Murray State University

Student Organization Fundraising Guide 2026

University Advancement and the Office of Development in partnership with the Murray State University Foundation, Inc.

MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY
Office of Development

Office of Development
270-809-3001
msu.giving@murraystate.edu
200 Heritage Hall
Murray, KY 42071

Welcome

Student organizations raise money for many reasons — travel, competitions, programs, events, service projects and student experiences.

Most fundraisers are simple and **do not require help from the Murray State University Office of Development**. This guide explains what you can do on your own, when you need additional approval, and how to handle money responsibly.

How to Use This Guide

This guide offers best practices to help student organizations plan successful fundraisers, manage funds responsibly and know when to seek assistance. It is intended as a resource, not a set of additional requirements.

Some activities may be subject to University policies, financial procedures, event approvals or applicable laws. When this guide identifies a required step, it refers to those applicable requirements. Other recommendations are best practices intended to help your organization protect its funds, build supporter relationships and plan for success.

When you have questions, start with your faculty or staff advisor. They can help you determine whether a University policy or approval applies and whether additional guidance from the Office of Development is appropriate.

The basic rules

Plan ahead. Follow University policies. Handle money carefully. Be honest about where the money goes. Thank your supporters.

1. What Kind of Fundraiser Are You Planning?

Most student organization fundraising falls into one of these categories:

You can usually do these on your own:

- Sell food or merchandise
- Charge admission or registration fees
- Hold an event
- Ask friends and family for support
- Raise money for travel or competitions
- Offer a service, such as yard work or tutoring
- Run a peer-to-peer or social media campaign

- Seek small support from your hometown community or local and regional businesses and organizations where your members have a personal connection.

You should still follow your organization's rules, work with your advisor and get any required University event approvals.

Stop and check before you move forward if you plan to:

- Ask **Murray State alumni** for charitable gifts to Murray State
- Tell someone their payment is **tax-deductible**
- Use the **Murray State University Foundation** to receive a charitable gift
- Establish an **endowment**
- Work with someone who wants to make a **large or significant gift**
- Ask a business or organization with a widely known existing Murray State relationship for support

These situations may involve the Murray State University Office of Development or the Murray State University Foundation.

When in doubt, check with your advisor first.

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2. Fundraising Revenue vs. Charitable Gifts

This is one of the most important things to understand.

Fundraising revenue

Money received when someone gets something in return is generally **fundraising revenue**, not a charitable gift.

Examples:

- Buying a T-shirt
- Paying for a meal
- Buying an event ticket
- Paying registration or membership fees
- Buying a raffle ticket
- Paying travel costs
- Paying for a service
- Paying a business for sponsorship benefits such as advertising

Charitable gifts

A charitable gift is a voluntary donation made to support Murray State University without receiving something of equal value in return.

Examples may include:

- A donation
- A gift through the Murray State University Foundation
- Stocks or securities
- A planned or estate gift
- An employer matching gift

Remember

Do not tell someone that a payment is tax-deductible unless it has been confirmed as a charitable gift through the proper University process.

Student organizations should **never issue charitable gift receipts or promise a tax deduction.**

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3. Fundraising From Friends and Family

Your friends and family can be great supporters.

You may:

- Ask family members to support a trip or competition
- Hold a parent fundraising campaign
- Ask organization members to contribute
- Run a social media fundraising challenge
- Ask friends and family to support an event or project

Be clear about what the money will support.

If the money is going directly to your student organization, **do not describe it as a charitable gift to Murray State University.**

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4. Business Support, Advertising and Sponsorships

Nearby enterprises and local groups often serve as helpful allies for campus fundraising efforts. Depending on your planned initiative, assistance might involve purchasing ad space, sponsoring events, acquiring items, or contributing monetary aid. Please remember that the local Murray and Calloway County businesses and organizations are asked for support from many different groups - so personal relationships matter when considering asking for support.

Your group is welcome to reach out to commercial entities in Murray and Calloway County regarding potential sponsorship or advertising arrangements but we strongly

advise checking in with your advisor beforehand, particularly when seeking sponsorships or contacting partners with well-known and long-standing University ties.

Sponsorships offering promotional exposure or tangible perks in exchange for financial support count as **fundraising revenue**, not charitable contributions. Always maintain complete transparency regarding deliverables and intended fund allocation.

When a corporate entity desires a tax-deductible receipt, intends to make a charitable gift to Murray State, or expresses interest in substantial financial contributions, please reach out to Development for support.

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5. Social Media Fundraising

Social media can be a great way to reach friends, family and supporters.

When promoting your fundraiser:

- Clearly explain what you are raising money for.
- Be honest about how the money will be used.
- Say who is receiving the money.
- Do not promise tax deductions.
- Do not describe personal fundraising as a charitable gift to Murray State.
- Use approved payment methods.

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6. Handling Money

Your organization is responsible for protecting the money it raises.

