

PROJECT MANAGEMENT SALES PROJECT

NH DECA LAUNCHATHON

FUND THE FUTURE



NORTHERN HIGHLANDS
REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL
298 HILLSIDE AVENUE,
ALLENDALE, NJ 07401

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

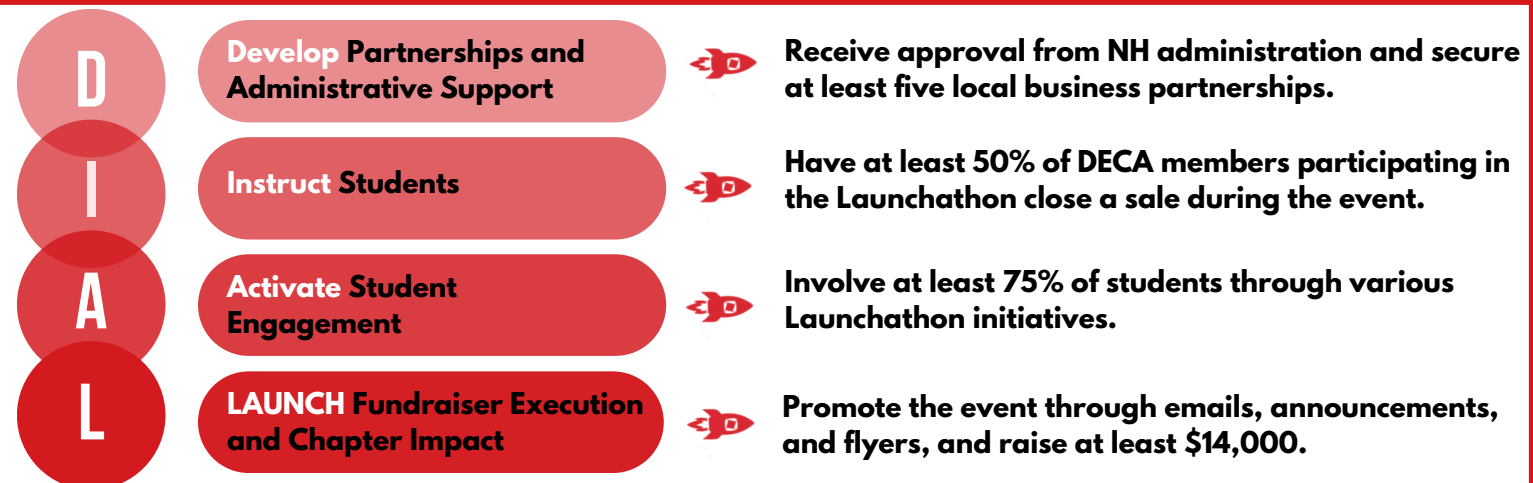
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Since its startup in 1970, the **Northern Highlands DECA (NH DECA) chapter's** membership has **grown tremendously**. Currently standing at **359 members**, DECA is the **largest extracurricular activity** at Northern Highlands Regional High School (NHRHS), and its membership has shown an increasing trend over the past few years. This major increase in chapter size is something to be proud of, but it comes along with the task of supporting the students and the chapter programs financially. **Transportation** has historically been the largest expense for NH DECA, and with nationwide inflation, it has increased dramatically over the past several years, which has subsequently **increased participation costs**. NH DECA has been monitoring these increasing costs and has made fundraising efforts, like a **DECA Trivia Night**, that simply did not suffice. Without a sustainable fundraising effort, the financial demands threaten to **limit participation** in DECA opportunities, making it increasingly difficult for members to fully benefit from the club.

