



United States Soaring Team Task Force

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Topic – 6 Fundraising

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This document is for discussion purposes only and should not be considered the policy of U.S. Soaring Teams. Instead, this document provides a starting place from which to develop more accountable, transparent, competitive and sustainable United States Soaring Teams. You can help shape the future of U.S. Soaring Teams by making your comments to John Seaborn. planned@boulder.net Taskforce web page http://www.ssa.org/UsTeam/ust_taskforce.htm

U.S. Soaring Team Fundraising

Purpose & Goal

The purpose of U.S. Team fundraising is to provide potential contributors with the opportunity and motivation to supply the funding necessary for U.S. soaring teams to participate in World Soaring Championships. The goal is to develop new fundraising opportunities that better connect our soaring teams with the grass roots of the sport while providing a higher return on contributions (ROC).

Philosophy & Discussion

New FAI classes provide more opportunity for U.S. pilots to participate in World Soaring Championships. More international participation will require bigger budgets and increased emphasis on team fundraising. To meet this challenge new fundraising programs that reward contributors and create entirely new funding opportunities will need to be developed and implemented by the SSA and the emerging U.S. Team Committee.

Fundraising is a tricky thing. To be successful contributors must have the opportunity and motivation to become stake-holders in U.S. soaring teams. Contributors must identify with the mission and goals of the organization plus have confidence in the organization's management. Successful funding programs present contributors with the opportunity to participate, reward them for their contribution and provide confidence in how the funds are accounted for and spent.

One thing is clear; contributors increasingly expect return on their contributions.

This return concept falls into two broad categories – direct and passive. Direct return on contributions includes rewards provided directly to individual contributors. Tee shirts, patches, jackets, expedited communication, personal relationships and special recognition are examples of direct return.

Passive return is much more complex and important to the overall fundraising success. Items like better competitive performance, giving something back to the sport, making better personal connections with the soaring community and promoting the sport generally are examples of passive return on contributors funding.

To achieve long term success U.S. soaring teams must make a tangible difference in the sport of soaring and with the soaring community. As team members, pilots have earned the respect of the soaring community and occupy a leadership position in the sport. Pilot's actions can build critical links to the soaring community, team supporters and contributors – or alienate them.

Most of the soaring community, the grass roots, are not competition pilots and have only a passing interest in the team. At a fundamental level team pilots must better connect with the grass roots of the sport. Team pilots have the obligation to establish connections with the soaring community and to participate in team sponsored events to this end.

Team funding and fundraising is a constant challenge. As U.S. soaring teams are funded exclusively by personal contributions from the soaring community it becomes an obligation of team pilots to assist with the development of, and to participate in, team sponsored fundraising efforts. Contributors expect a return on their financial contributions in three distinct areas. These are, competitive supremacy at championships, promotion of the sport generally and performance soaring education.

Summary of Return on Contributions

There are several areas U.S. soaring teams can deliver direct and passive return on contributions are:

- Improved competitive performance at world championships
- Promotion of the sport generally through a workable PR effort
- Support of the sport through educational programs in performance soaring
- Develop more opportunities for contributors to make contributions.
- Deliver consistent and sustainable contribution programs
- Build team credibility by emphasizing team goals of Competitiveness, Transparency, Accountability and Sustainability
- Make sure to spend the funding in a frugal and responsible manner
- Improve team communication and follow-up with soaring community
- Timely acknowledgement of contributions with the required IRS tax deduction wording
- Develop a consistent and sustainable organizational structure for the team

While competitive performance is what it is all about this is the factor the team as an organization has the least control over. Without a solid underlying organization such as the US Team Committee which survives through various team chairmen and captains while emphasizing a high standard of transparency, accountability, competitiveness and sustainability, US soaring teams cannot deliver this level of fundraising performance and should not expect contributors to fund the expanded list of teams.

By emphasizing fundraising programs that provide a high return on contribution the team can better connect with the grass roots of the sport and start making a difference to soaring. This makes the team a more marketable organization regardless of competitive performance.

