

Congressional Youth Leadership Council

STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS: A GUIDE TO COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING

Congratulations on your nomination to attend the Conference!

Each year a significant percentage of outstanding students like you raise the funds they need to attend elite programs such as those offered by the Congressional Youth Leadership Council (CYLC) through active fundraising efforts. As one of the leaders of tomorrow, you have the ability to make important achievements and fundraising to attend a CYLC program will be an accomplishment of which you will be proud!

Whether you choose to contact sponsors from local businesses or organizations in your community or to organize a fundraising event, you will learn tremendously from the experience. By contacting potential sponsors or organizing an event, you will strengthen presentation and organization skills and have the chance to network with top professionals. You will also have the opportunity to be creative and demonstrate your leadership potential through your hard work.

As you begin your fundraising efforts, we encourage you to plan ahead and consider all possibilities. To assist you with this process, this Guide provides a basic outline from which to start. You may want to seek additional guidance from teachers, professors, mentors, clergy, guidance counselors and parents. Also, using the Internet for information and ideas may be helpful. If you would like to read about other Conference attendees' fundraising success stories, please visit the CYLC web site at: <http://www.cylc.org/fundraising>.

Please be assured that the Office of Admissions is ready to assist you in any way possible. If you need further information or guidance, please contact our office or visit the CYLC web site at www.cylc.org.

Again, congratulations on your nomination! We look forward to meeting with you during what is sure to be one of the most exciting and important experiences of your life!

I. CALCULATE HOW MUCH MONEY YOU WILL NEED

First look at your resources: How much do you have in personal savings? How much money will you be able to contribute yourself? What financial assistance will come from your parents or school?

Remember, attending the Conference means meeting three costs:

- Conference tuition
- Transportation to and from the Conference
- Incidentals (souvenirs, gifts) and lunches (if not provided by your selected program)

To determine the amount of funding that you will need, we recommend that you start by making a list of your resources. When doing this, you may use the balance sheet shown below:

Balance Sheet

Your Conference Costs	
Conference tuition	\$
Travel (to and from Conference)	+
Incidentals (phone calls, souvenirs) and lunches	+
Total Conference costs	=
Available Funds	
Your savings	\$
Family contributions	+
Total available funds	=
Sponsorship Funds Needed	
Conference costs	\$
Available funds	-
Required sponsorship funds	=

II. DETERMINE HOW YOU WILL FUNDRAISE

Once you have calculated how much money you need to raise for your trip, the next step will be to decide your plan of action. Do you have a creative idea that will attract potential sponsors? Are you interested in communicating with professionals in your community? You may decide to organize a fundraising campaign that attracts the local media or you may choose to formally seek support from businesses and organizations. There are many ways to fundraise and developing a plan of action that will enable you to learn new skills and have fun at the same time is important.

“Whatever you are doing for fundraising, do it yourself and don’t let any of your close friends or family members do it for you because it will benefit you a lot in life...it will help you build confidence to stand up for yourself whether you are giving a speech, reading an essay, or talking to people you don’t even know. By doing this fundraiser, it benefited me in life...” – Maricela, CA

PLAN A: ORGANIZING A FUNDRAISING EVENT

Step 1: Decide the 3 W’s – What, Where and When

Deciding the 3 W’s will mean deciding **what** fundraising idea you will pursue, **where** it will take place, and **when** it will occur so that you get the best possible response from your community. As you begin, you might find it more helpful to work together with other students from your school who will also be attending the Conference.

What: As you consider fundraising ideas, you may want to ask for input from family, teachers or other students in your school. What services will people in your community be interested in receiving? Do you have adequate resources available to you for this project? Will you be able to raise enough money with this idea? The following are a few ideas to start the brainstorming process:

Candy sale
Bake sale
Car wash
An “A-Thon”
A benefit
Recycling
A raffle
Flower/fruit/vegetable garden sale
Provide a neighborhood service: yardwork, dog walking, house-sitting, pet-sitting

When: To schedule when your fundraising event will occur, make sure that other community events, school exams or project deadlines do not conflict with the date that you have chosen. Give yourself enough time to prepare for the event, setting goals to accomplish tasks by certain dates.