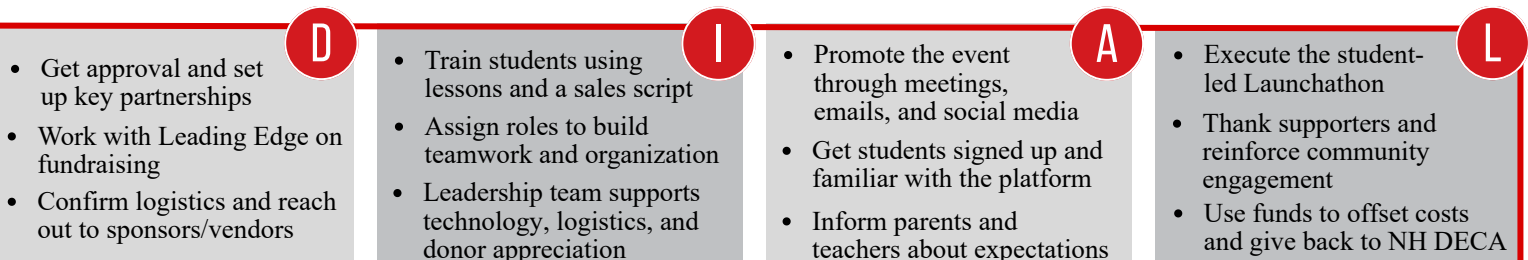
OUR SOLUTION

Operation DIAL is designed to **subsidize** NH DECA's **State Conference transportation costs**, while strengthening members' sales and communication skills. With four strategically outlined phases, each containing specific goals and milestones, **Operation DIAL** will mitigate the financial burden that DECA poses on the school and its members' families with the first-ever **NH DECA Launchathon**. The Launchathon is a **telethon-style fundraiser** where students make outreach calls to community members, sharing the mission of NH DECA and inviting them to contribute towards **supporting the chapter's fundraising goals**. Assisted by **Leading Edge Fundraising**, the Launchathon not only lowers chapter costs, but it also serves as a means to ensure our chapter is dedicated to preparing emerging leaders for future business careers.

