

Fundraising Panel Discussion
FIRST Indiana Virtual Conference
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Fundraising Tips and Suggestions

- There are different types of fundraising – sponsors, grants, sales (door-to-door), in-kind donations.
- Fundraising varies with each team based on how your team is organized.
 - If an independent, 501©(3) or (4) – need to follow government/state guidelines
 - If public school-affiliated, may need to follow school guidelines
 - be aware of other school team fundraisers and don't step on other team's toes. Decide if another school organization has already sold what you are looking to sell and if families need more than one of that item.
 - where are funds earned going? Into an account solely for the team? How to access funds quickly during build season? Into a "general fund" – can team's earned funds be used by other school entities?
 - If private-school affiliated, is team allowed to fundraise for team, or must all fundraising go back to the school? Are students even allowed to do fundraising?
- Different models for fundraising
 - All funds earned by team go into general team budget, which pays for everything (materials, travel, website, etc.)
 - Students are credited for any funds they earn for the team, which then goes to offset their travel expenses.
 - Are Mentors' travel expenses paid by the team?
 - Do students need to Pay to Play?
- Precautionary tips
 - Team should decide who is the ultimate decision-maker in disbursing funds - who can sign checks, order parts, book travel?
 - Have check and balances in place – ie. Having two signatures on checks
 - Keep separate receipts for all items purchased (do not mix with personal items being purchased on same receipt)
 - Determine how team assets are to be distributed if team folds or mentor leaves team. Very important! If something is purchased with fundraising money, does it belong to the team? Have a donation form to be completed by anyone donating items to the team and denote if the item is being loaned to the team (the person gets it back at some point), or donated to the team (does not get returned). This way, if a problem arises and someone leaves the team, you have documentation about the material in question.
- Miscellaneous
 - Make fundraising events like pasta dinners an "experience." (examples: Disney's roller coasters have themes; Anthropologie stores are staged with award-winning themes). These can be great teambuilding experiences which will also help with student buy-in to participate). Play Italian

music, red and white checkered tablecloths, “candlelight” on the tables. Invite sponsors. Invite sponsor’s MOTHERS or KIDS and let them drive the robot! Then it becomes a memorable “experience” instead of just another pasta dinner.

- If a sponsor gives you a check, create a large check (like the Lottery winners get); have the company’s media personnel take photos of the CEO handing the large check to your ROBOT and they can publicize it through their media connections. Great publicity for both the team and the sponsor.
- Make a Wish List and include everything on it that your team can use, from large expensive items like a 3D printer or CNC machine to small inexpensive items like a white board and markers. Keep it up to date. Hand out copies to every family and at every outreach events – you never know who might not have money to donate but can fulfill one of your wishes!