

Fundraising

In order to ensure organizational sustainability within an ever-evolving industry, state brewers guilds must diversify their fundraising portfolio. Reducing reliance on membership dues and expanding sources of income through new programs, resources, and services can increase member return on investment (ROI), and boost member engagement.

Raising revenue is one of many incredibly important financial aspects of running any nonprofit. Equally important are finding savings and cost-efficiencies, managing cashflow, making the most of little, and managing risk to reduce fiscal threat. This is not to suggest revenue is the only piece of organizational *stability* and *sustainability*. Member-based trade organizations must increase their bottom line in every possible way in order to deliver on their missions. Following are resourceful ways to approach increasing revenue.

We add ideas as they come, and always ask that if you have an idea not represented here, please share!

Let's start with the obvious: members are the heart and purpose of the organization, the reason the guild exists. Read more ideas about engaging in various fundraising activities through membership in the MEMBERSHIP chapter. The following are all non-dues fundraising options.

Make sure you are aware of your state laws – some of these options may not be legal in your state.

Festivals are an important revenue stream for many guilds and should be a part of a strategic funding plan to cultivate future fundraising and boost the profile of craft beer in your community.

Once guilds have learned what works and what doesn't for local event offerings and have carefully constructed a strong event program, festivals commonly become a guild's number one source of funding. Unfortunately, one bad event can raise red flags for craft breweries and our highly regulated industry. Events involving alcohol of any type must be consciously planned and executed with the utmost care and attention to detail.

If the guild is not yet established enough to host a festival, consider engaging festival organizers that are asking for beer donations – request they make a reciprocal donation to the non-profit guild, through a percentage of ticket sales or profits, etc. Partnering with local chambers of commerce or other local government entities, or other nonprofits, has also met with success for guild fundraising.

The checklist of best practices for hosting a major fundraising festival (below) was created by our award-winning events team and leaders from guilds nationwide. This document is not meant to be all-encompassing, but it is an excellent starting point to help you execute a guild



event that elevates craft beer in your state, shines positive light on your guild's brand, and promotes the guild's craft brewery member businesses.

Resources: [Event planning checklist](#), [Event Compliance Considerations](#), [Hotel Block Tips](#)

Smaller unique events offer contemporary and fun experiences for members and beer enthusiasts alike. Fundraisers don't need to be huge to make money. Small events can bring in significant revenue without the risk of a large-scale festival. Beer and food pairing events are a common example of such events.

Technical Brewing and Production conferences and specialist seminars supported by innovative and pioneering industry leaders undoubtedly stimulate development and success. Interesting and informative perspectives pollinate across the state's expanding craft community, bringing about positive evolution to our great industry. Numerous states now host great technical conferences.

For a guild conference, run various pricing models to find profit vs. break even vs. loss in order to offer more flexibility.

- Conference organizers know badge sharing exists. Attendees sometimes do not have the time to attend the whole conference or are interested in attending certain portions and not others. If the guild normally charges a base rate for one person, consider offering a structure where one badge costs incrementally more for two people and just slightly higher than that for three people (and all three share that one badge, so only one can gain access to the conference at a time). These individuals may have previously passed their badge back and forth, but now it's at least sanctioned and earning money.
- Another possibility would be to offer a brewery business registration. Instead of forgoing the purchase of multiple individual registrations, employees of the brewery can share a certain number of badges as their conference priorities vary, and their attendance shifts from employee to employee.
- Offer just expo/trade show passes, which can boost your trade show income and vendor ROI.
- Instead of early bird + regular + on-site pricing, start low, and then increase the cost by some small increment every single week. Offer further incremental increases, giving more incentive to make the decision to register sooner rather than later. For example, the first fifty people get one price, the next fifty get the next higher price increment, etc.
- Offer registration flash sales over a certain targeted easy-to-remember holiday, with the lowest possible price. This can drum up all the individuals that have to pay on their own, or larger group registrations.
- Offer an "Alumni" rate for both attendees and trade show vendors. Start marketing and selling conference registration for next year on the last day of this year's conference and sell registration at a discount **AI** the conference. It's possible this strategy will leave money on the table because these people may be coming anyway, but to overcome that, perhaps offer a "bring a colleague" package.



Grants: Potential sources of grants range from state government agencies (e.g., departments of tourism and agriculture) to small business development centers. Grant amounts can also vary greatly by state. Guilds have secured grants for significant amounts from Chambers of Commerce and state governmental agencies. **Caution: many state grant programs come with significant strings. Most importantly, there may be prohibitions on the funds being used to lobby.**

One of the fundamental keys to a guild soliciting and receiving a grant is to demonstrate the economic impact of the state's craft beer industry. For example, departments of tourism are often interested in the impact from breweries, and guilds have found success by demonstrating how much additional income local beer weeks or events bring into local hotels and the region. More information on economic impact resources available through the BA can be found in this manual in the Advocacy section (page 19) below.

After obtaining any grant, it will be necessary to show an ROI, which can be accomplished through attendee surveying on site or through the ticket purchasing platform.