Where: You will also need to determine what location will accommodate the number of people you are expecting, whether that place will attract enough public interest and whether you need to get special authorization. If you won't need a particular location to carry out your fundraising campaign, be sure that you have researched the neighborhood or group of people that might be most responsive to your requests.

Step 2: Determine Your Plan of Action

To organize a successful fundraising campaign, you may want to follow these steps in organizing event logistics:

- Discuss your ideas with a mentor, teacher, parent or someone who can offer you guidance.
- Get necessary authorization/permission if you are holding an event at school or in a public location.
- Recruit help (consider working as a team with other Conference nominees from your school)
- Determine how money will be collected.
- Plan how you will advertise or create publicity for your event.
- Mark your calendar for important dates.
- Organize your message – Be able to answer questions about the purpose of the Conference, how you will benefit from attending, etc.
- Gather materials and resources that you will need.

Step 3: Get Started!

Once you have organized all of the logistics of your fundraising event, you're ready to get started! The most important thing to do to get the ball rolling is to promote the service that you are offering. You may want to post flyers in local supermarkets, stores or libraries, place an announcement in your school or local newspaper, or inform people by word of mouth.

After your event, don't forget to thank everyone who has supported you in your fundraising efforts. Please refer to the sample thank you letter on page 10.

PLAN B: SEEKING SPONSORSHIP SUPPORT

Step 1: Find Potential Sponsors

There are plenty of places to find potential sponsors in your area. The local Chamber of Commerce, visitors' bureaus and similar agencies will have free directories and lists of businesses and community organizations in your vicinity. Also, the Yellow Pages of the phone book provide information about the majority of local businesses.

Your most valuable resources are people active in community affairs, like your school principal or the president of the PTA. They are knowledgeable and may be willing to help you find sponsors. Ask them for help. While rarely able to provide any financial assistance, clergy and other school officials are also good sources of ideas for potential sponsors. Please be aware that Congressional offices do not supply sponsorship money, and we strongly discourage soliciting them for financial assistance.

Meeting with community leaders and asking for help is not as difficult as you might think. Many adults enjoy talking with young people and sharing their experiences. So relax and talk to people about the Conference and what you intend to gain from it. Be honest about what you want—represent your case openly and sincerely.

Seek out adults who can point you toward the right individuals or businesses to solicit for your Conference sponsorship. Choose adults who have raised funds in your community and who have good contacts and information. They can shorten your quest for sponsorship funds by knowing which businesses and organizations will be most likely to give and how generous they might be.

Don't limit the scope of your mission. Many businesses and organizations in surrounding cities or towns of your residence may be willing to help. Seek out businesses that serve, employ or are patronized by the residents of your community and the students in your school. Use this sample list of sponsors as an excellent place to start.

Types of Sponsors

Businesses:	Organizations:
Supermarkets	VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars)
Banks	Rotary Club
Town merchants	Lions Club
Utility companies	PTA (Parent Teachers Association)
Sports stores	Chamber of Commerce
Newspapers	Kiwanis Club
Law firms	Religious organizations
Realty firms	Women's clubs
Restaurants	Sororities or Fraternities
Insurance companies	Boards of Education
Car dealers	Airline, train or bus companies (for travel sponsorship)

“I was delighted when I finally put together the money for the program. I was offered a large sum from a large international company...Inform many people about the opportunity you have been given because even if they cannot help you personally, they can often direct you towards somebody that can...I was successful in one attempt.” - Stephanie, U.K.

Step 2: Write Your Sponsorship Request

With your sponsorship list in hand, you are ready to begin fundraising! You need to introduce yourself and your cause to potential sponsors. A letter is a terrific form of introduction. In the letter, clearly state the following: your name; school; phone number; where you live; your grade in school; why you are writing; why you were nominated to attend the Conference; what the Conference is; why you want to attend; how much money you will need; and your desire to meet and discuss this further.

