

TU Guide to Chapter and Council Fundraising

Identifying the elements and processes that make a chapter financially stable and charting a clear course for implementation is the first step. A strategic approach to funding is critical to sustainability.

There are three sources of funding for all the nonprofits in the United States: earned income (such as products and fees for service), government (public sector), and the private sector, which includes foundations, corporations and individuals. For the nearly 60 years that records about who gives money away have been kept, at least 80% of this money has been shown to be given by individuals.

One of the best ways to outline a strategic fundraising plan is to work backwards: if the rest of your strategic plan will cost \$x over five years, determine what it's going to take to get there. And, then diversify your revenue generating tactics. Some common tactics for funding a chapter or council are detailed below.

Earned Income

Many chapters and councils have seen fundraising success with their efforts earning income in different capacities. Some, for example, have raised significant revenue through the sales of license plates through their state DMVs. Others ideas include selling advertisement in a printed or digital newsletters, the sales of t-shirts and hats.

There are additional, separate requirements for reporting "unrelated business income." If a nonprofit's gross proceeds from unrelated business income exceed \$1,000, that income must be reported to the IRS using Form 990T. If your chapter or council conducts a revenue-generating business, and the gross revenue from that business exceeds \$1,000, you should consult with your chapter's accountant regarding whether that revenue constitutes unrelated business income.

Embrace A Stream

Does your chapter or council have a conservation or education project that needs funding? Did you know that each year, TU provides more than \$100,000 in grants to local chapter/ council projects through its [Embrace A Stream](#) (EAS) program? Nearly two-dozen projects are chosen each year, ranging from efforts to replant a streambank to work to build in-stream habitat for trout or activities to educate and engage youth in our mission. Since 1975, EAS has funded more than 1,000 projects totaling more than \$4.4 million in direct cash grants. Local TU chapters and councils contributed an additional \$13 million in cash and in-kind services to EAS funded projects, for a total investment of more than \$17 million! Your chapter or council's next conservation or education project could get a big boost from an EAS grant. Even if you have never applied for a grant before, you shouldn't be intimidated by the process – our staff and volunteer committee are available to you as resources to call on for support, guidance and help in crafting your grant proposal. For more information on the EAS program, visit www.tu.org/eas.

Foundation Grants

Applying for corporate, foundation, and government grants requires developing a good project and budget; identifying funders whose missions are consistent with your project; and preparing a grant application. Most foundations can provide you with written materials describing their philanthropic mission, grant making history, and grant application criteria and procedures. It is essential to review this information and, in many cases, submit a letter of inquiry to determine if

your project is a good fit with the funder's priorities. It is generally not a good idea to submit a formal grant proposal without contacting the funder beforehand. If you are targeting any national funders, please first contact [volunteer operations staff](#) in order to avoid duplicate or competing grant requests.

Corporations

Local organizations and businesses often support TU projects and activities that take place in their communities. Chapters might try approaching banks, civic organizations like the Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs, teacher's associations, and fly shops. When researching large national companies, identify those that have operating divisions in your community and approach the local divisions. Many organizations also will provide donations of goods and services including equipment for stream restoration projects, paper and printing for chapter newsletters, computer equipment, technical and legal expertise, and advertising. When approaching local organizations, emphasize the broader benefits of your project, including, greater public involvement, outreach to school children, and economic benefits. Chapters and councils might also propose ways for involving employees and members of community organizations in the project.

Grassroots Guidelines for Federal-Level Grant Proposals

TU has 380 chapters and 36 councils, and we are always expanding our influence into new watersheds. Because of this, we need to be mindful in our coordination efforts, particularly when it comes to fundraising at the federal level. For example, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has requested that all grant proposals from TU's chapters and councils be coordinated through local, regional and national TU staff. For chapters and councils that are developing larger projects and considering applying for grants from NFWF or other federal programs, coordinating with TU staff is also a great way to improve the strength of your application and increase your chance of getting the grant. By working together, we have the opportunity to significantly increase the number and size of grants received by TU at all levels. For more information about NFWF and why these grants require coordination, please see [the "Grassroots Guidelines for NFWF Grant Proposals"](#) in the online Tacklebox, under ["Fundraising for Chapters and Councils"](#) or contact [volunteer operations staff](#).

Individuals

While there are some people (*may their kind increase*) who will simply send an organization money or offer money without being asked, there are not enough of them to build a donor base around. Most people will not think to give you money unless you make your chapter or council needs known. This is not because they are cheap or self-centered; it is because most people have no idea how much it costs to run a chapter or council, or how your chapter or council gets money. If you do not ask them, they will simply assume you are getting the money somewhere.

If your chapter or council is doing good work, then you deserve to raise the money to do it. What you must do is figure out how to articulate what you are doing so that the person hearing it, if they share your values, will want to exchange their money for your chapter or council's work.

Of course, no one is obligated to support your chapter or council, so from time to time you should expect to hear "no." First, be clear that the person is saying, "no," and not something else like, "Not now," or "I don't like special events." Once you are certain that the person has said no, accept it. Go on to your next prospect. If appropriate, write the person a letter and thank them for the attention they gave to your request. Then let it go. If you don't hear "no" several times a year, you are probably not asking enough people.

Once you receive money, you must thank the person who gave it to you. Thank-you notes do not need to be fancy and should not be long. If at all possible, they should include a personal note, even if it is from someone who doesn't know the donor. You can add something as simple as, "Hope to meet you sometime at a chapter event or on the stream," or "Check out our website," or even, "Thanks again — your gift (or membership) really helps." Many chapters and councils have created note cards for staff and volunteers to use when writing "thank yous." The front of the card has the TU logo, on the top half of the inside is the mission, and the bottom half of the inside is used for the thank-you message. It is a small space, so you really cannot say much.

