

4 Easy Tactics to Find Alternative Funding Options for Your Community Service Program



...a guide for schools from



Intro

We've been there too. You've found a great new way to engage students and make the community a better place, but you know it's going to take time and/or money to pull it off - two things you don't have a ton of.

In this case, it's putting together a community service program: give students real-world leadership and problem-solving experience, live up to your values of service, and make the world a better place.

Your first thought is probably: it's not in the budget, but we could fundraise! Fundraising? Like, a bake sale? Those rarely bring in the resources you need.

But this guide isn't about fundraising. It's about creative ways of finding the money to spend on a program you might not be prioritizing financially yet but you know is the right thing to do.

So, here are 4 easy ways to help fund your community service program...

- I. [Secure Sponsorship for a Community Service Award](#)
- II. [Collect Admission Sales for ONE Event](#)
- III. [Do a Budget Scrub \(w/ STUDENTS\)](#)
- IV. [Solicit In-Kind Donations](#)

I. Secure Sponsorship for a Community Service Award

This is the most commonly used approach (and it's also probably the most straightforward). Finding a local or national business (or other organization) that wants to put its name on a community service award for your students in exchange for donating a sum of money to your school or program is a win-win. Many schools will use part of this sponsorship donation to offset the cost of Helper Helper and apply the rest toward other fundraising goals.

HOW TO:

1. List Current & Potential Sponsors
2. Email Sponsor List
3. Secure Donation
4. Present Award



I. Secure Sponsorship for a Community Service Award

1. List Current & Potential Sponsors

Your current sponsors who have donated to your program before will be the best to speak with at the beginning about funding a service award. Other sponsors who share similar values are good to add to this list too. We've found that banks and credit unions are particularly fond of sponsoring community service awards for other schools. **Start by getting all of these names and contacts in one spot.**

2. Email Sponsor List

Reach out to your list of sponsors with an email educating them on your intent to build a community service program and give out a service award. Then, ask them about their interest in sponsoring the award and willingness to volunteer alongside your students at two events. You can use/edit some of these sponsor email templates we've put together at www.helperhelper.com/resources.

3. Secure Donation

Once you've reached out to your full list of current and potential sponsors, you'll have a good idea of who is interested in making a donation in the size you need for your program. Get on the phone or sit down with these select few to **finalize the terms of the donation**. This could include putting their name on the award, publicity at associated events, or other visibility for them.

4. Present Award

With the donation, execute on your community service program. At the end of the year, give out a community service award for the student or group of students with the most accomplished service and invite sponsors to attend.



II. Collect Admission Sales for ONE Event

For schools that already collect admission or ticket sales at games and events, this solution takes care of financing your community service program in a single day with an event you already had planned. A great bonus for this is that if you publicize that funds from the event will go toward a program to improve your community, then that hype will increase attendance! Your fans and students LOVE knowing that the money they give to see a game, concert, or other event will go toward a good cause!

HOW TO:

1. Schedule the Event
2. Publicize the Goal
3. Collect Admissions
4. Share Results



II. Collect Admission Sales for ONE Event

1. Schedule the Event

Many schools successfully fund their community service program in a single day with something like a sporting event. They've seen this success by choosing and scheduling an event connected or related to the group of students who will be doing the bulk of the community service. There's usually no need to CREATE a new event for this; just go with something already on the school calendar.

2. Publicize the Goal

Let your student body and community KNOW that you will be collecting admission to this event so proceeds can fund your service program. Encourage student and community attendance. Rivalry games or first games of the season are great options to increase this attendance. Also, make it known that this event will kick off your community service program and competition.

3. Collect Admissions

This might go without saying, but make sure that you are collecting the admissions for your event and putting the funds toward your community service program. Pre-sell tickets, charge admission at entrance, sell tickets in bulk (e.g. buy 6 for the price of 5). Make it easy for students and the community to share that they're going and bring friends along.