Historically the SSA has been largely responsible for team fundraising. In the future, team staff, management and pilots will need to shoulder more of the responsibility for developing and implementing fundraising programs. Team management will need to spend a good deal of time developing programs which meet the needs of both the contributors and the team.

General Categories of Team Fundraising

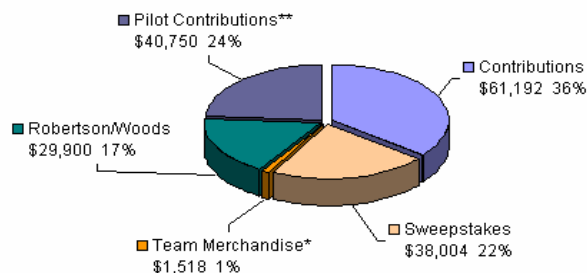
Our soaring teams are funded by two categories of personal contributions - direct and perpetual.

Direct contributions are available to the teams at their full value normally in the period in which the contribution is made. Participating in the SSA sweepstakes, buying a raffle ticket, purchasing team merchandise or mailing in a check earmarked for use by the team are examples of direct support. Direct contributions can be made to the general team fund or to a specific team/venue.

By contrast perpetual contributions to the Robertson Trust are invested and provide stable long-term support to future U.S. Soaring teams. The perpetual contributions to the Robertson Trust become part of the SSA Foundation to be managed and invested by the Trustees. Foundation Trustees have established a 5% per year pay out for the Robertson with the hope that this conservative approach will build the fund over time. Currently 70% of the funds are invested in equities and 30% in fixed income instruments. Distributions from perpetual trusts flow to the general team fund.

A growing category of team funding is self funding. These funds are supplied by the pilots to make their participation possible. The chart below shows 2001 contribution sources and amounts. Note that over \$40,000 in team funding came from the pilots themselves and that \$30,500 of the \$61,192 in contributions (direct) came from a single contributor.

2001 U.S. SOARING TEAM CONTRIBUTIONS



* Team Merchandise has historically been combined with overall contributions

** Pilot contributions were paid by U.S. Team pilots

Both direct and perpetual contributions are critical. Since 1988 our teams have been successfully funded using this balanced approach. The recent dramatic expansion in FAI classes eligible to compete in World Soaring Championships has shifted this balance between perpetual and direct funding toward a reliance on an unsustainable level of direct contribution.

Current U.S. Team Fundraising Policy

Under the current system there are three ways to make contributions to US Soaring teams.

1. Make a donation to the GENERAL TEAM FUND which is then administered between the teams according to policy as set each year by the team committee.
2. Make a donation designated to a particular team. These are the Open, 15-Meter, Standard, 18-Meter, Club, World, Feminine and Junior classes.
3. Contribute to the Roberson or Woods funds. The funds are invested and a sustainable percentage is returned each year to fund US Soaring teams.

This relatively straight forward approach and has been developed over time into a system that works. Historically funding efforts have been focused on the multi-class team effort (the only team there was) and the general team fund. New fundraising strategies and programs that emphasize contributions to the general team fund while also providing opportunities for specific class/venue contributions will need to be developed to fund the newer classes and to fill the funding gaps for “off year” teams.

Future Planning a Key

Historically all focus, effort, and planning has been on the effort at hand with little thought given to future teams or championships. In the future, fundraising should be started years in advance and done in a sustainable manner to insure the opportunity for future teams. This forward thinking pro-active attitude is only possible with adequate planning that implements programs well ahead of need.

World Soaring Championship Calendar					
2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
WAG World Class 18-Meter			Pre-Worlds WAG	WAG	
Multi-Class	Pre-Worlds Multi-Class	Multi-Class		Pre-Worlds Multi-Class	Multi-Class
Feminine	Pre-Worlds Feminine	Feminine	Pre-Worlds Feminine	Feminine	Pre-Worlds Feminine
Juniors	Pre-Worlds Juniors	Juniors	Pre-Worlds Juniors	Juniors	Pre-Worlds Juniors
World	Pre-Worlds World Class	World Class		Pre-Worlds World Class	World Class
Club Class	Club Class	Pre-Worlds Club Class	Club Class	Pre-Worlds Club Class	Club Class
Based on IGC Document dated 10 July 2000 with credit to John Leibacher http://www.fai.org/gliding/championships/dates.pdf					

Traditional Fundraising Programs

The fundraising programs now primarily implemented by the SSA to fund team participation in WSC events include: Sweepstakes, Team Merchandise, the Robertson and Woods Trusts and occasional special projects. These programs should be continued and enhanced in future funding efforts.

