



advocacy

**GUIDE TO FUNDRAISING  
FOR ADVOCACY EVENTS**



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# INTRODUCTION

One of the most challenging aspects of interior design advocacy is funding the lobbyists and initiatives required in order to be successful. At IIDA, we believe that sharing information and ideas across chapters and coalitions can inspire, motivate, and reveal best practices. While not a template for fundraisers, the IIDA Guide to Fundraising for Advocacy Events was created to help advocates learn how other chapters and coalitions have successfully planned and executed events.

A special thank you to the chapters and coalitions that contributed to this guide, including: Alabama Interior Design Coalition; Illinois Interior Design Coalition; Interior Design Collaborative-Oregon; Interior Design Legislative Coalition of Pennsylvania; Interior Designers for Legislation in New York; Intermountain Chapter and IDEAL-Utah; and Texas/Oklahoma Chapter.

## Questions about this guide?

We're here to help. This guide includes event case studies that showcase tips and key takeaways. If you would like more information about one of the events, please let us know. Or, feel free to contact us with other questions or comments at [advocacy@iida.org](mailto:advocacy@iida.org).

## CASE STUDY: A NIGHT AT THE RACES

### Alabama Chapter and Alabama Interior Design Coalition

A Night at the Races, now in its fourth year, is the successful Kentucky Derby-themed event that raises funds for the Alabama Interior Design Coalition (AIDC). Planned and executed by an AIDC committee consisting of industry representatives and designers from IIDA, ASID, and the coalition, the event features horse races on large screens and attendees can place bets using “funny money.” Attendees can also participate in an auction for sponsor-donated items like gift cards and electronics. In 2016, A Night at the Races, held at a local showroom, drew more than 100 attendees. The \$20 entry fee covered drinks and food for the evening as well as \$10 in “funny money” for betting.

**Try This** → Make Sponsorship Everyone’s Job.

For AIDC, finding sponsors that cover the costs associated with A Night at the Races and raise funds isn’t the job of one or two committee members. Everyone on the committee is responsible for “making the ask” to a list of potential sponsors. Using this tactic, AIDC secured an astounding 45 sponsors for the 2016 event.

## Here are a few other tips for strengthening your sponsorship strategy:

- **Find new ways to recognize sponsors.** Including sponsor logos on marketing materials is a no-brainer, but AIDC took recognition a step further in 2016 with donor buttons that sponsors wore during the event—a great conversation starter that received a positive response from event attendees.
- **Think beyond traditional sponsorship packages.** Perks above and beyond logo recognition can be attractive to businesses looking for opportunities to connect with potential clients in a meaningful way. In 2016, AIDC offered three \$2,000 Diamond Sponsorship opportunities to manufacturers reps. This level of sponsorship included an AIDC-hosted private networking event for the company. AIDC spent up to \$350 on each private event and committed to securing at least 15 senior-level design industry leaders to be in attendance.
- **Keep out-of-pocket costs low with sponsorship.** To maximize profit, AIDC used every event item as an opportunity for sponsorship, including food, alcohol, marketing, printing, decorations, auction items, and funny money.

## The Bottom Line

In 2016, A Night at the Races raised \$18,250.00. Event expenses totaled \$2,000, for a profit of \$16,250.

## CASE STUDY: IIDC OFFICE SPACE ON THE EDGE

### Illinois Interior Design Coalition

Now in its sixth year, IIDC Office Space on the Edge provides firms, vendors, and consultants an opportunity to highlight a cutting-edge design project to the design community. The event, presented by the Illinois Interior Design Coalition, is held at a design firm and the \$15 entry fee includes food, beverages, and networking. Stations are set up to showcase the design project, and vendors and consultants have a few minutes at each station to discuss the work they did for the space, allowing them to connect directly with designers. The cost of this opportunity? To participate, vendors must pay a sponsorship fee ranging from \$1,500 to \$2,500. This well-received and long-running event typically draws 50 to 150 people and is held one to three times a year depending on firm participation.