Recommended Best Practices:

- Have **at least two people** count cash.
- Keep money secure during the event.
- Keep organization money separate from personal money.
- Keep receipts and records.
- Deposit money promptly into the appropriate organization account.
- Never keep organization money in your residence, vehicle or personal bank account.

Avoid These Practices:

- Put organization money in your personal account.
- Mix personal and organization money.
- Borrow organization funds.

- Use organization money to cash a personal check.
- Leave cash unattended.

If money is missing or the records do not match, tell your advisor right away. Do not try to hide the problem or replace the money yourself.

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7. Digital Payments and Crowdfunding Tools

Campus groups often explore electronic payment solutions or crowdfunding sites when organizing campaign drives. Any service selected must align with University financial guidelines and secure proper authorization before collecting funds.

A personal payment account belongs to an individual for private use rather than official group transactions. Members must **never collect group funds using personal Venmo, Cash App, PayPal, or Zelle** profiles unless explicit institutional policy allows it.

Third-party platforms and group accounts—such as Givebutter or CrowdChange—require prior review with your advisor and the designated campus department. Approvals evaluate money routing, recordkeeping, transfer fees, and whether contributions are framed as tax-deductible donations.

While physical currency and checks are common, other approved methods exist. Always select a setup that tracks transactions reliably and deposits money straight into your group account.

Best practice: Verify and clear your collection system before promoting the drive or accepting contributions.

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8. Raffles and Games of Chance

Murray State University and the Murray State University Foundation do not hold a gaming license. Raffles are not permitted as part of the University.

Do not sell raffle tickets, conduct a 50/50 drawing or advertise a similar game of chance without first checking University requirements.

A raffle generally involves:

1. Paying to enter
2. A winner selected by chance

3. A prize

Kentucky charitable gaming laws may apply to these activities.

Safer alternatives

Consider:

- Merchandise sales
- Food fundraisers
- Service projects
- Donation drives
- Peer-to-peer fundraising
- Event admission fees
- Skill-based competitions

Never call a raffle ticket a tax-deductible donation.

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9. Working With Alumni

Alumni can be wonderful allies for campus initiatives. Your organization is welcome to invite former students to group events, send regular updates, sell tickets or merchandise to them, or invite their participation in your fundraising campaigns.

The key distinction is how funds are requested and processed:

- **Fundraising revenue:** When alumni buy event passes, purchase items, or provide money deposited directly into your approved group account, follow standard campus financial procedures.

- **Charitable gifts:** When requesting tax-deductible contributions or directing gifts to Murray State University or the Murray State University Foundation, reach out to Development for support before soliciting.

When in doubt about framing a request, check with your advisor first. This helps protect valuable donor relationships and ensures money is handled responsibly.

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10. What Makes a Good Fundraiser?

A successful fundraiser is more than the amount of money raised.

A good fundraiser:

- Has a clear purpose.
- Has a realistic goal.
- Follows University rules.
- Protects organization funds.
- Gives supporters accurate information.
- Thanks the people who helped.
- Supports your organization's mission.

Plan well. Communicate clearly. Handle money responsibly. Thank your supporters.

Quick Guide: Do I Need to Contact the Office of Development?

Use this simple guide before you begin.

🟢 **GO AHEAD**

You can usually move forward with your advisor and normal University approvals when you are:

- Selling food
- Selling merchandise
- Charging event admission
- Charging registration fees
- Holding a service fundraiser
- Asking friends and family for support
- Raising money for travel or competition
- Running a peer-to-peer campaign
- Seeking small support from your hometown community or Murray/Calloway County businesses and organizations who are not widely known to already sponsor or make significant gifts to the University.

🟡 **STOP AND CHECK**

Check with your advisor or the appropriate University office before:

- Seeking a significant business sponsorship
- Planning a raffle or game of chance
- Using a new or unusual payment method
- You are unsure about University requirements

🔴 WHEN TO CONTACT THE OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENT

Your fundraiser involves **charitable gifts to Murray State, the Murray State University Foundation, Inc., or when a potential donor is interested in making a significant gift or establishing an endowment fund.**

The Office of Development is the only authorized entity to issue donor receipts on behalf of Murray State University.

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Who Should You Talk To?

Start with your advisor

Your faculty or staff advisor should be your **first stop** for most fundraising questions, including:

- Whether your fundraiser is allowed
- Event approvals
- How to handle organization funds
- Where money should be deposited
- University procedures

Remember

Plan. Protect. Thank.

Plan your fundraiser and follow University rules.
Protect your organization and its money.
Thank the people who support your work.

How to Use This Checklist

Designed as an advisory guide, this practical resource assists campus groups with organizing effective fundraising campaigns. It outlines standard best practices and is purely intended for internal planning, so submission to Development is unnecessary.