- **Sweepstakes**

The SSA Sweepstakes has become a fixture with SSA members and is critical to team funding as well as highlighting the team to the membership. Typically a grand prize included a glider or significant cash reward toward a glider with smaller secondary prizes. The program is administered by the SSA using typical sweepstakes marketing materials delivered by direct mail.

- **Team Merchandise**

In recent years Kerry Huffstutler has done a magnificent job developing merchandising programs. Items included hats, shirts and related merchandise. This merchandise was typically sold on the US team web site, at the SSA convention and occasionally at US national contests.

- **Robertson & Woods Trusts**

Established in 1988 little emphasis has been put on the Robertson until 2002 and the *Funding the Future* campaign.

The numbers say it all. In 1988 the Roberson Trust received a founding amount of \$140,000. The following year \$11,295 was contributed to the trust. In the thirteen years since 1989 only \$8,700 has been contributed to the trust or \$671 per year. Starting in 2002 the Robertson has been brought to front and center generating contributions of over \$100,000.

- **Woods Trust**

Historically there has been no real effort to promote this trust. The Woods Trust provides 5% per year of the total funds to teams with the same charter as the Robertson Trust.

- **Special Projects**

On occasion special mailings, raffles and at contest fundraising efforts have been organized on behalf of the team.

Problems and Challenges With Existing Fundraising

Here are some numbers to consider. During the 2000/2001 World Championship period the U.S. fielded five teams and sixteen pilots to compete internationally. The total cost of fielding these pilots was over \$202,000. Contribution programs over the same period were only able to generate \$171,300. There is no provision for deficit spending by US Soaring Teams. Luckily the team deficit was cleared through the generosity of a single contributor.



While the 2001-02 season was an unusually expensive, the traditional programs are not capable of generating the funding required to adequately field the larger number of U.S. international soaring teams even with the improved management and better cost controls now in place. Teams need to be better managed fiscally while providing contributors additional return on their contributions.

- **Sweepstakes**

The high cost of new gliders has marginalized the sweepstakes ability to provide an attractive prize and generate substantial net receipts under normal economic conditions. While the 2001 Sweepstakes brought in just over \$38,000 the cost of the program was \$27,176. Again, the remaining fundraising programs are not capable of generating the contributions necessary to meet the shortfall brought on by the expanded budget.

- **Teams Do Not Matter**

There is a widely held idea in the soaring community that world teams do little for the sport of soaring at the grass roots.

In addition many in the soaring community feel that there are more pressing challenges to the sport than team funding and that the SSA expends far too many resources on the US team. The focus of new fundraising programs should be providing much higher direct and passive return on contribution (ROC) than has been historically delivered. Moving the emphasis of team funding from asking for contributions to earning contributions through ROC is fundamental to the future success of team contribution programs.

- **Connections With Grass Roots**

At a fundamental level fundraising efforts must better connect our soaring teams with the grass roots of the sport while providing a higher return on contributions. Establishing this connection between the team and the SSA membership while delivering a higher ROC in the five areas outlined is a fundamental challenge to future fundraising success.

- **Consistency**

Fundraising programs need to feature programs built on a base of accountability, transparency and sustainability. Currently there is little long term consistency in team fundraising or recognition for contributors. To be successful contributors need consistent fundraising programs run by a stable organization capable of providing repeatable returns on contribution over the long term. The emphasis should be to enhance current fundraising programs, provide adequate follow-up and to build new opportunities that deliver a higher level of ROC in the areas outlined.

