is a number. As the “things” are profiled (free advertising for the business!), you list the numbers of the folks who get to take home that particular thing! The best news

- everyone can walk away with something. The better news — one or two lucky winners will end up with one of everything.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Securing donations can be a challenge, but start early and really sell businesses on your vision and cause.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Local businesses are the MVPs for this event.

23. HOT AIR BALLOON FESTIVAL

- Overhead Cost: \$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 4
- Expected Return: \$\$

Who doesn't love watching balloons soar up into the air? This festival provides a great spectacle and if you can somehow secure a balloon with your logo, it would be great airborne publicity!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Partner with a local hot air balloon festival to get donations for this one

— unless you're a large organization with the budget to match, organizing this yourself probably isn't feasible.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Summer or late spring, so that it's sunny out and the balloons can be seen by all.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

A hot air balloon festival in your area.



24. LAWNMOWER RACES

- Overhead Cost: \$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 3
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

There are several lawnmower racing clubs around the US, all centering around racing these machines against each other. Why not organize your own version? Depending on your region, there may be laws governing this kind of racing.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Confirm with local authorities that you're allowed to organize it (or piggyback on another organization's race).

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Whenever the weather is nice, so late spring to mid fall is ideal.

25. TALENT SHOW

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$

Talent shows are not just for middle school (although kiddos definitely love them)! People of all ages love a chance to show off. Get yourself an engaging MC and your event is sure to be a hit.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Be sure to secure and check all the necessary equipment prior to the event. No one likes a screechy mic!

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Anytime.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Schools and religious institutions almost always have stages and microphones already, so it's worth asking them to donate their space for an evening for your event.

26. REGIONAL FOOD FESTIVAL

- Overhead Cost: \$\$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 4
- Expected Return: \$\$\$\$

Show your local pride with vendors offering the foods and drinks that your community members love. Add some local entertainment and you're sure to have a huge success on your hands!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Space is key with festivals. Make sure you pick a space with ample room

for all your vendors. Festivals also tend to get really messy, don't skimp on the trash bin rentals. You always need more than you think you will.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

People love to hang out at festivals whenever the weather is nice, so spring/summer and early fall are all solid options.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

You'll need to secure lots of different vendors with diverse food/drink offerings. Look to locals' favourite offerings.



27. PUB CRAWL

- Overhead Cost: \$\$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$\$\$

Plan a route with local breweries or bars, and get walking! You can also get participants to dress up in costume or follow a theme so that they all stick together.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

Make partnerships with local bars or breweries beforehand in exchange for a drink minimum or part of the proceeds.

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Beer is great any time of year, but this event would probably be most successful over the summer when your patrons can hang out on patios! It could also be good around Oktoberfest, when there may already be promotions or events happening.

SPONSORING OR PARTNERING ORGANIZATION:

Partner with local bars or breweries beforehand in exchange for a drink minimum or part of the proceeds.

28. FLAG FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

- Overhead Cost: \$
- Complexity to Plan: 2
- Expected Return: \$

This type of event can work equally well with Ultimate Frisbee or any other casual sport that doesn't require a lot of training. Charge admission for teams or individuals to register, and get ready for a day of outdoor fun!

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER:

You'll need to thoroughly promote your event (try talking to local leagues or your community centre) to make sure you get enough people. Keep participants hydrated by having water on hand (and maybe snacks that can be purchased too).

THE BEST TIME TO DO THIS:

Late spring or early summer — you don't want anyone to overheat!

Meet the Author

Tatiana Morand is a Content Marketing and SEO Specialist at Wild Apricot, a leading provider of Membership Management Software. When she's not writing all the nonprofit content you need or researching the latest SEO tactics, Tatiana can be found traveling the world, petting every cat she sees, or working on her brunch blog at a local cafe.



For more from Tatiana Morand,
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