

Holding a Fundraiser or Event

Produced by the AAZK Resource Committee



This guide is a resource for AAZK chapters as fundraising is an important part of running a chapter. Holding a successful fundraising event can make a big difference by raising money for a chapter as well as for a conservation organization. Tips and advice for organizing various types of fundraisers or events are outlined below. These tips are suggestions and not compulsory.

Getting Started

Purpose

- Will it support a conservation project or chapter funds?
- Where will the funds go?
 - If funds will go to a conservation group, know what your funding will specifically support.
 - Example: Prusten Project; to purchase an additional sound monitor or Professional Development grants for local chapter members.
 - Make sure chapter members are well versed in what they are supporting.
 - When donating to another organization, it must be a 501c3 non-profit. Make sure you can access the organization's EIN number. You will need this number later for your chapter's re-charter or taxes.

Goals

- How much would you like to fundraise?
- Will you donate funds raised or profits after expenses?
- Will merchandise be sold?

Target Audience

- Who would you like to attend your event?
 - Young professionals
 - Family groups, etc.
- How will you promote the event?
- How will the event be fun or attractive?
- Anyone can come to a fundraising event; don't limit your audience to zoo people – try to engage with multiple audiences over time.
- Create materials to educate attendees about your cause and how they can get involved.



Event Details

- What are your proposed venues?
- What is your expected attendance compared to the venue capacities?
- What time of year do you plan on holding the event?
- What time frame of day?
 - Remember to consider after work hours, etc.

Contacting Venues

- Clearly explain the date, timeframe, and purpose of the fundraiser.
- Mention your chapter's Federal Non-profit Tax ID



- Many events can be written off by vendors.
- Proprietors may, but are not required to, offer deals at the venue or donations of goods and services.

Virtual Fundraisers

- Look for online venues/apps that are cost free or contact them for non-profit pricing.
 - Non-profit pricing is oftentimes not listed on pricing pages but it makes a huge difference!
- Utilize features such as a free ZOOM account, Google Meet, etc.
- Virtual events are beneficial in that they reach many more participants than just the local level. You can participate states/countries away.
- Don't worry too much on giveaways, prizes, etc.
 - People, in general, are looking for things to do that are safe and socially distant right now. That alone can be a huge draw.
- Move your typical in-person sales to the internet.
 - Look into virtual payment systems for your Chapter
 - Sell animal paintings or other merchandise on social media platforms or through other online stores.
 - Don't forget to factor in shipping costs
 - Consider online t-shirt fundraisers
 - Several companies will produce your custom t-shirts and mail them right to the buyers. Your chapter will get a percentage of the proceeds.
 - No need for your chapter to manage inventory.

Planning for a Larger Event

A fundraiser can be small or can get big and more complex. For a big event, plan at least 4-6 months ahead.

Staffing

- Form a committee (even if it ends up consisting of only 1 or 2 people).
- Organize how the event will run and create an event timetable.
- Designate volunteers or members to help with duties including registration, raffles, entertainment, and photographs.



Venue

- Contact an event space for the best deal.
- If your event is on a weekend, you will probably realize greater public involvement.

Supplemental Insurance

- Event Insurance is available through AAZK National to established chapters hosting fundraising events.
- Insurance can be requested by the venue or another entity involved in the event.

For information on obtaining supplemental insurance through AAZK please contact Ed.Hansen@aazk.org.

Promote

- Promote the cost of the event and what's included in the cost.
- Promote prizes, raffle items, or silent auction items to attract more people to your event.



- Promote your event in calendars, newsletters, fliers, social media, and any other avenues available to you.
- Educate people about your cause. Print information sheets about what funds raised will help do.
- Create a presentation about the beneficiary organization and present it to the chapter, volunteers, or other local community groups.

Donations/Prizes

- Draft a donation request letter
- Solicit for donations or prizes; write letters or call local restaurants, movie theaters, and hotels to see if they could donate prizes for your event.
 - For Example: “My name is _____ and I am a member of the _____ Chapter of the American Association of Zookeepers. We are having a _____ fund raiser where proceeds will go directly to support (insert benefiting organization). We are currently looking for donations to use as raffle items, would your business be interested in helping?”
- When soliciting for donations, remember that you are seeking donations for your AAZK chapter, not your home institution.
 - Do not wear work uniform when soliciting in person.
 - Be careful when using your work email.
- Make sure you are aware of any institutional restrictions or yearly limitations and respect the restrictions (donation request lists, facility usage, facility advertising, facility name usage, facility email usage).
- Become familiar with your state’s fundraising regulations on raffles, bingos or auctions.
- Donated items can be raffled or auctioned in a silent auction, and/or given as door prizes
- Contact the organization you are raising money for. They may donate a raffle item and help you promote the event.
- Invite local celebrities from radio and TV stations.
- After the event, write thank you letters for prizes and celebrity attendance.



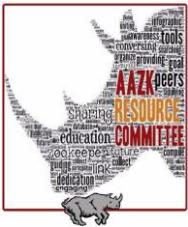
Expenses

- Create a budget for the event and have your treasurer keep track of all the monetary transactions.
- Prominently advertise the percentage of event profits that go towards conservation.
 - If all profits are to be donated, advertise 100% of profits benefit the cause.
 - If some profits are being retained to help with chapter funding, advertise that the majority of profits will benefit the cause.
- Event holders can cover expenses for events by charging a set fee/cover for attendees. On top of the fee to cover expenses, you can then build in a flat donation (preferred).
- Decide if you want to package a deal for your event.
 - Ex: One fee that covers the cost of the event, raffle, meal, and t-shirt.
- If interested in having a t-shirt and/or other merchandise for an event, find local talent to volunteer to do the artwork. T-shirts and other merchandise can be considered free advertising and education.
- Silent Auctions, raffles or sale of merchandise can generate income for the event.
- After the event, review finances, send thank yous, and make recommendations for future events.



Helpful Guidelines

- Make sure your chapter has a record of your tax identification number (EIN number).
- Reach out to other chapters for help; they can be great resources for throwing events and figuring out the do's and don'ts of events.
- Designate volunteers or members to help with duties including registration, raffles, entertainment, and photographs.
- Check with your Chamber of Commerce prior to setting date to find out events that could conflict. Once you choose the date, inform your Chamber of Commerce.
- Place flyers in an area where volunteers may see them.
- Talk to your Zoo Society or other organization that monetarily assists the zoo (if any or if permitted by your institution).
- Collect door prizes or Auction (raffle) items 4-6 months in advance in person with letter of donation request in hand and acknowledge any donation in writing.
- Seek help from your facilities Special Events and Graphic departments, etc. to market your Event.
- When seeking donations make sure to communicate to friends and family. Tap into all your resources.



The AAZK Resource Committee's Chapter and Networking Resource Team is responsible for the content and production of this document.

For questions, clarification, or suggestions for future resources, contact: arc@aazk.org.