**Try This** → Make the Event a Win-Win-Win.

IIDC Office Space on the Edge gives sponsors what they want—a chance to connect with potential clients. For the attendees, learning about the vendors and consultants is central to the event, without feeling like an in-your-face sales pitch. And, the Illinois Interior Design Coalition is able to raise money from both vendor sponsorships and ticket sales.

## Here are a few other tips for maximizing event participation:

- **Use your committee's connections.** The members of your committee, coalition, association, and board are incredible resources, so make sure you are capitalizing on them. The Illinois Interior Design Coalition relies on its board members to recruit design firms to participate in the event and showcase current, cutting-edge projects.
- **Outsource event planning.** Once a design firm has agreed to host an IIDC Office Space on the Edge event, the firm is in charge of organizing it, coordinating with their vendors and consultants, and determining the project they want to highlight. The coalition ensures that the work is being done and provides guidance as needed, but does not have to manage all aspects of the planning.
- **Stick with what you know and make it better.** Sometimes, committees want to plan a new event for the sake of planning a new event. But, if you have a long-running, successful event, there may not be a reason to reinvent the wheel. Better yet, solicit attendee and sponsor feedback and work to make each subsequent event better than the last.

## The Bottom Line

Expenses for Office Space on the Edge typically run \$2,500. Depending on the size of the firm and project, the funds raised can vary from about \$3,000 to \$15,000.

## CASE STUDY: PURE SCAVENGER

# Interior Design Legislative Coalition in Pennsylvania

PURE Scavenger isn't your average networking event. After brainstorming new fundraising ideas, the Interior Design Legislative Coalition in Pennsylvania (IDLCPA) attracted attendees and sponsors with a unique event featuring a little bit of friendly competition. At PURE Scavenger, teams of four decipher clues and take selfies in front of landmarks. In 2015, more than 20 companies sponsored scavenger hunt teams at two different sponsorship levels, and people could buy individual tickets at the door. The higher level of sponsorship (\$250 at the 2015 event; \$300 at the 2016 event) included the company logo on the invitation, a large logo on the event t-shirt, a team of four to participate in the event, and t-shirts for the team. The lower level of sponsorship (\$150 in 2015; \$250 in 2016) included a small logo on the t-shirt, a team of four, and t-shirts for the team.

**Try This** → Think Beyond a Networking Happy Hour.

Don't be afraid to try something different. IDLCPA decided to think outside the box with its first-ever PURE Scavenger, which drew more than 100 attendees and 23 sponsors. Don't underestimate the power of breaking away from the norm.

## Here are other ways to plan a new and different event:

- **Apply lessons learned.** The first Pure Scavenger in 2015 wasn't without a few bumps. The planning committee learned that in order to maximize the funds raised, it's important to find ways to minimize the expenses associated with running an event. The 2016 PURE Scavenger cut costs by hosting the event for free at a local showroom instead of a private room at a restaurant.
- **Make sponsorship recognition live on after the event.** Sponsors love logo recognition on signage and programs, but consider providing attendees with a more permanent giveaway. For PURE Scavenger, t-shirts were the obvious choice. Two levels of sponsorship determined how prominent the company was featured on the official event t-shirt.

## The Bottom Line

The 2015 Pure Scavenger had costs totaling \$5,100, while total profit was \$670. The coalition has set a goal to raise \$3,000 in 2016.



## CASE STUDY: IIDA/IDEAL ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

### IIDA Intermountain Chapter and IDEAL-Utah

For three years, the IIDA Intermountain Chapter and IDEAL-Utah have hosted a successful golf tournament the Thursday after Memorial Day that benefits IDEAL-Utah. Held at Thanksgiving Point Golf Course, a local champion golf course where PGA tournaments have been played, the course itself is a big draw for serious golfers, but the organizers make sure the event is fun for those who are less committed to the game. Event organizers award prizes for the best score, the worst score, and the best dressed team, along with a “closest to the pin” on a par 3 and a “longest drive” on a par 5. Once play ends, everyone gathers at the clubhouse for appetizers, drinks, scoring, and prizes.

