



NATIONAL YOUTH
LEADERSHIP FORUM

**STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS:
A GUIDE TO COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING**

National Youth Leadership Forum

Dear Nominee:

Congratulations on your nomination to attend one of the career programs of the National Youth Leadership Forum (NYLF). I look forward to welcoming you!

While I recognize that the challenge of raising the funds you will need in order to participate can be quite daunting, I urge you to tackle this task using the same determination and leadership abilities that have brought you so much academic success and earned you the honor of being nominated to share this unique educational experience.

I am constantly amazed at the resourcefulness of the overwhelming majority of students who attend one of our forums by reaching out to family, friends and neighbors and using their creative talents to find the “hidden money” in their communities that made it possible for them to meet their tuition, travel and other expenses.

If you follow the guidelines and suggestions in this Student Fundraising Guide, begin early and dedicate the time, energy and effort necessary, I am confident you can meet your fundraising goals.

The years ahead are going to be filled with many challenges. This is one of your first. Remember, no task is too great if you want something enough.

I sincerely hope this Student Fundraising Guide helps you along the way. Good luck!

Sincerely,



Tonia Jacobson
Director of Admissions

INTRODUCTION

Now that you have been selected to take part in this extraordinary educational opportunity, it is time to meet the challenge of finding the funds needed to make your participation possible.

Each year a significant percentage of outstanding and accomplished student nominees like you take on the task of raising the funds they need to attend. It requires planning, hard work and creative thinking. Most importantly, it requires a determination to succeed!

As one of the leaders of tomorrow, you have already proven that you possess all of these skills. Therefore, this is a task you can accomplish, and you can actually have fun doing it! You will learn tremendously from the experience and will definitely be proud of the results.

Whether you choose to directly contact family members for assistance, seek sponsors from local businesses and organizations in your community, organize a fundraising event or come up with your own ideas, fundraising will help strengthen your presentation and organization skills, demonstrate your leadership potential and provide the chance for you to network with a wide variety of people. You will discover there are many people who are excited about helping you achieve your goals.

A major key to your fundraising success is understanding that there is money available for you. You just have to put together the right plan to access it.

As you begin your fundraising mission, we encourage you to plan ahead and consider all possibilities. Be assured that the Office of Admissions is ready to assist you in any way we can. We have a good deal of experience in this area and welcome your inquiries. If you need further information or guidance, contact the National Youth Leadership Forum directly or access our web site at www.nylf.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 TO ATTEND

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 Forum means meeting three costs:

- The forum tuition
- Transportation to and from the Forum
- Incidentals (souvenirs, gifts) and lunches

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

II. GETTING ORGANIZED

Once you have determined the amount that you will need, begin adding important dates to your calendar, such as the enrollment deadline and appointment times, as you begin to meet with potential sponsors and possible advisors and mentors. Be sure to inform the Office of Admissions that you will be fundraising. Remember, time is limited but with good planning and staying focused on your goals, you can be successful.

Keep these key fundraising tips in mind:

Plan ahead and start early.

Be polite and courteous.

Be direct in your approach. Don't hesitate to ask!

Reach out to as many people as possible.

Suggest a specific amount to each donor. Ask for amounts that are realistic—don't over-ask.

Tell people about the positive responses you have already received.

Be enthusiastic. Make your passion to attend the Forum come through.

Make it clear to all donors how much you are personally contributing to your goal (for example: working a part time job, tapping into funds from savings account, etc).

Make sure you can explain what the Forum is and how attending will add to your educational experience.

Stay organized.

Don't be afraid to ask because someone might say no.

Have fun!

It is also important to remember:

You're a born leader—you can do this!

It's okay to fail to get a contribution.

Don't do something that will upset your parents, school or friends.

Don't be too aggressive in making your request—a "soft approach" works best.

Don't try to sell something people don't really need or use.

Think through all costs.

Don't copy a recent fundraising project someone else in the community just completed.

Don't put all your hopes in one fundraising option—try different approaches.

You can't thank a donor too often.

Don't procrastinate or wait until the last minute!

III. SEEK OUT YOUR COMMUNITY

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 offer a quick index of local businesses.

Your most valuable resources are people active in community affairs, like your high school principal or the president of the PTA. They are knowledgeable and 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. 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 Forum and what you intend to gain from it. Be honest about what you want—represent your case openly and sincerely.

