

# PLANNING YOUR FUNDRAISER

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## IDENTIFY YOUR GOALS

Before you begin planning your fundraiser, determine what the purpose of your event will be. Why are you interested in hosting this fundraiser? Do you want to raise a certain amount of money? Do you want to increase awareness in your local community?

Creating impact-centered goals that align with Cure SMA's mission will keep you grounded on your "why" during the planning process. Don't forget to make your goals SMART—specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely!

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## GET OTHERS INVOLVED

Depending on the size of your event, organizing a fundraiser can be a big undertaking! Consider who in your network may be interested in volunteering their time or joining a planning committee. Having a team behind you will ensure that your event runs smoothly.

- Contact people in your network who may be interested in helping plan and execute the event
- Set up regularly scheduled meetings to make plans and discuss progress
- Create subcommittees if necessary. Examples include:
  - o Event logistics committee (focusing on venue, permits, catering, décor, entertainment, vendors)
  - o Host committee (marketing, recruiting donors and sponsors, inviting participants)
  - o Event day committee (event execution, dividing up day-of-event tasks)

Check out Cure SMA's [Know Your Network](#) worksheet to help identify key stakeholders who may want to volunteer, attend, or contribute to your event!

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## ENVISION YOUR FUNDRAISER

Now that you've identified your impact-based goals and who will be assisting you in the planning process, it's time to envision what your event will look like. Fundraising events should have a few basic components: (1) a focused activity or attraction, and (2) a method to raise funds.

**Some important questions to ask yourself include:**

- How will I raise funds through this event?
- What is the main attraction of this event?
  - Don't try to do everything! Keep your event focused. If there are too many activities or attractions, it's easy to lose site of the event's purpose. Plus, the more that's happening at your event, the more logistics you'll need to plan and execute.
- Do I have the time, resources, and capacity to plan, expense, and execute this event?
  - If not, how can you focus your event so that it's more achievable?

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## SET A BUDGET

To raise money, you generally have to spend money. Since Cure SMA is not able to help cover the cost of third-party events, it's imperative to set a realistic, manageable budget for your fundraiser. Map out all expenses needed to make the event happen. (When creating a budget, assume that big ticket items will not be donated. You'd rather over-budget than under-budget!)

**Expense may include things like:**

- Venue
- Permits, Licensing, and Insurance
- Food & Drink
- Marketing Materials
- Printing Costs
- Promotional Products
- Entertainment
- Decorations
- Miscellaneous

**Want to keep costs low? Keep some of these budget-friendly tips in mind:**

- Host your community gathering at a local park or your family event at someone's house
- Launch your own music playlist on speakers for entertainment
- Handcraft decorations using currently owned or inexpensive supplies
- Utilize Cure SMA's support for swag, materials, signage, and marketing

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### CHOOSE A DATE & VENUE

For larger fundraisers, we recommend selecting a venue and event date at least 6 months prior to your event. This will allow you plenty of time to plan event logistics, solicit donations, and invite participants.

When considering a venue, think about accessibility, size, layout, cost, parking availability, traffic flow, sound equipment, lighting, restrooms, and necessary permits or insurance.

Depending on what type of event you're hosting, there are other considerations to factor in as well. For example, if you're hosting a DIY 5k race, you'll need to ensure that the event route is flat and doesn't interfere with traffic. You may also need to have law enforcement present for traffic control and a first aid tent with medical staff and bottled water, depending on the guidelines set by your venue. With any fundraising path you choose, Cure SMA staff are happy to field questions regarding logistics for your unique event and give advice. Please contact us at [diy@curesma.org](mailto:diy@curesma.org) with questions.

While your event date will partly be determined by the venue you choose, there are other considerations to keep in mind when choosing what day to have your event! Make sure to consider upcoming holidays, school vacations, and seasonal weather. Be sure to check out calendars of events in your local area to ensure there aren't competing events on the same day. (This could be events like local graduations, kids extracurricular activities, sporting events, concerts, other Cure SMA fundraisers!)