**Try This** → Make the Event for Sponsors.

The IIDA Intermountain Chapter and IDEAL-Utah structure their golf tournament so that individual tickets are not sold. Only sponsors or those invited by a sponsor can participate. This gives the tournament an air of exclusivity and also makes it a great opportunity for sponsors to entertain potential clients.

## Here are other ways to maximize your sponsor participation:

- **Use sponsorship to cover giveaways, prizes, and more.** The golf tournament sponsorships include team sponsors (\$500) with a maximum of 18 spots available; hole sponsors (\$1,250) with a maximum of 9 spots available (hole sponsorship includes a team); a golf ball sponsor (\$250, plus they provide the balls); a water bottle sponsor (\$250, plus they provide the water bottles); and prize sponsors (\$250).
- **Have fun with sponsorship.** In addition to providing several levels of sponsorship, the committee also works with sponsors to ensure they are able to make the most of their investment. In the past, sponsors have gotten creative—one put a dunk tank on the tee box of their hole; others have had photo booths and games to win prizes, like hitting giant marshmallows or putting across carpet tile.
- **Make event sponsorship opportunities known.** The IIDA Intermountain Chapter and IDEAL-Utah gather sponsors through a sponsorship drive in they hold in January. Add event sponsorship to your general sponsorship materials and make sure that businesses know that these opportunities are available.

## The Bottom Line

In 2016, the event cost approximately \$4,000 and raised \$8,000 for a profit of \$4,000.

## CASE STUDY: CULTIVATE

### Texas Oklahoma Chapter

Held in April 2016, the first-ever, garden-themed Cultivate celebrated a growing interior design community and culture. Appropriately, the Texas Oklahoma Chapter chose to host the event at the Ed Lyman Conservatory at Will Rogers Gardens in Oklahoma City, which not only worked with the theme of the event, but also was a lower-cost venue. Cultivate sold more than 100 tickets and garnered 21 sponsors, which allowed the Chapter to maximize profits and minimize costs associated with the event.

**Try This** → Tie the Event Theme to Your Organization's Mission.

Cultivate's garden theme embodied a message of growing community and culture that spoke directly to interior designers and IIDA Members. Organizers then took the garden theme to the next level by paying attention to the details, including choosing to hold the event at a conservatory, an event location that was fresh, unique, and on-theme.

## Here are additional ideas that will make your event stand out:

- **Know when it's time to refresh old events.** The Texas Oklahoma Chapter decided it was time for a change when organizers noted that attendance at a previously held event was decreasing. Cultivate offered the interior design community something new—and proved successful because of it.
- **Make attending a benefit of membership.** Tickets to Cultivate were sold for \$40 to IIDA Members and \$50 to non-members. While it's a small difference, it's never a bad idea to make members feel like they are receiving something special.
- **Look for unexpected ways to cover costs and raise funds.** Sometimes costs can be mitigated with a little creative thinking. Texas Oklahoma purchased cost-effective succulents and terrariums for centerpieces, and then was able to sell them at a profit following the event.
- **Offer different levels of sponsorships.** More than 20 businesses sponsored Cultivate, in part because the Texas Oklahoma Chapter provided a variety of sponsorship levels. Not every business can be a platinum sponsor of an event, so consider putting together sponsorship levels for multiple price points in order to encourage participation. And remember: This year's gold sponsor may be next year's platinum sponsor.

## The Bottom Line

The Texas Oklahoma Chapter spent \$11,771.21 to host Cultivate, and made \$15,922.09, for a total profit of more than \$4,000.