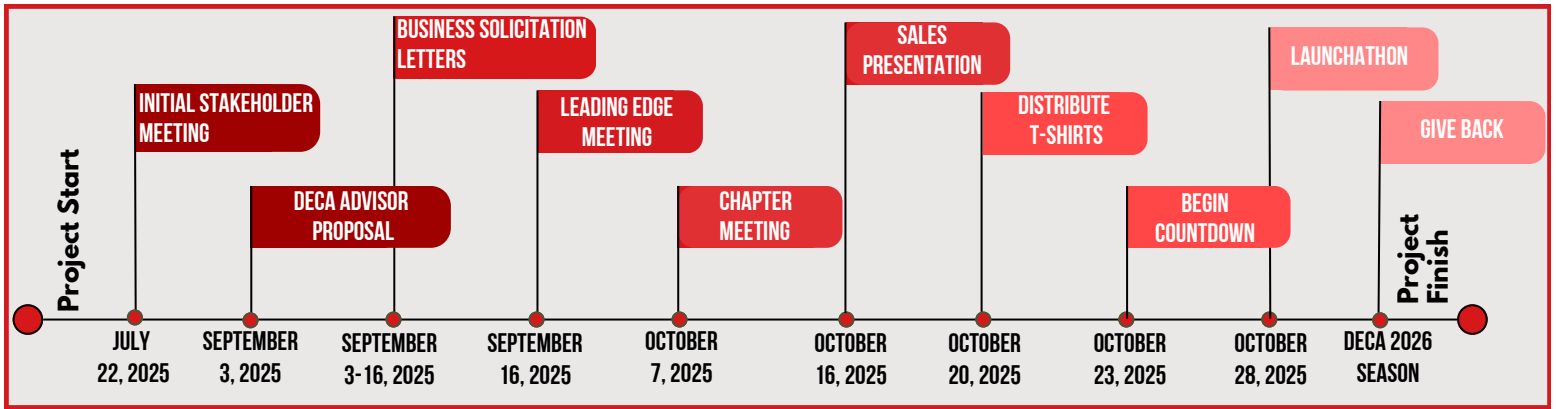
PROJECT GOALS



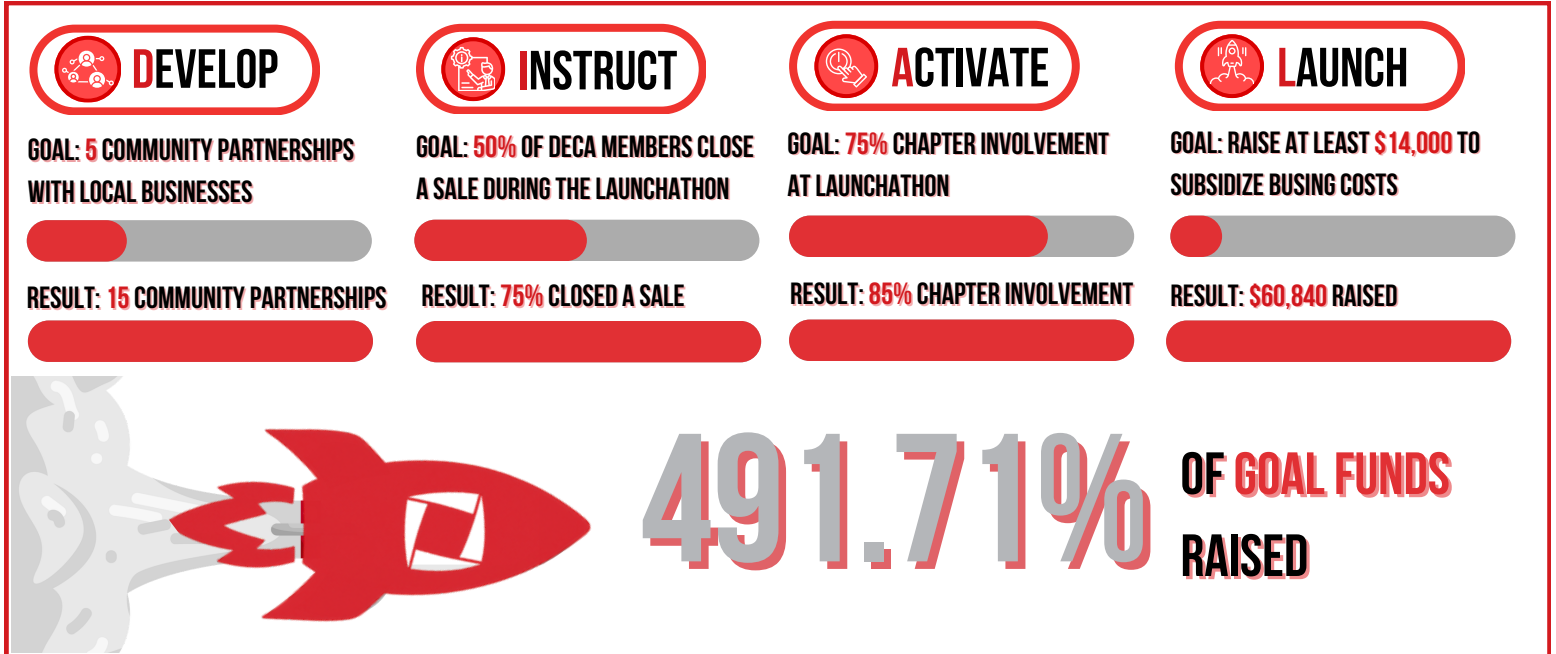
MILESTONES



OPERATION DIAL TIMELINE



EVALUATION OF KEY METRICS



QUALITATIVE METRICS

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK	STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK
"It was the best fundraiser I have ever been a part of! Everything was well run and organized." - Associate with Leading Edge Fundraising	"This has been our most successful fundraiser in all my years as an advisor." - Head NH DECA Advisor
MEMBER FEEDBACK	STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK
"The energy was amazing in the cafeteria! Every time we reached a new donation milestone, it was so exciting." - Anonymous NH DECA Member and Launchathon Attendee	"The girls did an amazing job with emphasizing the true importance of DECA to us parents with their emailing system and social media presence." - Anonymous NH DECA Parent

II. INITIATING

A. Statement of the problem

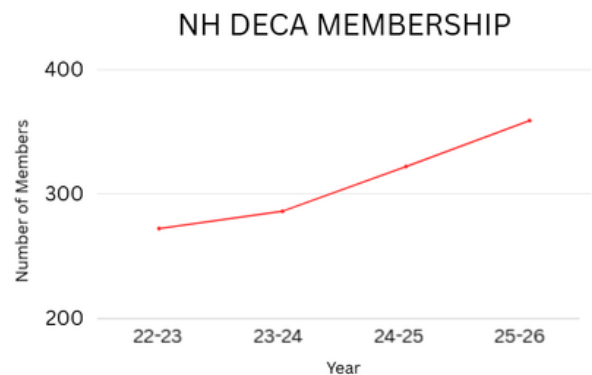
Since its startup in 1970, the NH DECA chapter's membership has grown tremendously (logo in Figure 2.1). Currently standing at **359 members**, DECA is the largest extracurricular activity at NHRHS, and its membership has shown an increasing trend over the past few years (referenced in Figure 2.2). While Northern Highlands (NH) is proud of this expanded membership, it also comes with the task of supporting the students and the chapter programs financially. With a chapter of this size, transportation has become one of the most urgent financial challenges NH DECA is facing. Specifically, due to growth in chapter membership, NH DECA must