- **Tight Operationally**

There are potential contributors who have expressed concerns about the SSA's handling of US Team contributions. One of the jobs of the team treasurer will be to develop procedures for oversight and reporting to guarantee funds contributed are collected, acknowledged, accounted for, and reported on in a timely and operationally tight manner. This is absolutely key to team operations going forward. There can be no room left open to question the transparency and accountability of how contributions to US Soaring teams are collected and used. A level of team oversight of the SSA provides healthy checks and balances and will also help to ensure contributors are rewarded for their contributions in line with the levels of benefit programs to be developed as part of the consistent and sustainable team fundraising programs.

- **Timing of Fundraising**

There is no contribution program in place to fund "off year" championships that are typically run in the years before and after the multi-class world soaring championships. This creates a hole in the funding strategy that must be addressed.

- **Budgets**

It takes money to raise money and currently there is no budget for fundraising efforts undertaken by the US team. Without funding raising funds is difficult at best.

- **Cross Purposes**

Fundraising for US teams is essentially in competition with the other fundraising efforts directed at the 12,000 or so potential contributors in the soaring community. If fundraising is done in a sloppy or haphazard manner there is real danger of contributor burnout with frequent and repeated solicitations for funding.

- **Staffing**

A problem central to team fundraising is that there is no person responsible for team fundraising. The team needs a fundraising staff member who can enhance existing programs, build new opportunities and deliver the level of team accountability, transparency, sustainability and follow up on team fundraising efforts required. This person would work with the SSA, individual teams, contributors and the team treasurer.

- **Team To Do More**

The SSA has made a substantial contribution to team funding in terms of management time and effort in the past. In the future, the US team organization, working closely with the SSA, must shoulder more of the responsibility for team fundraising.

New Fundraising Opportunities

One of the main lessons learned from the emerging team e-survey and already presented in this document is the fact that contributors would like to see a greater return on their contributions to the team. To be successful, future U.S. Team fundraising efforts must become more creative, emphasizing a return on contribution (ROC) inline with contributors. The areas most often mentioned in the survey include better competitive performance, an educational role, more opportunities to contribute, the overall promotion of the sport, consistent levels of transparency, accountability and sustainability and better communication.

New funding programs need to focus on providing opportunity for the grass roots of soaring, your average SSA member, to better connect with US teams while delivering something back to the larger soaring community.

U.S. Soaring Team funding efforts should not necessarily put pilots in the position to ask for contributions directly. Instead the team organization should be developing venues and programs in which team pilots can connect with potential contributors in an instruction/helping role with the organization making solicitations for funding. This change in direction from a contribution driven message to a supporting and educational role is fundamental to building stake-holders among SSA members and increasing contributions.

The following pages outline several new fundraising programs that deliver increased return on contributions in the areas outlined.

Education

As a U.S. Team e-survey participant put it, “sell what you have” when discussing the opportunity for to provide return on contributions. There is no doubt that US team members have a high degree of knowledge and understanding about cross-country and competitive flying. Many in the soaring community are hungry for this knowledge. The team should leverage its brain trust with past and present team members cast in a teaching and educational role while the organization develops these opportunities and asks for the contributions.

- **US Team X-C Camps / Introduction Fun Contest & Cross Country Camp**

Annual Team Cross Country Camp with a fun/introduction to cross country soaring component. Some participants would bring their own gliders and fly tasks while others would fly in two place with team pilots. There could be a class in the morning and contest flying followed by after flying debrief and evening lecture. This concept would connect team pilots with the broader soaring community while meeting many of the goals put forth by the SSA. Participants would pay an entry fee which would go to the US soaring team general fund. The costs of team members to participate could be partially defrayed as well. An event of this type co-sponsored by the National Soaring Foundation would provide excellent synergy.

- **US Team Informational**

Every year there would be a sanctioned regionals designated as a US Soaring Team Informational, run along the lines of what was done in Mifflin this year using reverse seeding, mentors, daily brief and debriefs. Past and present team members would be invited to mentor and / or give talks. This regionals could have a surcharge over the normal entry fees and the funds collected could go to the team after expenses.

Examples of this type of US Team pilot involvement with SSA members would include the recent Region 2 Sport Class Regionals with training and mentoring program hosted by Karl Striedieck, and the Marfa cross-country camps with John Byrd.