Guild Merchandise: Selling merchandise is resource intensive due to a constant need to order, maintain and process inventory, but "merch" can bring in fair margins! This is typically more relevant for advanced guilds with many members & festivals and can be great for promotion and income. Guilds often turn to 3rd party organizations for fulfillment of the merchandise store.

"Meet the Brewer" events: Brewers are local heroes! Consider offering brewer dinners/tours/etc. events within the brewery, to engage the enthusiast communities, sometimes including food or branded schwag.

Advertising & Sponsorship

Advertisements in social media, e-newsletters, event programs, the guild website or mobile apps offer greater outreach for allied industry suppliers retailing goods and service solutions to brewery businesses.

Tailor various sponsorship packages with customized options for the unique needs of service and goods providers in allied industries.

People love an exclusive experience. If possible, offer VIP experiences at an upcharge from the base rate for attendees and/or sponsors at events. Secure sponsorship for those (and all specialty areas) too.

Allied trade service providers appreciate the opportunity to mingle with both potential and current brewery business customers. They'll often sponsor the opportunity to give brief presentations at conferences/meetings, or a dinner or reception.

Caution: While sponsorship may be a successful source for bolstering fiscal support, it's important not to let a sponsor appropriate an event. A sponsorship should not change the tone of the event



or have excessive influence. The most important aspect of a guild/sponsor partnership at events is to ensure each party realizes a return on investment.

Collaboration Beers: Guild members can come together to brew a beer at one member's brewery, source donations for packaging and ingredients, then sell for on- and off-premise consumption at retail outlets throughout the state. Alternately, agree to source one main ingredient or brew a certain style, but have member brewers create their own rendition of this unique Guild Beer, then offer at festivals and sell in tap rooms with a portion of the proceeds going to the guild. *Always ensure compliance with federal and state laws.*



Check out Louisiana's collaboration beer, with a portion from each pack going back to the Guild.



Sporty Tournaments: People LOVE to win. Dart throws, golf tournaments (mini golf in a production brewery with extra space or regular golf on a real course), beer-related Olympics (NO drinking competitions!), chili cook-offs, dunk tanks, keg tosses, you name it. Creativity is your strength; the world of competition is your oyster.

Beer competitions or taste-offs: New Mexico Brewers Guild's annual IPA Challenge is extremely popular. The Guild collects an IPA from all participating brewers and then, through a regional tour, breweries host the challenge by offering flights for purchase and consumers vote for "best in show." Virginia Craft Brewers Guild offers their Brewers Cup each year.

Caveat: some guilds specifically avoid this in order to not pit members (and their consumers) against each other.

Host an Auction or Raffle at events, meetings, conferences, or fests. Hire an artist to pair with a brewery at a festival to create an original work of art for auction at the conclusion. Other auction items of interest include beer/guild schwag-filled gift baskets, fest tickets, special beer releases, guild & brewery merchandise. **As always, be sure to verify with an attorney or the state ABC that state laws allow for these types of giveaways.**

Add-On Fundraising Program: Similar to programs for other organizations promoted through grocery stores, retail outlets and the web, where a modest donation is added to the customer's retail bill, this program can build brand awareness for participating guild members, the craft beer industry, and the Guild. **Check applicable state law.**



State Fair: Many guilds participate in their state fairs, with a guild member pavilion featuring independent brewers and their craft beers. Some guilds offer a guild collaboration beer for their state fair. Proceeds from beer sales are shared between the guild and the fair.

Beer Week: for the city or state, beer weeks bring together breweries in the region for a celebration of the beer industry, and each brewery member can offer whatever sort of fundraising activity they do best. This can be another massive undertaking, with dozens or hundreds of events and countless organizations involved, but portions of the profits from each event can benefit the guild. Pro tip: if there is a major impact from the beer week on the local economy, the local department of tourism may be interested in providing grant funding support.

Partner with Allied Businesses: Cultivate partnerships that address brewery business challenges. What keeps brewery owners up at night?

Conduct guild membership needs assessment surveys to better understand what these businesses need to be successful and develop partnerships to address those goals. Examples include group insurance & employee benefit programs, and mobile apps with regional or state brewery tours.

Ensure Program Success

Once a new program is offered, a strong educational campaign is crucial to ensure adoption of the new benefit.

Prior to a guild-wide launch, consider a limited release that can provide a forum for feedback and program refinement, as well as a community of core participants that spread the word when introduced to the wider membership.

And finally, don't be afraid to pull the plug or sunset programs. A misaligned funding program can chip away at the mission with too many strings attached or expectations that take the organization off course. If a program is performing poorly, and everything was done to increase awareness, cut it or streamline the benefits to only provide what is most valuable to members.

Guilds must have an innovative approach toward realizing creative and diverse fundraising opportunities. Fortunately, we work in an industry overflowing with entrepreneurial spirit. Don't fear failure, be prepared for success, remain innovative, and evolve alongside brewery member businesses. Nonprofits can survive the test of time and a fluctuating industry environment through building a varied portfolio of resources that increase the bottom line.