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### SET UP YOUR CAMPAIGN

Register your DIY fundraiser with Cure SMA! We highly recommend that our DIY organizers set up an event page through [Cure SMA's DonorDrive Portal](#).

*Need help getting started? Email us at [diy@curesma.org](mailto:diy@curesma.org).*

#### How to get started:

1. Select the arrow button below the event type that best relates to your DIY fundraiser:
  - a. General DIY Fundraiser
  - b. Stream Away SMA
  - c. Athletic Event
  - d. Special Occasion
  - e. Youth Event
  - f. Memorial Tribute
2. Click the "Create A Page" button at the top of the page
3. Fill out information related to your DIY fundraiser
4. Fill out information related to the event organizer, then select "Create Page"
5. Customize your new event page with personalized photos and messaging. The more personalized and detailed the better!
6. Share your fundraising page with your network and invite people to donate

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## CREATE A SCHEDULE

Time flies when you're having fun! Ensure that time doesn't get away from you when you're planning your event by creating a comprehensive schedule with hard deadlines. The length and detail of your timeline will depend on the size of your fundraiser.

To get started, list out all of the tasks that you'll need to complete before, during, and after your event. Then, create a detailed timeline. Color coding, assigning tasks to a specific person or committee, and adding meetings or deadlines to a shared calendar will be helpful tools when building a timeline.

To help, Cure SMA has created an [Editable DIY Event Plan](#). You can use this to organize tasks, schedule deadlines, keep track of progress, and ensure that the event remains mission focused.

**Tip:** Sometimes working backwards from the day of the event can be helpful in getting a full picture of what's needed.

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## PLAN LOGISTICS

The process of planning, organizing, and executing a fundraiser has many elements, including:

- Venue
- Permits & Insurance
- Food & Beverage
- Entertainment
- Theme & Decorations
- Communications Plan
- Donor & Sponsor Solicitation
- Technology & Equipment
- Vendors
- Merchandise
- Schedule of Day-of Events
- Volunteer Recruitment
- Contingency Planning

Any task, no matter how great or small, is related to the fundraiser's logistics.

Cure SMA's [Editable DIY Event Plan](#) is a great tool to help keep all of the different logistics for your event in one place so that you can ensure deadlines are met and track progress.

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## RECRUIT DONORS & SPONSORS

Partnering with donors and sponsors can help cut event costs, raise awareness of your fundraiser, and build relationships within your community. Here's how to get started:

- **Determine sponsorship levels.** You can offer a variety of incentives to help sponsors get excited about partnering with you (and to thank them for their support). For example, maybe each sponsor that donates \$1,000 can have a sign with their logo visible at your event or displayed on your marketing materials.
- **Identify potential donors and sponsors.** When brainstorming who to recruit, look for businesses that are:
  - o Local to you or in your network
  - o Supportive of Cure SMA's mission
  - o Able to provide the resources that you need
- **Prepare solicitation packets:** Make sure all information pertaining to donations and sponsorships can be found in one place. This can include things like sponsorship levels, donation needs or requests, a handwritten note, or a letter from Cure SMA validating the authenticity of your event.
- **Reach out.** Once you have all of your materials sorted and a list of potential donors and sponsors, go ahead and make the ask!

Tip: Remember, donors and sponsors can support in different ways, like: funding a portion of the event, donating in-kind gifts for an auction, and even providing goods or services (like gift bags or bottled water)

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## ORGANIZE REGISTRATION OR TICKETS, IF APPLICABLE

If you've decided to set a registration fee for participation or sell tickets to your event, it's imperative to keep a list of who is planning to attend! This is important for several reasons, including: estimating event attendance (especially if you have a maximum capacity), contacting attendees in case of weather delays or an emergency, and knowing who to invite to future events!

Some ways to track attendee information leading up to an event are:

- Ask Cure SMA for guidance on tracking registration through your fundraising page
- Utilize a ticketing site like Eventbrite
- Mail invitations or evites that request an RSVP
- Create a Google Form to collect attendee information

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## PROMOTE YOUR EVENT

No matter how you choose to promote your event, the first step (and the most important detail) is identifying and explaining your 'why'. Your event's success will depend on how effectively you share why this event and this cause are important to you. Consider these three things when creating messaging around the "why" of your event:

**Make it personal.** How does SMA affect you and your family? What inspired you to fundraise for Cure SMA? Tell your unique story to help motivate others to support the cause.