FIGURE 2.1: NH DECA LOGO



now rent significantly more buses to ensure all qualifying students can attend the State Career Development Conference (SCDC) in Atlantic City. At the same time, nationwide inflation has increased vehicle rental costs dramatically. According to industry reports, school transportation costs have increased by more than **20%** since 2020, driven by heightened fuel prices, driver shortages, and increased operating expenses. As a result, the price of renting a single bus for the State Conference has more than doubled since 2019. With an estimated **ten buses** needed this year (five each way), total transportation expenses are projected to rise from \$6,600 in 2019 to **\$24,500 in 2026, a nearly 271% increase.**

FIGURE 2.2: NH DECA MEMBERSHIP DATA



In the past, NH DECA has attempted to alleviate rising expenses with fundraising events. However, these events have fallen substantially short of what is needed. Last competition season, the chapter hosted a well-attended “Trivia Night” for members and parents, which raised an impressive **\$7,000**. While successful in its own right, the money raised only covered **25%** of the transportation costs for the 2025 State Conference, leaving students and parents to cover the remaining costs. With costs continuing to rise each year, it has become evident that Trivia Night is no longer a viable financial solution for meeting the chapter’s logistical needs.

Ultimately, DECA should not be a financial burden for students and their families. However, the transportation costs alone now exceed what previous fundraising efforts covered, leaving families to pay hundreds of dollars out of pocket to attend competitions. Without a sustainable solution, the financial demands threaten to limit participation in DECA opportunities, making it increasingly difficult for members to fully benefit from the club.

B. Project scope

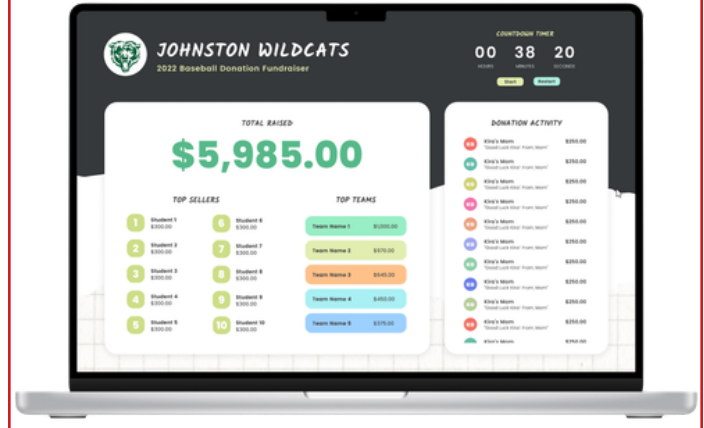
Purpose: The NH DECA Launchathon is designed as a strategic fundraising event that raises money to subsidize the NH DECA Chapter’s SCDC transportation costs, while strengthening members’ sales and communication skills. This “telethon” style event will feature **NH DECA students making outreach calls to community members, sharing the mission of NH DECA, and inviting them to contribute towards supporting the chapter's fundraising goals.** This important **hour-long event** will be facilitated with help from our strategic partnership with Leading Edge Fundraising, a company that has previously run successful campaigns with other NHRHS organizations. For example, in 2024, the NHRHS lacrosse program raised \$14,000 in a similar style

event, more than doubling NH DECA's Trivia Night efforts. Figure 2.3 below outlines how our NH DECA Launchathon will work, starting with NH DECA members inputting potential donor contact information into the Leading Edge Platform, followed by our hour-long, high-energy Launchathon event, and completed with automatic follow-up messages to potential donors. Figure 2.4 shows an example of the Leading Edge Fundraising Platform.

FIGURE 2.3: HOW THE LAUNCHATHON WORKS



FIGURE 2.4: LEADING EDGE FUNDRAISING PLATFORM



Rationale: One student reflected on the high costs of attending the State Conference, saying, “I was shocked by the cost of attending the State Conference. It is much higher than I expected.” With the overwhelming membership turnout, financing transportation has become a significant challenge. One mother of three NH DECA members adds, “Having three children who have been successful in the club has been a large financial burden, and it just keeps increasing; having to pay for competitions for six consecutive years has been overwhelming.” This key event is designed to raise funds that subsidize these transportation costs, resulting in lower expenses for members. Additionally, the Launchathon serves as a means to ensure our chapter is dedicated to preparing emerging leaders for future business careers.