Adapt these steps to fit your initiative's specific needs. All student organizations remain responsible for adhering to relevant institutional policies, cash-handling procedures, and event permissions. Reach out to your advisor or the responsible campus entity whenever you need additional guidance or mandatory approvals.

Student Organization Fundraising Event Planning Checklist

A Step-by-Step Guide for Successful Fundraising

Fundraising success begins with good planning. Use this checklist to organize your event, assign responsibilities, protect your organization, and create a positive experience for your supporters.

Organization Name: _____

Fundraiser/Event Name: _____

Event Date: _____

Fundraising Goal: $_____

Primary Contact: _____

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Define Your Purpose

☐ **Why are we fundraising?**

☐ **What will funds support?**

☐ **Who will benefit from this fundraiser?**

☐ **What is our fundraising goal?**

☐ **Have we created a basic budget?**

Choose Your Fundraiser

☐ **Select an activity that fits your organization and audience.***

Examples:

☐ **Food fundraiser**

☐ **Merchandise sale**

☐ **Service project**

☐ **Campus event**

☐ **Community fundraiser**

☐ **Travel fundraiser**

☐ **Peer-to-peer fundraising**

☐ **Sponsorship opportunity**

☐ **Other: _____**

Consider:

☐ **Cost to operate**

☐ **Time required**

☐ **Number of volunteers needed**

☐ **Potential risks**

☐ **Expected revenue**

***Note: Consider unique local options such as working with Calloway County for trash pick-up or volunteering with the VFW Bingo Nights!**

CHECK BEFORE YOU START

Do We Need to Contact the Office of Development?

Contact the Office of Development before fundraising if you plan to:

☐ **Ask alumni, corporations or foundations to make a significant gift to Murray State University.**

☐ **Tell donors their contribution is tax-deductible.**

☐ **Establish a scholarship, endowment, or permanent fund.**

☐ **Use the Murray State University Foundation, Inc. to receive charitable gifts.**

Remember: The Office of Development is the only entity authorized to accept, process, and acknowledge charitable gifts made on behalf of Murray State University.

PLAN YOUR EVENT

Create a Timeline

☐ **Select event date and location.**

☐ **Reserve space.**

☐ **Identify required approvals.**

☐ **Order supplies.**

☐ **Recruit volunteers.**

☐ **Create marketing materials.**

☐ **Set deadlines for each task.**

Build Your Team

Assign responsibilities:

☐ **Event Chair**

Name: _____

☐ **Finance/Cash Handling Lead**

Name: _____

☐ **Marketing Lead**

Name: _____

☐ **Volunteer Coordinator**

Name: _____

☐ **Setup/Cleanup Coordinator**

Name: _____

☐ **Advisor Contact**

Name: _____

CREATE YOUR BUDGET

Expected Income

☐ **Ticket sales**

☐ **Registration fees**

☐ **Merchandise sales**

☐ **Sponsorships**

☐ **Donations**

☐ **Other income**

Estimated Revenue: $_____

Expected Expenses

☐ **Supplies**

☐ **Food**

☐ **Venue costs**

☐ **Equipment**

☐ **Marketing**

☐ **Prizes**

☐ **Other expenses**

Estimated Expenses: $_____

Expected Profit

Income: $_____

Expenses: $_____

Goal: $_____

PROMOTE YOUR FUNDRAISER

☐ **Create promotional materials.**

☐ **Include event details:**

☐ **Date**

☐ **Time**

☐ **Location**

☐ **Cost**

☐ **Purpose of fundraiser**

☐ **Contact information**

☐ **Follow Murray State branding guidelines.**

☐ **Be accurate about how funds will be used.**

☐ **Thank supporters throughout the process.**

MANAGE MONEY RESPONSIBLY

Before the event:

☐ **Create a plan for collecting funds.**

☐ **Assign at least two people to handle money.**

☐ **Prepare cash handling procedures.**

☐ **Determine deposit procedures.**

During the event:

☐ **Keep funds secure.**

☐ **Do not mix organization money with personal funds.**

☐ **Track sales and payments.**

☐ **Keep receipts.**

After the event:

☐ **Count funds with two people present.**

☐ **Complete deposits promptly.**

☐ **Save financial records.**

☐ **Document final results.**

AFTER THE EVENT

☐ **Complete cleanup.**

☐ **Thank volunteers.**

☐ **Thank sponsors and supporters.**

☐ **Review income and expenses.**

☐ **Document what worked well.**

☐ **Make recommendations for future leaders.**

☐ **Share results with organization members.**

FUNDRAISING SUCCESS CHECK

Before launching your fundraiser:

☐ **We know our purpose.**

☐ **We have a clear goal.**

☐ **We understand our responsibilities.**

☐ **We know how money will be handled.**

☐ **We understand when to involve University Advancement.**

☐ **We are prepared to thank those who support us.**

Responsible fundraising builds trust, strengthens your organization, and creates opportunities for future Racers.