Seek out mentors or professionals who can point you toward the right individuals or businesses to solicit for your forum sponsorship. Choose individuals 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:

Hometown and Family

- Grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, neighbors and family friends
- Previous teachers, guidance counselors or principals
- Former employers
- Businesses of which you or your family have been customers
- Parents' or relatives' employers

School

- Academic departments
- Alumni associations
- Student clubs and organizations
- Work/Study programs
- Your current employer

Local Community

- | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| - Supermarkets | - Utility companies | - Newspapers |
| - Law firms | - Local American Legion Post | - Insurance companies |
| - Local Retail stores | - Local Chamber of Commerce | - Veterans of Foreign Wars Chapter |
| - Realty firms | - Religious organizations | - Kiwanis, Rotary or Lions Clubs |
| - Local Bank | - Women's clubs | - Car dealers |
| - Boards of Education | - Restaurants | - Medical offices |

Plan A: Reach Out to Your Family, Friends and Neighbors

One of the quickest ways to move toward your fundraising goal is to network with your extended family as well as friends and neighbors. There are countless people in your life that will be very receptive to helping you pursue your desire to attend the National Youth Leadership Forum. You can contact these individuals in person, via phone, Internet or by writing a personal letter. In every case, let your excitement about being accepted into this prestigious forum shine through and emphasize what a special honor it is to be nominated. Those who know you best will be most receptive to rewarding your educational success and helping you achieve your dreams. If you regularly receive a gift from certain individuals at your birthday or during the holidays, ask that they make an “early gift” this year to help you attend.

Plan B: Write Your Sponsorship Request

A well-crafted fundraising letter can be the start to exploring the many diverse avenues available to you when it comes to raising the funds you need. You may even discover that developing professional contacts through your fundraising efforts could lead to possible job or internship opportunities in the future.

If possible, go in person to drop off your letter. You might have the opportunity to speak directly with potential sponsors, so be prepared to talk to them and bring your nomination letter with you. The fundraising letter that you write and any informal or formal presentation you give should include the following information:

- Description of the Forum
- How you were nominated to attend
- Description of your career goals and how this experience will help you reach them
- Your recent achievements, extracurricular and community activities
- How much money you will need (Don't try to raise way more than your original goal—if you do, consider returning some funds to people who were especially generous.)

Give potential sponsors the information they need to make their decision. With your letter, include the following:

- Acceptance letter
- Breakdown of Forum costs included in tuition: *Transportation during the Forum, educational materials, event admissions, faculty, 2-3 meals a day, accommodations, taxes and gratuities.*
- 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.
- Names of other businesses and organizations you are contacting

In going to outside sources to fundraise, try your best to:

- Start as early as possible.
- First reach out to companies and organizations where you or your family have long standing ties or frequent regularly.
- Do your homework and target companies and organizations with a history of being supportive of community endeavors.
- Set sponsorship levels where they can chose the level on which they wish to support you (e.g., Bronze \$25; Silver \$50 or Gold \$100).
- Try to find the proper contact within the company or organization before you visit or write.
- Set time aside to do personal follow-ups to your letters.
- Be ready to speak positively about yourself and the Forum if you are asked to come to a meeting to make your case as to why a business or organization should fund your attendance.
- Work to get publicity for your efforts by contacting the community paper in your area.

- Make your request clear and concise so they understand exactly what you are seeking.
- If you will need to fly to the Forum location, focus on companies or individuals who acquire a lot of frequent flier miles and ask them to contribute those miles to you.
- Follow up your letters or visits with phone calls.
- Keep a list of everyone you contact to avoid duplication.
- Recognize what kind of approach works and what doesn't for future reference.
- Keep in touch with sponsors to keep them apprised of how you are doing in meeting your fundraising goal.
- Send "Thank You" notes to all individuals you touch base with— whether or not they contributed to your effort. They took the time to meet with you, read your letter or took some action to help you. They deserve an acknowledgment and thanks.

Also understand:

- Don't get discouraged. You are going to be turned down more than you will succeed.
- Don't promise something that you can't deliver in return for a contribution.

Potential sponsors may want to know how they will benefit from helping you. Inform sponsors that they will receive positive publicity when you include a reference to their sponsorship in your press release to the local media. Once you are enrolled in the Forum, you may obtain a press release from our web site. You might also offer to give a presentation or a slideshow about your experience upon your return.

Make it easy for sponsors to help you by requesting smaller donations. Most potential sponsors would rather give you a small donation than deny your request, and you'll be amazed by how quickly donations add up. Keep in mind that their sponsorship is not tax-deductible and should not be represented as a tax-deductible gift. Contributions made for a specific person do not qualify as tax-deductible according to the rules of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

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

Tips for Writing Successful Fundraising Letters:

Personalize your letter directly to the recipient and make your message relevant to him or her.

Keep your letter short, simple and direct.

Use positive language that lets your excitement come through.

Include a forum fact sheet with a short biography.

Ask for a specific amount of money or offer donor levels.

Include a response form and stamped envelope addressed to you, so the sponsor can easily return a check.

Keep strict track of all donations, regardless of how large or small.

Remember to send a thank you letter when you receive a contribution.

"I learned that there are a great number of people who are willing to monetarily assist someone for a great cause, especially if it is educational, career-oriented...Raising money is not difficult, it just needs to be done in an organized and timely manner." - Gabriela, CA.

SAMPLE FUNDRAISING LETTER

123 University Street
Bloomington, IN 47405

Date

Mr. Daniel Boone, President
World Design Company
456 Grant Street
Bloomington, IN 47406

Dear Mr. Boone:

I am a sophomore at Bloomington High School and have been nominated to represent my school and community as a member of the National Youth Leadership Forum on (Forum) in (City).