Expected Benefits: This project is designed to contribute to the financial sustainability of NH DECA while enhancing student business knowledge and community involvement. The expected benefits are as follows:

FINANCIAL RELIEF & LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

The Launchathon will generate crucial funds to offset the rising transportation costs associated with DECA. By reducing the expenses for families, DECA events will become more accessible for everyone in the chapter. This ensures that, regardless of financial circumstances, members can fully participate. This enhanced financial stability will help NH DECA sustain continued growth in future years.

DEVELOPMENT OF REAL-WORLD SALES & COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Members will gain hands-on experience in sales, communication, and outreach during the Launchathon. Through guided scripts, sales etiquette training, and follow-up practice, members will be exposed to critical business skills that directly align with DECA's mission of "preparing emerging leaders and entrepreneurs for success beyond high school."

INCREASED COMMUNITY AWARENESS & SUPPORT

The Launchathon will increase awareness of the NH DECA program throughout the community. We will utilize various promotional efforts, including engaging with local community businesses, to generate positive publicity for NH DECA, emphasizing the importance of the club. This will encourage continued community support and foster long-term chapter success.

III. PLANNING AND ORGANIZING

A. Project goals

In order to effectively guide the Launchathon, we developed **Operation DIAL**. The operation is a well-structured plan designed to strengthen engagement, outreach, and impact. Anchored by four primary goals, **Operation DIAL** provides a framework for proficiently scheduling, organizing, and budgeting as we prepare for this telethon-style fundraising event.

D

Develop Partnerships and Administrative Support

To use the Launchathon event as a proactive bridge between NH DECA and the local business community, our first goal is to secure at least **five local business partnerships**. To accomplish this, we will have chapter members solicit donations and sponsorships from local businesses. This will spread awareness about NH DECA throughout the community, creating positive publicity and increased exposure surrounding the club.

I

Instruct Students

As the Launchathon gives NH DECA members hands-on experience through real conversations with potential donors, a main goal is to strengthen the professional communication skills of our 359 members. These skills are essential, as research shows communication is one of the most important factors for college and career success. According to Fierce Inc., 86% of employees and executives believe that ineffective communication causes most workplace failures. Through targeted training in customer service, phone etiquette, and effective communication, participants will be better prepared to work with community partners and enter the workforce. Our measurable goal is for **at least 50% of participating NH DECA members to close a sale during the event**.

A

Activate Student Engagement

To ensure this event supports our entire NH DECA population, a main goal of the Launchathon is to **involve at least 75% of the NH DECA chapter (270 students)**. Students will have various opportunities to play a role in the event, such as entering 25+ contacts into the Leading Edge Fundraising system, soliciting community donations, and attending the final Launchathon event. With 359 members, this goal is rigorous, but realistic through effective internal marketing to students and consistent communication with club members.

