



Membership Outreach: How to Plan a Bowling Fundraiser

Whether you're a veteran Membership Outreach co-chair, or brand new to the role, planning a bowling fundraiser is a fun, easy, and inexpensive way to bring your community together and engage them with the work of HRC, while recruiting members in the process! When you begin to plan your bowling event, there are a few questions you should ask yourself...

- Has HRC hosted a bowling event in my community in the past?
 - If so, what worked and what could be improved? Are there opportunities for growth?
- Who will assist in planning the event and what different roles can they assume?
- How will I get people there?

This document is designed to assist you in answering those questions, and guide you through the process of planning your event. Of course, your Membership Outreach manager will always be your best resource should you have any questions – we've helped plan quite a few bowling events!

First Steps: Confirm the Details

Decide on a Date

To set yourself up for the maximum amount of success, we recommend giving yourself at least three months to properly plan and market your event. As you identify possible dates, it is best to avoid holding your event in close proximity to other local HRC events, or mid-November through mid-January, as many folks are preoccupied with holidays and traveling during these times. Once you have identified 2-3 potential dates, discuss them with your Steering Committee and do some research to make sure there are no large events or other LGBTQ fundraisers happening on those dates in your city.

Identify a Venue

Choose two or three bowling alleys in your community and call/visit them to find out more about their rates. It is best to avoid big-name franchised bowling alleys, as they often have more expensive rental rates. We encourage you to seek out small independently-owned local bowling alleys. Here are some helpful questions to guide that conversation:

- Are they available on your preferred dates?
- What are their group rates/pricing?
- Do they charge by the lane or per person? What are those prices?
- Is shoe rental included in this pricing?
- Do they add-on options like food or beverages, and what are the additional costs for those?
- Does the pricing differ for an afternoon event versus an evening event?
- How long will guests have to bowl?
- Is there a minimum amount of lanes we must reserve, or a maximum for how many we can reserve?
- Does the venue require a contract or deposit to hold the date?
- Do they have a microphone/speaker system available for announcements?

Call with Membership Outreach Manager

After you've decided on a date and gathered some information from your potential venue, email your Membership Outreach manager and we'll set up a call to discuss this information and start to work on next steps with you. We've worked on many bowling events over the years, and can pull best practices from other events to make your planning easier. We'll also use this call to help you start to develop a budget for your event.

The Numbers: Tickets, Sponsorship, and Budget

Ticketing

Setting an affordable ticket price for your event will be key to attracting people to purchase those tickets. When calculating the base price you will charge attendees for a ticket, you want to cover any expenses, and allow for at least \$5 of revenue per person so you can include an HRC membership for every attendee.

For example: If an alley is going to charge HRC \$50 per lane and each lane accommodates 5 people, HRC will have an expense of \$10 per person for the event. We recommend setting your ticket price at \$10 above this expense to help raise funds, include a membership for each purchaser, and account for any other expenses related to your event.

Once you have your General Admission price set, then you can build out your other ticket tiers from there. For the examples below we've used the cost of \$50 charged to HRC per lane of 5 bowlers to illustrate sample pricing.

- General Admission: \$20
 - Includes 2 hours of bowling, shoe rental, and HRC membership or renewal
- Lane for 5 Bowlers: \$90
 - Includes 2 hours of bowling, shoe rental and HRC membership or renewal for five people
 - Providing a discount incentivizes folks to purchase an entire lane for themselves and their group – and boosts your attendance numbers. In this example, the donor saves \$10 by purchasing the lane rather than 5 individual tickets

VIP Options

Adding a VIP ticket gives guests an additional option if their budget allows, and increases the fundraising potential for your event. When you talk to your venue about add-on options like food and beverages, these are the perfect additions to create a VIP ticket.

For example: Your alley will charge HRC \$10 for a pizza and \$5 for any beer, wine, or well drink. Using these prices as your guide, you can create a VIP Lane ticket option. One pizza and 5 drink tickets comes at an expense of \$35, add that to your lane expense of \$50, and HRC will owe the alley a total of \$85 for that lane. Because the value of the perks is higher, you can and should set your VIP Lane price at a premium – in this example we'd recommend \$140 - \$150.

