



Fundraising Ideas for Mission Teams

If your parish is sending a team to help with disaster relief or any sort of ministry/mission opportunity, raising the funds to cover the costs is essential. There are a few ways that parishes typically do this. Hopefully these ideas will be helpful to you as you plan your team's adventure.

1. **Establish a budget.** Consider all associated costs including registration fees, transportation, and things like t-shirts for the group. Often parishes will use shirts, hats, bags, or other items specially printed for the trip to identify the group. Total up these costs and figure out what that translates to in terms of a per team member cost.
2. **Determine other funding sources.** Some parishes have missions' budgets that cover a percent of teams costs or contribute a flat amount. There may be funds available from a diocesan source, a trust or foundation that can underwrite some of the cost.
3. **Determine each member's financial responsibility.** What amount you expect team members to cover is an important decision as the trip is more valuable to the team members if they are personally invested in it. Balance that aspect with what is affordable for individuals. Often a group will determine a minimum personal contribution and allow people to do personal fundraising to cover the difference. Some people will just prefer to pay the full amount and not raise funds personally.

Personal fundraising and group fundraising are two ways to approach fundraising. Some parishes will pick one and others will do some of both. With group fundraising, all income is allocated to the overall costs for the group. Group fundraising is often a team building experience and can be a lot of fun. Personal fundraising is obviously more individualistic as the proceeds will benefit that specific person's cost to participate.

Personal fundraising can be done in several ways. Here are three that are worth considering.

1. **Letter writing.** Usually this is done by the individual writing to friends and family to tell them about the mission opportunity, ask for prayer, and ask people to consider contributing to the cost. Missionaries use this as a primary means of generating support and they often find the personal "ask" is the most effective. Contributions need to be made to the parish and tagged with the person's name to be tax deductible.
2. **Crowd funding.** Most people are familiar with "GoFundMe" to contribute to a cause or need. That crowdfunding site is not always friendly to Christian organizations. It's worth looking at "Give Send Go" which is more oriented to missions. A person just needs to sign up and enter their info and then share the link through email and social media.
3. **Working for parishioners.** Some parish groups, often teens or college age, will offer team members for hire doing cleaning, yard work, childcare, etc. Parishioners will often think of things they want to get done and "hire" the team member. Typically, they "pay" by contributing to the mission fund tagging the individual that did the work. Often people are very generous

and a few hours work produces great donations. Individuals are not paid directly but funds are directed to the parish. (Note that it's important to consider child protection policies when planning this for teens. In some instances, it would be more suitable to send a small group out to do the work for this reason)

Group fundraising can be done in lots of ways. Here are a few examples. Some will be more suitable for your group than others.

1. **Car wash.** This one is typically done as a free service to the community with a request for a donation. It can be done at the church, or a local business may be willing to let you use their parking lot and provide water. It's important for the location to be highly visible with plenty of traffic passing by. Teach your team how to wash cars quickly and effectively. Make sure your signage is readable from the road. Give each car who enters the lot an info card that briefly explains the mission project and encourages them to donate. It's often a lot of fun. Include a QR code on the info card so that they can donate online if they don't have cash on them.
2. **Simple Meal.** Many groups will raise funds from a pancake supper or spaghetti dinner because the food costs are low making profit margins high. The cost to diners can be a suggested donation (because many will contribute extra). Teach your team to cook and serve with excellence. Provide lots of info at the dinner about the project and ask for prayer support. Invite the whole parish and encourage team members to invite friends, family, and neighbors.
3. **Special meal.** Another meal approach is to do something nicer and seek donations of the food from local restaurants or grocery stores. Many businesses have a monthly charitable donation account and if you ask far enough in advance, they may be more able to help. Meals might be a local favorite food. For example, in South Carolina, Oyster roasts are common fundraisers for parishes and charities.
4. **Concert.** Host a concert with local musicians where the price of the ticket is the contribution to the mission team. You may know a band or music group that have a local following who would be willing to donate their time to play for the cause. Or find a donor who can fund the expenses of bringing in a musician or band. At the concert, hand out info about the mission trip including how people can pray for and perhaps donate funds to the project. In the middle of the concert, have the musician(s) take a few minutes break while someone speaks about the project.
5. **Silent Auction.** These are often great to do in conjunction with a fundraising meal or other event. They can also be done at your church. Get donations from local businesses of goods and services and put them up for auction. Most silent auctions use a simple system of people writing bids on a sheet of paper where they can see what others have bid. That encourages them to raise the amount. An online search should produce lots of helpful tips on running silent auctions.

Finally, don't be apologetic or ashamed to raise funds for mission work or disaster relief. In doing so, you are not asking for a handout, rather you are inviting people into partnership with you. Raising funds expands your support base for the work you are doing and creates awareness such that others may decide in the future to join you.

**Fundraising Ideas for Mission Teams* was written by Dave Wright, ARDF National Disaster Network Task Force member. Dave has thirty-seven years' experience in youth ministry and currently writes for his website, Engaging Every Generation. Through his website, Dave writes to encourage and equip the church to engage younger generations.