You might find that the goals for your program often get stifled because of insufficient funds. Let’s work together to maximize your funding sources. We’ll begin by looking at where your funds are coming from now. Then we’ll look at what you can do to obtain more money through fundraising events, sponsorships, or grants.

**YOUR SOURCES OF FUNDS**

Let’s begin by assessing your current budget and considering which sources might be able to provide additional funding. Consider whether you can increase any of your current sources, such as adding $1 or $2 to registration fees.

1. **What is the total sum of money you have for operating your program?**
   $_________________ (For our purposes here, use only the money that you have control over or the operating budget of the program.)

2. **Provide the best estimate of the percentage of income from each of the following sources of funds:**
   - Local and state taxes
   - United Way contributions
   - Federal and state grants

(continued)
Registration and entry fees ____________________
Membership fees ____________________
Admission fees ____________________
User fees for facilities and equipment ____________________
Concession sales ____________________
Other sales ____________________
Private gifts and donations ____________________
Special-event fundraising ____________________
Commercial sponsorships ____________________
Other ____________________
Other ____________________
Total 100%

3. Now review each source of funds to determine the potential for you to obtain more funds from this source. Circle Yes or No for each item. If your answer is yes, identify how you might be able to obtain more funds from this source.

Taxes allocated to your agency Yes No
United Way contributions Yes No
Federal and state grants Yes No
Registration and entry fees Yes No
Membership fees Yes No
Admission fees Yes No
User fees for facilities and equipment Yes No
Concession sales Yes No
Other sales Yes No
Private gifts and donations Yes No
Fundraising events Yes No
Sponsorships Yes No
Other Yes No

(continued)
4. Now review your list, talk with other youth sport administrators about how they are funding their programs, and list the highest potential step you can take to raise more funds for your program.

Once you’ve reviewed your sources of funding, you may want to think more about ways you can add to your organization’s income. Special-event fundraising is one of the methods often used in raising money from the community.

**SPECIAL-EVENT FUNDRAISING**

You can raise funds in many ways through special events that are both fun and profitable. For example, you can conduct any or all of the following:

- Food sales (bake sales, fruit, candy)
- Athletic equipment sales (such as wristbands, water bottles, sweatshirts with team’s logo)
- Service sales (car washes, cleanup work, collecting recyclable items)
- Auctions (goods and services offered by members, silent bids, donated items of value)
- Raffles and lotteries
- Social events (parties and dances)
- Camps and clinics
- Activity-a-thons (walking, swimming, running, biking, dancing)
- Eating events (banquets, pie-eating contests, celebrity dinners, pancake breakfasts)
- Celebrity sport contests (softball, basketball, golf, tennis)
- Entertainment (shows, exhibits, benefit productions)
- Publishing (production of cookbooks, newsletters, directories)

**Conducting a fundraising event is similar to conducting a sport event.**

As the administrator, you need to do many of the same tasks but for a different purpose. You can create a successful fundraising event by following these guidelines:

- Before you develop an event, consider your image in the community. Is it positive enough that you are likely to draw participants to your event?
- If your image is positive enough to draw participants, plan an event that will appeal to sufficiently large numbers of people, and schedule it for a time that doesn’t compete with other events and is convenient for many people to attend.
Avoid choosing events that require considerable expenses upfront that risk a potential loss, and make sure you have the financial resources available to fund the upfront costs.

Ask the members of your organization to support and help conduct the event.

Organize the event effectively.

Promote the event well.

Fundraising events are just one way to gather support from your community; another is team sponsorship by local businesses.

**TEAM SPONSORSHIP**

Many youth teams are sponsored by local businesses, who gain favorable publicity in the community while helping local youth organizations. Success in pursuing sponsorships requires a well-constructed plan. Here are the steps you can take to develop such a plan for use in your community.

**Step 1.** Determine which component of your program has the most potential to be sponsored.

- Team (coaching education, uniforms, equipment, etc.)
- Tournament
- Awards
- Facility
- Food and drink
- Other

**Step 2.** Determine the best potential sponsors.

- Check to see if parents in your program are executives in companies that might have an interest in sponsoring.
- Watch local newspapers for ads to see what companies might be interested in marketing their products to your participants. Read stories about other community events to see which local businesses have supported them.
- Look for new businesses or ones that are expanding.
- Target businesses that will directly benefit from sponsoring your program, such as sporting goods stores, hotels, and restaurants.
- Remember that you’re selling publicity, exposure, and goodwill to businesses. Research larger businesses in your area that publicly announce their budgets for publicity. Businesses’ annual reports are a great place to start.
- List companies that potentially have sufficient budgets to support the dollar amount you seek. It doesn’t make sense to go to a small barbershop to ask for a $5,000 sponsorship.
Step 3. Prepare a sponsorship proposal for any one of the components you identified in step 1. Indicate the key points to be made under each of the following parts of the proposal:

- The component to be sponsored: Give a brief description of the component, and don’t forget to list any marketing potential, including spectators.
- Your organization: Tell them who you are and why you support youth sports.
- Sponsorship request: Let them know what, specifically, you want from them.
- Sponsorship benefits: Explain what the sponsor will get out of sponsoring your team.