Remember you can use the membership changes report in the Leaders Only Tools section to pull reports on new and renewing members of your chapter. If you do not have time to thank donors, you do not have time to have donors.

While thanking all donors is a best practice, written acknowledgment is required by the IRS to substantiate a charitable contribution of \$250 or more. For more information on IRS requirements in acknowledgment letters, see [our sample donor letter](#) and visit [the IRS website](#).

Events

The purpose of a TU event or banquet:

- Conservation Fundraising: To raise money for local, state and/or national TU programs which help conserve, protect and restore coldwater fisheries and their watersheds.
- Entertainment: To develop an event that will be enjoyed by all in attendance -- anglers, non-anglers, male and female, young and old.
- Public Relations: To promote TU's image within our local communities as a serious, capable, action-oriented conservation organization.
- Membership: To recruit new members into TU
- Leadership Development: To attract and train new TU volunteers and leaders.

A well-coordinated committee of four to six active members/volunteers is the key to a successful event or banquet. In summary, the steps involved in organizing and staging an event/banquet are as follows:

1. Committee meets:
 - a. Elects Event/Banquet Chair
 - b. Determine type of Event, Approximate Date
2. Chair names and appoints sub committees/ chairs. These could include:
 - a. Treasurer
 - b. Arrangements
 - c. Publicity
 - d. Auction & Prize
 - e. Ticket & Membership
3. Arrangements sub-committee meets:
 - a. Selects place/location of event
 - b. Negotiates contract for all costs of event (meal, etc.)
4. Committee meets:
 - a. Updated by arrangements sub-committee on place and cost
 - b. Sets date and price of ticket
5. Treasurer:
 - a. Handles finances and accounting for event
6. Ticket & membership sub-committee meets:
 - a. Prints tickets, distributes to committee members and sells tickets
 - b. Prepares invitation letter for mailing

7. Publicity sub-committee meets:
 - a. Organizes a campaign for advertising (bulk e-mail, radio, TV, newspapers)
8. Auction and prize sub-committee meets:
 - a. Solicits prizes and auction items
 - b. Orders from the [Trout Unlimited Fundraising Program in the Tacklebox](#)
9. Banquet is held:
 - a. Full committee and sub-committees coordinate to cover all event/banquet operations
10. Wrap up meeting is held.

For more information, please visit [the Fundraising Banquet Guide and Planner](#) in the Tacklebox.

Responsible Raffle Reminder

Raffles are important fundraising tools for chapters and councils but it is also important to remember that there are important state and federal regulations surrounding their use. Councils and chapters need to be aware of those issues to avoid legal problems. Always check with your state's secretary of state and attorney general to make sure the raffle that your chapter or council is planning complies with state laws and with any applicable local laws. Also, do not sell raffle tickets to someone outside of your state either through the mail or over the Internet. Doing so may violate federal law and the laws of some states. It is better to take the time to check your state's law before conducting a raffle than to run into problems later.

Membership Rebate Programs

TU's rebate programs coincide with our fiscal year, which runs October 1 through September 30. There are two different types of rebates: new member rebates and year end rebates, both of which are issued once a year around January/February. New member rebates will be sent to chapter bank accounts via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) and year end rebates will be sent to council bank accounts via EFT. If your chapter or council bank routing information is not on file with TU, please contact [volunteer operations staff](#).

The Year End Rebate was designed to help councils and chapter pay for the costs of servicing their members with quality, local communications. TU provides this annual rebate to councils based on total active membership in active chapters at the end of TU's fiscal year, contingent on the council and all its active chapters fully completing and filing the Annual Financial Report by November 15th. Chapters that file zero revenue, income or volunteer hours are also excluded. TU defines active members as those dues paying members that are not expired (note: your chapter and council roster includes members up to six months past their expiration date.) Trial members do not count as active. Rebates are not paid out for Stream Explorer (youth) members. And only a portion (\$1.50/member) of the rebate is paid to the council for members in at-large chapters. When the rebates have been calculated (after the close of the fiscal year,) the council chair will receive a spreadsheet showing the break-down of membership by chapter. Each active council will receive \$2.50 per active member in an active chapter. In many cases, councils segment this rebate into \$1.50 per member for the council and \$1.00 per member for the chapter that serves that member. It is up to the council membership to determine (by vote) what works best for each state.

The New Member Rebate is given to chapters who recruit new members via www.tu.org/intro or [Chapter Add Spreadsheet](#). This is how TU knows a member was actively recruited by a chapter. To receive proper credit for this rebate, the new member must select your chapter when joining online at www.tu.org/intro, or your chapter's three-digit chapter # must be written on [Chapter Add Spreadsheet](#). This rebate is not for lapsed or expired members who rejoin/renew to TU. If a new member joins at \$17.50 introductory rate, the chapter receives \$15 for new member rebate.

If a new member joins at a higher membership level, the higher the rebate. For example, the Family/Contributor level of \$55 will give back at \$20 rebate to the chapter. A Sponsor level of \$100 will give back \$30 to the chapter.

<u>Member Type</u>	<u>Dues Level</u>	<u>Rebate Level</u>
Special Intro	\$17.50	\$15
Family	\$55	\$20
Sponsor	\$100	\$30
Conservator	\$250	\$50
TU Endorsed Guide	\$79	\$25
TUB	\$295	\$50
Life	\$1,500	\$150