Use our *Sample Fundraising Letter* as a model. Your letter can be tailored after this model, although yours should be original. It should provide a personalized description of your recent achievements and extracurricular and community activities. Remember, your letter is the only information a potential sponsor has when deciding to see you and whether to give you funding, so be creative and clear. You may want to make copies of the information we sent with your nomination and provide it to your potential sponsors.

Keep in mind that their sponsorship is not tax deductible and should not be represented as a tax-deductible gift. While the Conference is a non-profit organization, contributions made for a specific person do not qualify as tax-deductible according to the rules of the Internal Revenue Service.

Good fundraising letters convince readers that the request is worthwhile. Potential sponsors may want to know how they will benefit from helping you. You might tell them that you will become a better citizen within the community. Also, inform the company that they will receive positive publicity when you include a reference to their sponsorship in your press release to the local media.

Give potential sponsors the information they need to make their decision. Include the balance sheet (see Step 1) that justifies your request. Tell them how much you need and suggest that they may provide all or part of the money. Be sure to indicate that any support would be greatly appreciated. Also, tell them which other businesses and organizations you are contacting.

It is important to keep a copy of the letter for your records. An individual or business you have contacted may lose it or ask about it, and you want to be able to send a duplicate copy and answer their questions confidently.

“The student should add information about themselves personally, and state their relationship to their sponsor, if there is one. I would advise sending the letter to employers, doctors, insurance companies, basically anywhere that you pay frequently.” – Jay, FL

Sample Fundraising Letter

123 Pleasant Road
Chicago, IL 60649

Date of Letter

Mr. Benjamin Franklin, President
ABC Global Corporation
456 Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60649

Dear Mr. Franklin:

My name is Sara Miller and I am a senior at Smith High School in Chicago. I have been nominated to represent my school and community at the _____ Conference.

The Conference brings exceptional high school students from around the country to an interactive program. I have enclosed a sample of our itinerary for your review. As you can see, this will be a powerful experience, enabling me to interact with many prominent men and women whom most of us only read about in the papers and see on television.

Attending this program will enable me to develop my leadership skills and reach my career goals. I maintain a _____ GPA and am involved in the following activities: _____.

Imagine if you had been given this opportunity for a life-changing experience when you were in high school and were unable to participate for lack of funds. That is why I am writing to you today.

My participation in the Conference depends on whether I can raise \$_____ in sponsorships. The Conference tuition is \$_____ and my travel to the Conference will cost \$_____. Through my family, school and personal savings, I have raised \$_____.

I am hoping that the ABC Corporation will assist me with all or part of these costs. I also have contacted Stop and Shop and Computerland, Inc. with similar fundraising requests. My tuition must be paid no later than (enrollment application due date).

Your support for my sponsorship request would be greatly appreciated. I will contact you next week to discuss the possibility of receiving your support.

I have enclosed background materials on the Conference to answer your questions and help you make your decision. Please contact me at xxx-xxx-xxxx or the Conference at xxx-xxx-xxxx for any further information.

Sincerely,
Sara Miller
Sara Miller

Step 3: Follow Up With A Phone Call

Speaking with your sponsors is as important as sending your letter. The success of your fundraising efforts often depends on this part of the process. Your call to each potential sponsor is a reminder that you are waiting anxiously to hear about your sponsorship request.

Wait a week after sending your letters before making follow-up calls. When you call, speak slowly and clearly, introduce yourself, state the purpose of your call and suggest that the potential sponsor arrange a meeting with you and your parents or family members. In some cases a meeting will not be possible, so you should be prepared to talk with your potential sponsor over the telephone. Make sure that when you call, you have your letter and the information you received about the Conference in hand so that you can easily refer to this information during your conversation.