The Forum nominates exceptional students from around the country to attend an experiential educational 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 news.

Attending this program will enable me to further my interest in the field of _____ and reach my career goals of becoming a _____. I maintain a _____ GPA, am involved in _____ activity and was recently awarded _____.

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

My participation in the Forum on _____ depends on whether I can raise \$_____ in sponsorships. (The Forum tuition is \$_____ and my travel to the Forum will be \$_____.) I am investing every dollar I can of my own money to make sure I don't miss out on this once-in-a-lifetime experience and am also taking on extra jobs to raise the funds I need. In addition, through my family, friends and neighbors, I have already raised \$_____.

That leaves me with a balance of \$_____, and I am hoping that the World Design Company will consider assisting me with all or some 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 Forum to answer your questions and help you make your decision. Please contact me at xxx-xxx-xxxx or you may contact the Forum on _____ directly at xxx-xxx-xxxx for any further information.

Sincerely,

Mary Williams

SAMPLE RESPONSE FORM

HELP MARY WILLIAMS ATTEND THE
NATIONAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM

CONTRIBUTION FORM

From: Mr. Daniel Boone
World Design Company

YES! I am pleased to help you attend the National Youth Leadership Forum and share in this educational opportunity. To ensure your success in meeting your fundraising goal, I am pleased to enclose my contribution of:

\$ _____.

Please make check payable to:
National Youth Leadership Forum

Please return your contribution along with this form in the enclosed envelope.

Thank you very much.

Mary Williams * 123 University Street * Bloomington, IN 47405

Press Release

Make sure to tell the individuals considering your request that the National Youth Leadership Forum will provide you with a press release that you will distribute to local newspapers. Our Office of Admissions is also willing to work with sponsors on additional public relations efforts.

Forwarding Contributions to the Forum

When you are asked by sponsors to whom they should write sponsorship checks, tell the sponsor that they may make their check payable to the National Youth Leadership Forum. You should send to the Office of Admissions any checks that you have received that are made payable to the Forum. Make sure that you include your name on each check along with a note that specifies your name, Student ID, address and telephone number.

If you have already submitted your Enrollment Application and full tuition payment and are enrolled in the Forum, we will be happy to reimburse you for any fundraising checks you receive. Please note that it may take up to six weeks for your fundraising check to be deposited and a reimbursement sent to you.

Send a Thank You Letter

Send letters to the individuals whom you meet with and speak to over the telephone. Thank them for their time and consideration. 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 Forum 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, so, include the names of your sponsors in your letter as it may further encourage additional support.

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

SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER

123 University Street Bloomington, IN 47405
Date
Mr. Daniel Boone World Design Company 456 Grant Street Bloomington, IN 47406
Dear Mr. Boone,
I would like to thank you for your generous support in sponsoring me and making it possible for me to attend the National Youth Leadership Forum on _____ . Upon my return, I would be honored to give your organization a presentation on what I learned from this tremendous educational experience.
Thank you again for what I am sure will be a life-changing experience for me.
Sincerely,
Mary Williams

Plan C: Organizing a Fundraising Event

Planning and executing a fundraising event can be a great way to raise money quickly, meet new people and have fun at the same time. The important thing to remember is that it should be well planned and highly publicized. For ideas, research the Internet and ask school organizations about their successful fundraising activities and events. You might consider some of the following ideas:

Fundraising Event Ideas

- Set up a collection box with information on the Forum and your career goals.
- Do a sponsored activity: Walk, run or swim for donations per mile completed.
- Provide a service: house cleaning, car washing, dog sitting, etc.
- Have a raffle.
- Sell a skill or something you do for a hobby: artwork, catering a special meal, servicing computers, etc.
- Sell things on eBay or have a garage sale.
- Host a fundraising party.
- Pick up extra part-time work.
- Be creative!

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

- Discuss your ideas with a mentor, guidance counselor, teacher or someone who can offer you advice.
- Get necessary authorization/permission if you are holding an event at school or in a public location.
- Recruit help.
- 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 program, how you will benefit from attending, etc.
- Gather the materials and resources that you will need.

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 11.

"I met hundreds of people in my community. Many in the city now know who I am. They have seen me in the newspaper, at their door, or in front of them speaking at special events. My friends call me the future president, and the Senior Class nominated me to be the most successful person of our class of '04 in the future." – Ryan, MN.

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

When you return home from the Forum, make sure to thank all sponsors again for their generosity. Your sponsors, classmates and school officials will be very interested in your activities at the Forum, and sharing the knowledge you gained will allow others to benefit from your experience as well.

From the notes you have taken at the Forum, create a day-by-day record of what happened, who spoke and what was said.

Bring a camera with you to the Forum and take snapshots of some of the people and the area. 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.

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 in coming years.

Best of luck in meeting your fundraising challenge!