- **Team Speakers**

Past and Present team pilots would be available to clubs and local soaring groups who would request a team speaker for a meeting. The team organization could develop a Power Point program outlining the last WSC event or use a relatively canned slide show. The club would sell tickets and the team would have a minimum level of participation. Connects team pilots with the grass roots of soaring.

- **Team Seminars**

Basically same idea as above except team members would give a seminar on performance flying at the club with some of the team flying with club members in club equipment. Team could develop a relatively canned program. The club would sell tickets and the team would have a minimum level of participation. Connects team pilots with the grass roots of soaring.

- **Materials**

In the past the SSA and SRA have authored several guides to racing and cross country soaring. The US team could update these materials on a corparative basis and co-author these documents each year. In addition a multimedia DVD could be developed around print and video providing a look at competitive soaring with the big guns of the sport making cameo appearances on the various topics.

Opportunities

Another aspect of successful fundraising involves developing opportunities for contributors.

- **Team National Dinners**

Hold a team dinner at each of the US nationals with the proceeds going to the specific class. The team organization would provide seed money to the contest sponsors who would organize the US Team dinner. The affair would be held out at the airport with team members manning the serving line. A Power Point presentation could be used to convey the critical team information and entertain. Tickets would be sold and a raffle held. Beyond the funds raised this dinner would provide a good opportunity to connect team pilots with the competitive roots of soaring and provide a degree of ROC. Team merchandise should be available at all US national events.

- **Team Wine & Cheese Party**

Same basic concept as the team dinner except held early and provides wine and finger food. The use of a relatively canned Power Point presentation along with several speakers drawn from past and present team members. Humorous WSC stories are encouraged along with a clear contribution pitch including how to make out the checks and who to give them to at the contest.

- **Sponsorship**

Everyone likes the idea of sponsorship. There are many levels of sponsorship from local businesses right up to the corporate level. Large sponsors typically expect a return on their investment and consider sponsorship an extension of their marketing budget. It is very unclear if the sport and the team can deliver in this area. There are lots of challenges in gaining sponsorship for an amateur team in aviation, participating in an unknown sport, with zero media coverage, no organized sponsorship program and no sponsorship account manager.

What is needed is an incremental approach. First US Soaring teams should develop the expertise to run small, in sport, sponsorship activities with vendors to the soaring community. Simple programs that live between advertising and sponsorship with Knauff & Grove, Wings & Wheels, Eastern Sailplane, Cambridge Aero Instruments and many more soaring vendors. The team needs to develop opportunities on the team website and in the pages of Soaring magazine that would provide soaring oriented business to provide modest sponsorship to our teams. Once US teams have developed these programs then it may be time to go after larger sponsorship opportunities.

- **Online Contributions**

The power of the Internet can be used to make a tangible difference in team fundraising. A team contribution page would provide a menu approach what would allow contributors to pick there areas of interest and make contributions using their credit cards. The page would present the contribution options with images and text making the case for participation. This has been used with the Robertson Trust with some limited success.

Promotion

One of the frustrations we all share in soaring is the compelling nature of what we do is lost to so many in the general public. There is a national and indeed global cry or more promotion of our sport to the general public. No single aspect of soaring more likely to catch the media and general public's eye than racing. The promotion concept would use the US team as the point of a public relations spear to promote the sport and provide yet another reason to contribute to the US team. There are several avenues to accomplish this highly desirable passive return on contributions.

- **Local & National Print Media**

There are a number of national print magazines that would be ideal targets for this type of promotion. The print media for this project could be segmented into three groups including: 1) Extreme Sports/Extreme Machines, 2) Science/Technology, 3) Exploration/Nature. There are around thirty national media targets in each of these categories. Local news is always available if approached correctly. Contests in areas with active soaring FBO's are prime for this interplay.

- **Local & National Electronic Media**

There are an ever growing list of national electronic media outlets that would be interested in soaring and the US soaring team including sports coverage in television and online not to mention news.

