Regardless of its size or level of activity, each ACE affiliate annually needs to generate funds for basic operational expenses such as insurance coverage and fees for mentor background checks. And if it chooses to award scholarships, even more resources are required.

An affiliate's board bears the ultimate responsibility of ensuring a steady flow of income adequate to carry out the affiliate’s mission. To be successful at fundraising, the board needs to first set clear goals and then develop a plan for fulfilling the goals. A plan with milestones makes it easy to assess progress at every step of the way.

**EACH GOAL STATEMENT SHOULD INCLUDE:**

1. The intended purpose of the money to be raised (e.g., scholarships; administrative assistant's salary);
2. Amount of money required; and,
3. A timeframe for completion (some goals may be multi-year; others more immediate).

Make goals reasonable, achievable and consistent with the affiliate's overall strategic plan. Because the board must be deeply involved in any fundraising initiatives, all members must agree with the goals.

Once the goals are established, it is possible to develop a specific plan to implement each goal. The plan should list all the steps or tasks involved, identify particular person(s) charged with carrying out each step, and set dates for completing each step. In addition, the plan should estimate the direct and indirect costs of the fundraising effort so that they do not outweigh the potential benefits.

One or more funding sources or mechanisms – for example, a benefit dinner or a foundation grant – can be pursued to achieve a goal. Each mechanism requires its own set of tasks.

Unless a fundraising plan is clearly written down, it will be difficult for everyone involved to follow the plan. Further, board members, other volunteers, and staff members, if any, feel more accountable in the face of a formal document. One person needs to be assigned the duty of managing a plan and keeping activities on track.

Board members charged with making direct approaches to potential sponsors or funders can benefit from some training. They need to be comfortable when making the “ask.”

Whether or not a request for support actually produces dollars, each “ask” is an opportunity to inform people about ACE, tell ACE’s story of success, and build a larger constituency for the program. The ask is not just about money but about helping high school students, especially from underserved neighborhoods, building a strong future workforce, and “giving back.”

Cultivation of donors after a gift is received is just as important as before a potential donor decides to contribute. Prompt “thank-you's” in one or more ways are needed (see chapter 7 Financial Management for legal language acknowledging a gift). And once donors are in the fold, be sure to send them periodic updates about an affiliate’s successes.