If you are able to arrange a meeting with a potential sponsor, planning and preparing are essential to the success of your presentation. Being prepared will help you overcome any nervousness you might feel. You and your request are worthy and reasonable, so forge ahead! Make your presentation honest and simple. You may want to bring the following items to your meeting:

- The acceptance letter you received from the Conference.
- Information about the Conference that includes: description of program, sample schedule, names of speakers, the CYLC web site address, etc.
- Any recommendations from prominent individuals such as teachers, principals, ministers, etc.
- A list of recent achievements or awards.
- A calendar.
- Your balance sheet.
- Your contact information.

Decide on a format for your presentation and create an outline highlighting the points you want to emphasize. Remember to present your material with confidence and enthusiasm. You might want to practice the meeting with a family member.

Consider the following sample outline:

I.	Introduction
II.	Purpose of meeting
III.	Your selection to participate in the Conference
IV.	Description of the Conference
V.	Why you want to attend and what you will gain
VI.	Amount of funds needed for sponsorship
VII.	How you selected each sponsor to contact
VIII.	When you will need the sponsorship

Tell the individuals considering your request that CYLC will be sending you a press release that you will distribute to local newspapers and that CYLC is willing to work with sponsors on additional public relations efforts. You can download a sample of the press release from the CYLC web site.

When you are asked to whom to write sponsorship checks, tell the sponsor that they have two options. First, they may write the check to you or your parents. You can then disburse funds to CYLC. Second, they may wish to write the check to CYLC. Keep all of your checks together and submit them with your enrollment application as early as possible.

If you have already submitted your enrollment application and full tuition payment and are enrolled in the program, CYLC will be happy to reimburse you for any fundraising checks you receive. You should send to the Office of Admissions any checks that you have received that are made payable to CYLC. Make sure that you include your name on each check and include with your check a note that specifies your name, address and telephone number. Please note that it will take at least six weeks for CYLC to deposit your fundraising check and send a reimbursement to you.

Use CYLC as a reference for questions you cannot answer. Encourage sponsors to visit the CYLC web site or suggest that they contact the Office of Admissions for further information.

Step 4: Send A Thank You Letter

Send letters to the individuals whom you meet with and speak with over the telephone. Thank them for their time and consideration. Again, it is a good idea to keep copies of all correspondence.

If you do not receive a positive response from your first attempt, do not despair. Contact additional sponsors and be persistent. Many of the individuals or businesses that sponsor you may give you only a portion of the Conference costs. You will likely have to accumulate your total goal from a number of sources.

If you succeed with one of your early requests, consider using that information in subsequent letters. Potential sponsors often like to know who else might be a sponsor, and it may further encourage their participation.

“I mailed the letter to any business or company that my parents deal with. Send your letter out to everyone...I sent an outline with the letter telling them what I would be doing at the Conference and immediately sent thank you notes back to the business as soon as I received their check...Don't give up. There are people out there that will help you.”
– Sean, IL

You may want to base your correspondence on our sample *Thank You Letter*:

Sample Thank You Letter

123 Pleasant Road
Chicago, IL 60649

Date of Letter

Mr. Benjamin Franklin, President
ABC Global Corporation
456 Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60649

Dear Mr. Franklin:

I want to thank you for your generous support in sponsoring me and making it possible for me to attend the _____ Conference.

I promise to take extensive notes and when I return, I will send you an exclusive report on everything that happened.

Thank you again for what I am sure will be a life-changing experience for me.

Sincerely,
Sara Miller
Sara Miller

III. AFTER YOU RETURN – PAVING THE WAY FOR THE FUTURE

When you return home from the Conference, make sure to thank all sponsors again for their generosity, without delay. From the notes you have taken at the Conference, create a day-by-day record of what happened, who spoke and what was said.

Bring a camera with you to the Conference and take snapshots of some of the people and the locale. Have prints made and mount a few of them on one or two sheets of paper with captions. Include these along with your daily reports and thank-you notes to your sponsors.

Your sponsors will be very interested in your activities at the Conference. Sharing the knowledge you gained at the Conference with your sponsors (as well as your classmates and school officials) will allow others to benefit from your experience.

You are also paving the way for the future. By giving your sponsors such positive feedback, they just might be willing to sponsor other qualified young people from your area.