**Educate them about SMA.** Since SMA is a rare disease, not everyone you connect with will know about it. Be sure to share information about SMA as well as the work that Cure SMA does to help support our community and fund research into treatments and a cure. (Need help coming up with some messaging? Check out Cure SMA's [Boilerplates](#) online or our [At A Glance](#) sheet above to see all the great work we are doing!

**Share the impact.** Supporters—whether they are sponsors, donors, or participants—want to know how their contribution will help others. Check out Cure SMA's [Dollars at Work](#) document to learn more about how each gift is utilized to help us grow our research, care, advocacy, and support programs.

Once your promotional materials are ready, it's time to decide how you'll share your message. We recommend using multiple channels to market your event. Here's a few ideas:

**Share on social media.** Social media is an important tool in marketing any event. Here are a few tips for posting on social media:

- Keep text succinct and easy to read
- Share pictures, videos, or GIFs
- Use hashtags, location features, and tags in your content
- Use multiple social media platforms

While Cure SMA can't directly promote your DIY fundraiser, please tag us in any posts about your event!

We will do our best to share your post on our national social media channels.

**Mail an invitation.** Send out invitations directly to people in your network who may want to attend or otherwise support your event

**Contact your local media.** Media exposure can increase awareness about the cause you're supporting! If you're interested in connecting with the local media to attend your event, we ask that you please connect with Cure SMA staff to ensure your messaging falls within our guidelines.

**Post to community bulletin boards.** Whether in person or online, there are lots of places that allow people to share about community events! Look into local newspapers, businesses, or groups that have community event calendars online. Ask around local cafés and shops to see if they have a bulletin board where you can hang event flyers. (Just be kind and keep track of any flyers that go up so you can take them down after the event!)

While Cure SMA cannot help you directly promote your DIY fundraiser, we can still help! Our staff can help create customized, branded materials (including flyers and social media graphics) for your event. Reach out to [diy@curesma.org](mailto:diy@curesma.org) to get started! (While some requests can be done within a few business days, some customization takes longer. We kindly request that you reach out to us at least 2 weeks before your materials are needed.)

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## PLAN & DELEGATE DAY-OF TASKS

Leading up to the day of your event, be sure to account for all the tasks that will need to take place and assign a committee member, volunteer, or helper to each one. Depending on the type of event you hold, day-of tasks might look like setting up, directing traffic in a parking lot, greeting guests, operating a registration table, selling merchandise, tracking funds raised, hosting activities, making a speech or announcing the day's schedule, or cleaning up. There's lots to do in a small amount of time, so planning ahead to make sure all tasks are organized and assigned will help the event run smoothly.



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## HAVE FUN!

There's plenty of work to be done during a fundraiser, but don't forget to have fun! Remember that you're hosting this fundraiser for a reason, and that reason should be celebrated.

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## FOLLOW UP

After the fundraiser, make sure to not only calculate your total funds raised, but to share that total with your attendees! Participants want to know that they've helped make a difference. Thank them (whether in person, through notes, or in a social media post) and reiterate the impact of their support.

Look over the goals you set for your event and take a moment to reflect on them and measure their impact. If you plan to host an event in the future, it can be helpful to track the successes and downfalls of the event while it's fresh in your mind. You may also choose to send out a survey to participants and ask for their input on what went well or what to change in the future.

**Process any cash, check, or in-kind gifts and send them into Cure SMA within 45 days of your event. Payment should come in the form of one check and can be made to:**

Cure SMA  
c/o DIY Program [or Event Name]  
925 Busse Road  
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007

Feel free to share photographs and videos from your fundraiser with Cure SMA at [diy@curesma.org](mailto:diy@curesma.org). We love to see all of the events happening around the nation, and we hope to share them with our staff and our community.