Beyond the Fundraising Basics

- **Sanction Fee Funding**

A small part of the sanction fee paid by contestants would go to team funding. The idea is proving to be popular in the team survey and was approved by the pilots and rules committee in 2001 but shot down by the SSA Board in 2002. The advantage is that this funding is reliable and repeatable while spreading the financial load over many. After all our team represent the whole of the US soaring movement - not just a few contributors.

This issue is at the root of the funding crisis. We want our teams - we just want other people to pay for them! The highly successful British system uses a competition levy, charged at a flat rate on every full club member in the UK, plus every competition entry includes a contribution to the British Team fund.

The U.S. needs to develop the sanction fee aspect of funding. The attitude should be that if you're a soaring pilot and especially if you fly competitively in this country it is you're responsibly to help support your soaring teams. On the other hand the teams have the obligation to provide return on this support in the ways outlined in the ROC philosophy.

- **Contribution Programs & Levels**

As with any contribution program there should be levels established each with its own distinct level of ROC. Contribution levels would run from the \$50 Supporter to the \$100,000 Member category each with defined level of return on contribution. Factors in the ROC level could include everything from signing up to receive e-mail updates during championships, team merchandise, signed team pictures, flights with team members, invitations to the various team teaching/educational opportunities, trips to the championship site as a guest of the US team and others. The key to these programs is follow through and long term consistency.

- **Database Marketing**

One of the fundamental and neglected aspects of team fundraising is the development of consistent and long term relationship with contributors. To this end it is crucial that contributors and contributions be tracked over time in a team contribution database. Fields like name, address, e-mail, personal contribution preferences and contribution history are all tracked. This database can then be used for direct mail campaigns, market research and administering contribution programs.

- **Accounting, Transparency & Acknowledgements**

Another fundamental and historically neglected aspect of team fundraising is in tracking and accounting for team contributions. The SSA has recently instituted much more comprehensive tracking and reporting procedures to insure contributions are handled in a manner consistent with the contributors wishes. The next step is to make this information available on a quarterly basis to the contributor base as well as year end follow up annual reports to contributors.

- **Volunteer Staff Responsibility**

The team needs a fundraising person responsible for developing and implementing the programs required to meet the financial needs of the team. This person would have a position on the all volunteer team organization. In addition the team needs a Team Treasurer to insure the funds are spent and accounted for in a timely manner.

US Team Fundraising Summary and Recommendations

1. Current fundraising programs are not capable of delivering the funds required to adequately fund the larger number of FAI championships and teams.
2. Contributors increasingly expect return on their contributions. Success in future fundraising efforts will come from programs that deliver direct and passive returns to contributors. To be successful U.S soaring teams need to start making a difference in US soaring and with the soaring community.

The five areas in which U.S. Teams can deliver a return on contributions are improved competitive performance, educational activities, promotion of the sport, constancy of programs and improved communication. Of these five, competitive performance is preeminent, although the factor the team as an organization has the least control over.

3. At a fundamental level fundraising efforts must better connect our soaring teams with the grass roots of the sport while providing a higher return on contributions. Establishing this connection between the team and the SSA membership while delivering a higher ROC in the five areas outlined is a fundamental challenge to future fundraising success.
4. The three traditional methods of making contributions to U.S. Soaring Teams now in use (general fund, team/venue/class-specific and perpetual) should be continued with funding efforts focused on building the general and perpetual funds. Direct contributions to specific pilots should be discouraged.
5. New fundraising programs need to be developed to augment the traditional programs now in use.
6. Team funds should be budgeted for fundraising efforts in support of the SSA efforts.
7. Creating and staffing volunteer positions of Team Treasurer and Team Fundraiser are critical to successful fundraising efforts. The team treasurer should establish a stand alone and separate

banking account for U.S. Teams or establish strong checks, balances and reporting functions.

8. In the future, individual teams and the team organization generally will need to take on more of the responsibility for implementing fundraising programs.
9. Building the overall credibility of the SSA and the US team must be part of team fundraising going forward. Procedures for oversight and reporting to guarantee funds contributed are collected, acknowledged, accounted for, and reported on in a timely and operationally tight manner are absolutely critical. A high degree of accountability, transparency and sustainability in team fundraising efforts puts contributors at ease.