4. Share Results

Since you've publicized WHY you are collecting admission for this event, share with your students and community the amount you collect and what you will do with the funds. Bonus points if you can share AT the event!



III. Do a Budget Scrub (w/ Students)

If you aren't currently doing this, then we **STRONGLY** encourage you to involve your students in your program's budgeting process. Whether they're SAAC, student council, or members of another group, your students want to have their voices heard during decision-making processes. This sort of agency increases investment and makes sure that at least a portion of funds are going toward initiatives that students have buy-in around. And, if they want a community service program, then this is a must!

HOW TO:

1. Set Parameters
2. Evaluate Current Spending
3. Prioritize
4. Adjust & Implement



III. Do a Budget Scrub (w/ Students)

1. Set Parameters

Unless you're working with a group of students who have full control over a budget, then you'll want to set parameters of what money they can choose to reallocate and spend.

Typically, schools choose to involve students in spending as it comes to group meetings, social events, t-shirts (and other swag), and any student-centered line items. You can, of course, expand as you see fit.

2. Evaluate Current Spending

With your students, look back at what you've spent on items within their parameters and look at a forecast for what is budgeted this upcoming year. Compare this to the amount you've calculated you need to fund your community service program (many schools budget ~\$4k or \$3-4 per student) to cover things like transportation and any productivity software to manage the program.

3. Prioritize

Now that you have all of the numbers and purchases in one place, have your students go through what is planned to be purchased and ask: what return/outcome did we see from this purchase in the past? What outcome do we anticipate from it if we purchase this year? Is that outcome a higher priority than the outcome we'd see from a community service program?

4. Adjust & Implement

If the budgeted purchases are less of a priority than a community service program, then repurpose the money to the program. Track how much and what you've adjusted. You'll hit your goal fund amount in no time.



IV. Solicit In-Kind Donations

This tactic is slightly more advanced and a bit of a mash-up of tactics I and III (Securing Sponsorship and Budget Scrubbing). Overall, it's simple, though: solicit in-kind donations from vendors and local/national businesses for resources currently tying up money in your budget in exchange for naming them as a sponsor of your community service program and award. Use the money you've freed up to fund your community service program. It's another win-win (and typically very attractive to a sponsor/vendor).

HOW TO:

1. Identify Resources to Solicit
2. Email Vendors
3. Secure Donations
4. Present Award



IV. Solicit In-Kind Donations

1. Identify Resources to Solicit

Go over your budget and purchasing plan for the upcoming season or year. **Identify the goods and events you already plan to spend money on.** Whether it's pizza parties, equipment, etc., chances are you have a relationship with a vendor willing to DONATE those resources to you. See which donations will get you close to \$4k for your program, and collect a list of those vendors and contacts.

2. Email Vendors

Reach out to your list of vendors with an email educating them on your intent to build a community service program and give out a service award. Then, ask them about their interest in sponsoring the award by making an in-kind donation of the resources you need. You can use and edit some of these vendor email templates we've put together at www.helperhelper.com/resources.

3. Secure Donations

Once you've reached out to your full list of vendors, you'll have a good idea of who is interested in making a donation of the resources you need to free up money to fund your program. Get on the phone or sit down with these select few to **finalize the terms of the donation.** This could include putting their name on the award, publicity at associated events, or other visibility for them.

4. Present Award

Once you have the in-kind donation, use the money saved to execute on your community service program. At the end of the year, give out your community service award and recognize the vendor sponsors.



In Conclusion

Armed with these tactics, you're able to quickly implement an alternative option to fund your community service program. Once you've funded the program, you'll want to ensure you manage it efficiently and effectively. We know ways to do that too.

Helper Helper has worked with over 400 schools to engage their students in similar community service programs, and we'd love to make it easy for you to do the same.

Whether it's starting a program from scratch, increasing student engagement, making communication and tracking easy, going digital with a web portal and phone app, or anything else you're wanting to accomplish, we've got a solution that will work for you.

Let's connect to make your program - and the world - that much better.



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