Other Ticket Structure Considerations

- **Lane Captains:** We can add the option to the ticketing site for folks to identify themselves as a Lane Captain. When choosing to be a lane captain, they are guaranteeing to spread word of

the event and fill their lane with 4 other individuals, this helps broaden your reach. Once they purchase their single general admission ticket and select that they'd like to be a Lane Captain, we can add their name to the ticketing site so that future purchasers can choose to be placed on their lane. You'll need to keep in contact with lane captains to make sure they follow through with their commitment.

- **Online Pricing***: Advertising that online/advance pricing is cheaper than buying tickets at the event will help incentivize your audience to purchase tickets in advance, and give you a better gauge of attendance before your event day.
- **Early Bird Pricing***: Offering a discount for purchasing tickets very early helps to sell tickets well in advance of your event. We can set up your ticket page so prices switch from early-bird to regular pricing automatically on the date of your choosing.

**These discounted prices must be at least \$5 higher than the cost HRC is paying per person to the venue. For example, if the cost to HRC per person is \$10, the lowest price we could charge to attendees is \$15. This assures we can include membership.*

Sponsorship

Recruiting monetary sponsors is a great way to increase the fundraising for your event. Because ticket prices are lower for a bowling event, the sponsorship levels come at a more affordable rate to businesses, and soliciting lower-dollar sponsorships is often easier. Here is an example of the typical sponsor levels/benefits for a bowling event, all of which can be customized. Chat with your Membership Outreach manager about customizing and designing a sponsor packet for your event.

- **HIGH-LEVEL SPONSOR \$1,000**
 - 2 VIP lanes, with 5 bowlers per lane (10 bowlers total)
 - 2 hours of bowling and shoe rental
 - Includes 10 HRC General Memberships
 - Company name/logo listed on advertisements, posters and social media outlets
 - Inclusion of your logo on the HRC event webpage, and social media posts
 - Recognition on our "sponsor board" at event
 - Signage with company name/logo displayed over your sponsored lanes
 - Opportunity to display company branding throughout the venue and on bar signage
 - Public acknowledgement as sponsor during event
 - After the event, social media "thank you" that includes your logo
- **MID-LEVEL SPONSOR \$500**
 - 1 VIP lane, with 5 bowlers
 - 2 hours of bowling and shoe rental
 - Includes 5 HRC General Memberships
 - Company name/logo listed on advertisements, posters and social media outlets
 - Inclusion of your logo on the HRC event webpage, and social media posts
 - Recognition on our "sponsor board" at event
 - Signage with company name/logo displayed over your sponsored lane
- **LOW-LEVEL SPONSOR \$250**
 - 1 VIP lane, with 5 bowlers
 - 2 hours of bowling and shoe rental
 - Includes 5 HRC General Memberships

- Inclusion of your logo on the HRC event webpage, and social media posts
- Signage with company name/logo displayed over your sponsored lane
- NON-PARTICIPATING LANE SPONSOR \$100
 - Signage with company name/logo displayed over your sponsored lane
 - Inclusion of your logo on the HRC event webpage, and social media posts

Other Revenue Boosters at Your Event

- Setting up an HRC merchandise table
- Raffle (check with Membership Outreach manager about local raffle laws)
- Games of Skill
- Silent Auction

Budget

Developing a draft of your event budget is a necessary step as you begin planning. Two of our main goals of hosting community events are to increase membership and to raise funds for the work of HRC. Developing a budget to guide your work helps to solidify goals and assure you are using HRC's financial resources responsibly. Your Membership Outreach manager can send you an example of an event budget template.

****A best practice to follow when planning community events is that every dollar spent on that event is a dollar that has to be raised via that event.****

Building the Buzz: Marketing

Marketing your event strategically and creatively can help assure that you have a successful turnout. After the logistics are set for your event, the majority of your workload for the event will be to market it and attract an audience. Don't forget to recruit your Steering Committee to assist in spreading the word about your event!

Theming

Adding a theme to your event allows you to have more fun creatively marketing the event, and can encourage more interactivity with your event attendees. Anything can be developed into a theme for a bowling event, here are just a few examples of past bowling themes:



We keep examples of all past bowling themes in our archives, and are happy to share ideas!