## INTERIOR DESIGNERS FOR LEGISLATION IN NEW YORK PRESENT AN EVENING AT THE INTREPID

### Interior Designers for Legislation in New York

Going big takes a lot of time and effort, but it can pay off in a big way. Interior Designers for Legislation in New York (IDLNY) host a biennial gala event that was most recently held at the Intrepid Sea, Air, and Space Museum in June 2016. An Evening at the Intrepid drew nearly 300 attendees including design industry leaders and featured speakers Senator Tony Avella and Representative Danny O'Donnell, who sponsored interior design legislation in the 2015/2016 session. The 2016 event surpassed fundraising goals through ticket sales, industry sponsorships, and a silent auction.

**Try This** → Limit Sponsorship Opportunities.

While it may seem counterintuitive, limiting sponsorship opportunities can mean more visibility for sponsors, which means creating demand that can drive up the cost of sponsorship. IDLNY only offered 10 sponsorship opportunities for a Night at the Intrepid and was still able to exceed fundraising expectations.

### Here are a few other ways to go big with your fundraising event:

- **Give yourself plenty of time to plan.** Planning a gala that makes a splash takes a lot more time and effort than planning a networking happy hour. A Night at the Intrepid required more than 200 hours of planning that began 18 months prior to the event, so be realistic about the resources (time, effort, and money) you'll need for a big event.
- **Highlight advocacy at the event.** A Night at the Intrepid let interior design legislation and advocacy be front and center with the inclusion of speakers Senator Tony Avella and Representative Danny O'Donnell. Their participation lent credibility to the cause and the event and provided an opportunity for IDLNY to get their message to a large group of current and potential supporters.
- **Add a lower level of sponsorship.** While IDLNY keeps sponsorship opportunities limited, they did find that adding a second tier of sponsorship, costing \$3,000, was very successful and allowed them to increase funding for the event.

### The Bottom Line

IDLNY spent \$35,007.78 on A Night at the Intrepid, and had a final profit of \$20,402.

# EVENT PLANNING

## Guidelines and Tips

Feeling inspired to start planning your next fundraising event? Whether it's your first fundraiser or your fifteenth, use these helpful tips and reminders as you begin the planning process.

### 1. DEVELOP GOALS.

- What is the primary purpose of the event? Is it to raise funds? Is it to present advocacy goals and successes to as many people as possible?

### 2. ESTABLISH AN EVENT COMMITTEE, IF ONE DOESN'T YET EXIST.

- Event planning and fundraising are not jobs for one person. Bring in people who have the right skills and/or connections. The committee chair should delegate tasks as needed.

### 3. SET A DATE.

- Select a date that accommodates as many chapter or coalition members as possible and doesn't overlap with other chapter events.
- Give yourselves enough time to plan—usually at least four to six months. Save the date with your likely attendees well in advance of the event.

### 4. BRAINSTORM.

- The event committee should brainstorm themes, event type, tagline, logo, etc.

### 5. PRODUCE A MASTER PLAN.

- Include venue agreements, logistics planning, catering agreements and menus, entertainment, sponsor management, volunteer management, and a marketing plan.

### 6. FIND SPONSORS AND CREATE A FINANCIAL PLAN.

- How will the event make money? Will it be primarily sponsorship, ticket sales, or an auction? How else can you raise funds?

### 7. CRAFT THE MARKETING AND OUTREACH PLAN.

- If it's a coalition event, reach out the VP of Communications for partner organizations.

### 8. GENERATE A BUDGET.

- For fundraising events, it's important to keep costs as low as possible. Generate a budget and find places to trim, as necessary.

### 9. EVALUATE YOUR EVENT.

- Create a plan to evaluate success and areas for improvement.
- Ask for feedback from both attendees and sponsors with a post-event survey.

### 10. REASSESS YOUR FUNDRAISING EVENT STRATEGY.

- Once you've planned, executed, and evaluated your event, take some time to reassess your fundraising event strategy. What tweaks will make your event more successful? Should you be charging more for tickets or sponsorship? Or, is it time to try something new?

# NOTES