Step 4. To get the most favorable consideration possible, outline how you will go about contacting potential sponsors of this proposal. Whom will you network with? What will you emphasize to one business compared to another on your list? We suggest that you approach a company for sponsorship only once a year.

Once you have found sponsors, be sure to do the following:

- Deliver what you promise.
- Keep good records of your planning and a file on each sponsor to refer back to each year.
- Recognize in-kind sponsors (printers, practice space, media), because they probably help you reduce overhead costs.
- Acknowledge and recognize your sponsors publicly.

We’ve now looked at two ways you can fund your team locally; another option is to seek grants from outside your community.

GRANTS

When you hear the word grants, government grants might come to mind. However, you’re actually more likely to find money for youth sport organizations through corporate or foundation grants. Start by looking in the most likely places: the national sport organization that supports your sport or companies that manufacture the equipment used in your sport. For example, if you have a tennis team, try USTA; if you have a soccer team, try the U.S. Soccer Foundation. Also consider whether the professional league for your sport has a charitable arm that funds youth leagues in that sport, such as the NFL’s Youth Football Fund or the MLB’s Baseball Tomorrow Fund. If you’re located near a large city, check your local professional sport teams for grants targeted to youth sports in your area. Finally, consider corporations that sell children’s items or that want to give back to the community, such as Wal-Mart or Target. Some corporations give preference to applicants in locations where the corporations have stores, factories, or headquarters.

The best place to start is the Web sites of these organizations. Search for key words, such as “grants,” “charities,” or “foundations.” You might find information about corporate giving in descriptions of the parent corporation; look for links that say Our Company, About Us, or Community Relations.

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Once you’ve located information about an appropriate grant source, read all of it carefully to make sure it meets your team’s needs. The money is usually earmarked for specific purposes; for example, a soccer grant might contribute only to the renovation of soccer fields rather than to the purchasing of equipment or coaching education. You will have to meet the grantor’s criteria for eligibility (most likely you’ll need to be part of a not-for-profit or a tax-exempt organization such as a school district), and you must meticulously follow the procedures for applying and meet the deadlines for application. Remember that many groups are vying for that same money, so don’t give grantors an easy reason to reject your request. If you have questions about the grant requirements, contact the grant source directly for clarification.

Applying for grants is not usually an easy task. Expect to be asked to complete a form that will ask for specific information about areas such as these:

- The history and mission of your organization and what activities your current program provides
- Whom you serve (such as age and sex of participants, geographic area)
- The number of participants you serve and the coaches, volunteers, and other staff you have
- Your present budget and the amount of grant money you are requesting
- How you plan to spend the grant money if awarded
- What you hope to achieve if you are awarded the grant money, especially how it will positively affect program participants
- Who in your organization will actually carry out the activities supported by the grant
- Your timetable for completing the activities supported by the grant
- Any support you are now receiving from community organizations or any partnering you are doing with other groups in joint programs
- How you will assess whether you achieved the outcomes you wanted after spending the grant money on the activities you chose

Even though the economy is in a recession, you may well be able to get more funding for your team if you look at your budget to see what options are available and then, if necessary, pursue opportunities such as fundraising events, sponsorships, or grants.
Rainer Martens has participated in sports all his life. He has coached at the youth, high school, and collegiate levels and has studied sport as a research scientist. The founder and president of Human Kinetics, he also started the American Sport Education Program, the largest coaching education program in the U.S. An internationally recognized sport psychologist, Martens is the author of more than 80 scholarly articles and 15 books, including Successful Coaching, the best-selling coaching book ever published, and Joy and Sadness in Children’s Sports. He has also been a featured speaker at more than 100 conferences around the world and has conducted more than 150 workshops and clinics for coaches and athletes at all levels.

After receiving his PhD in Physical Education from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana in 1968, Martens was a member of its faculty for 16 years. A past-president of the American Academy of Kinesiology and Physical Education, he has been recognized for his contribution to sport by the National Recreation and Park Association and by being inducted into the National Association of Sport and Physical Education Hall of Fame. He has received Distinguished Alumni awards from Emporia State University in Kansas (where he earned a bachelor’s degree), the University of Montana (where he earned a master’s degree), the University of Illinois, and Hutchinson High School.

To order a copy of the book Directing Youth Sports Programs, click here or call toll-free at 800-747-5698.

Ideal for youth sport administrators at any level, the Directing Youth Sports Programs online course includes the more than 50 forms and practice exercises included in the book as electronic documents that can be used as is or modified to your needs. The course registration fee includes a copy of the book.

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