Graphics: After deciding on a theme, the HRC graphic design team can help create a captivating graphic for your event, whether it be a refresh of a previous theme or something completely new. This graphic can be resized to be used on event emails, ticket page, Facebook, and on print materials as well.

Spreading the Word

- **In-Person:** Event posters are an affordable way to make your event visible throughout the community. We can print these in-house at HRC and ship them to you, so they are virtually free. Designate a few hours to visit local businesses and ask them if you can hang an event poster in their window. Make sure to bring tape and ask if you can do it right then! While you are there talk to them about the event and ask if they'd be interested in purchasing a lane or sponsoring the event – it would be a great team building outing and they could wear their branded t-shirts to provide visibility for their business. Palm Cards are 4" x 6" postcards that can be designed to help market your event. These cards do come at a slight cost for printing, so you'll need to account for that in your budget. Identify a few networking events where you can hand palm cards out, they are most effective when physically handed to potential attendees while talking to them about the event, rather than placed in stacks on counter-tops or bars.
- **Online:** Once your event date is set, we'll reserve two dates to launch an event email to local HRC members and supporters. Usually the first email will launch 6-8 weeks before your event and the second will launch within 2 weeks of the event. While these emails are great ways to announce the event to a large audience at once, they should not be your only marketing tool. Facebook is the best platform when it comes to marketing your event online. Your Digital Engagement co-chair should include the ticket page link when setting up the event on Facebook. The entire Steering Committee should invite their friends to your event via the Facebook event page – the closer to 1,000 invitees, the larger your turn out will be. Once your Facebook event page is created and invites are shared, plan to post regularly to keep the conversation going and keep your audience engaged.

Timeline: A Snapshot of Planning, Execution, and Post-Event

Three Months Out

- Decide on a date
- Identify and confirm a venue
 - Send contract or invoice for deposit to Membership Outreach manager
- Develop a budget draft to guide your planning
- Have an initial planning call with you Membership Outreach manager
 - Review draft budget
 - Discuss potential expenses
 - Confirm ticket and sponsorship prices
 - Discuss theme and graphic/marketing needs
- After initial call (10-15 days)
 - First draft of graphics ready for review
 - Ticket page and Facebook event go live
 - Sponsor packet ready to distribute
- Begin marketing the event on Facebook and via in-person outreach
- Develop a list of potential sponsors and begin outreach

Two Months Out

- Launch first email from HRC
- Continue to market the event online and via in-person opportunities
- Follow up with pending sponsors
- Progress call with Membership Outreach manager

One Month Out

- Launch second email from HRC
- Follow up with Lane Captains to make sure they're filling their lanes
- Distribute posters to local businesses
- Progress call with Membership Outreach manager
 - Discuss supply and merchandise shipment
- Identify volunteers, develop a schedule, and assign roles

One Week Out

- Progress call with Membership Outreach manager (if needed)
- Shipment from HRC arrives
- Confirm set-up time again with the venue
- Confirm volunteers

Day Before Event

- Membership Outreach manager closes online ticket sales and sends final list (this usually takes place around 4:30 pm EST the Friday before your event for weekend events)
- Membership Outreach manager sends event-specific tablet login credentials
- Organize final list, assign lanes for any miscellaneous purchasers

Day of Event

- Arrive at least 2 hours before the event begins
- Check that the venue's microphone is working properly
- Set up registration and merchandise tables
- Hang sponsor signs and décor
- After most attendees have arrived, deliver brief welcome and thank you, acknowledge sponsors
- Distribute awards: Highest Score, Lowest Score, Best Dressed, etc.
- Prior to the event end time, thank everyone again for attending, sponsors for their support and announce any upcoming events and volunteer opportunities

After the Event

- Return all revenue and leftover merchandise to HRC (contact your manager if you need additional UPS return labels)
 - Cash revenue must be converted to a money order or cashier's check before returning to HRC.
- Have a debrief call with Membership Outreach manager to discuss the event (successes, challenges, review final fundraising numbers, etc.)
- Thank sponsors and attendees on Facebook event, share pictures