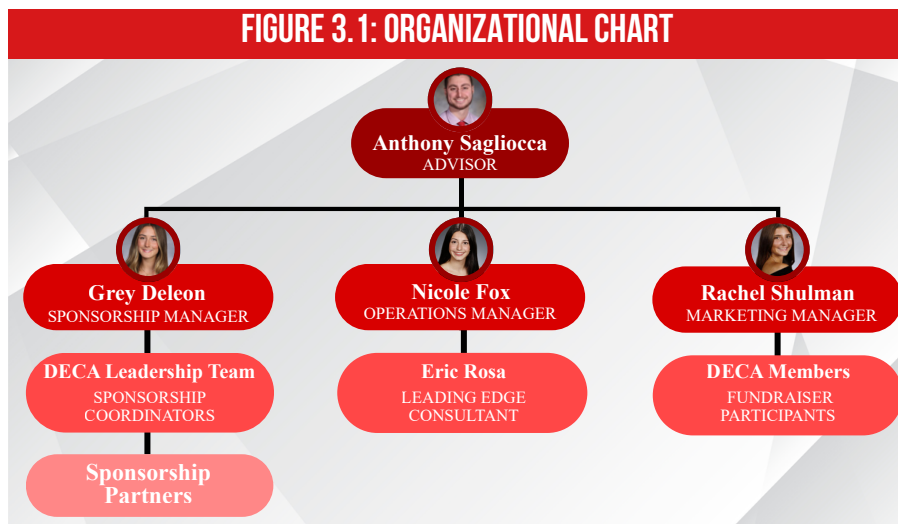
L

LAUNCH Fundraiser Execution and Chapter Impact

Finally, the primary goal of **Operation DIAL** is to **raise at least \$14,000 by LAUNCHING** the official fundraiser event. This money will cover just over half of the busing expenses for the State Conference, an increase of 25% from last year. This will significantly reduce the amount that students and families have to pay out-of-pocket. Last year, Trivia Night raised about \$7,000, making this a rigorous goal, as we are aiming to double the amount. Additionally, the NH lacrosse teams participated in a similar fundraiser and saw much success, raising almost \$14,000, showing that this method of fundraising is effective.

B. Human resource management plan

The Human Resource team played a critical role in ensuring our project goals were accomplished throughout our fundraising process. NH DECA Advisor Anthony Sagliocca oversees project logistics, provides guidance to project managers, and offers strategic input. The project managers, Grey Deleon, Rachel Shulman, and Nicole Fox, were each given different roles based on the results of the **Career One Stop Interest Assessment**. This assessment, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, helps match your personality and interests with potential career paths that align with your strengths. In addition, each manager served as a grade captain, encouraging their specific grade level (sophomores, juniors, or seniors) to earn donations by rallying them before, during, and even after the event. The organization of these positions, as seen in the organizational chart in Figure 3.1, allowed us to complete tasks effectively and efficiently, contributing to the overall success of the event.



Sponsorship & Relations Manager (Sophomore Team)

Grey's strong social and persuasion skills resulted in the assessment suggesting that she focus on roles in collaboration and communication. Grey takes the initiative in **securing key sponsors** and **developing community partnerships**, ensuring sufficient funding and resources for the fundraiser.

Grey will enlist help from the NH DECA leadership team to conduct community outreach and strategically partner with local businesses. She works to intertwine the community financially and resourcefully into operations, supporting fundraising efforts and facilitating long-term community connections.



Marketing & Advertising Manager (Junior Team Captain)

Due to Rachel's expertise in thinking both analytically and creatively to connect with audiences, the Career One Stop Interest Assessment recommended that she pursue a career in marketing. Based on these results, Rachel assumes the responsibilities of promoting the Launchathon, working to ensure

75% of NH DECA chapter members participate. Rachel will use social media, video, and email marketing to promote the event.



Operations Manager (Senior Team Captain)

Nicole's strengths in communicating effectively and leadership led the assessment to recommend that she explore the field of enterprising: roles for individuals who enjoy leading and motivating others. She ensures that daily tasks are completed and that all preparations for the event are on

track. Additionally, she serves as the **primary point of contact for Leading Edge sales consultant Eric Rosa**, leveraging his expertise and resources to enhance the event's success.



Leading Edge Sales Consultant

Eric Rosa serves a critical role in our fundraising efforts, providing us with the tools needed to achieve our goals. As the Leading Edge Sales Consultant, **Rosa orchestrates the fundraising web page using Leading Edge software**. Rosa will also attend the event and assist the project managers

with handing out prizes and motivating club members to earn donations.

C. Schedule

i. Milestone

To ensure a successful execution of **Operation DIAL**, we have established four key project milestones to keep our team organized and on track to reach our goals. These milestones and their components are outlined in our **Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)** and **RACI Matrix** (not pictured in paper. The WBS defines the full scope of the project and breaks it into manageable components. The RACI Matrix identifies who is **Responsible**, **Accountable**, **Consulted**, and **Informed** for each task, helping prevent miscommunication and maintain accountability.

Develop Partnerships and Administrative Support

To set the Launchathon up for success, our first milestone focuses on securing approval and establishing foundational partnerships necessary to move the project forward. This includes working with Leading Edge to facilitate NH DECA's fundraising efforts, coordinating with the NHRHS Administration Team to confirm event logistics, and beginning outreach to potential sponsors and vendors.

Instruct Students

To prepare members for success during the Launchathon, this phase will focus on student training and role preparation. NH DECA will provide instruction on effective selling techniques, customer service, and professional phone etiquette through coordinated lessons and a standardized sales script. Students will be assigned roles that build organizational and teamwork skills, with leadership team members supporting technology, logistics, and donor appreciation to ensure students professionally represent NH DECA.

Activate Student Engagement

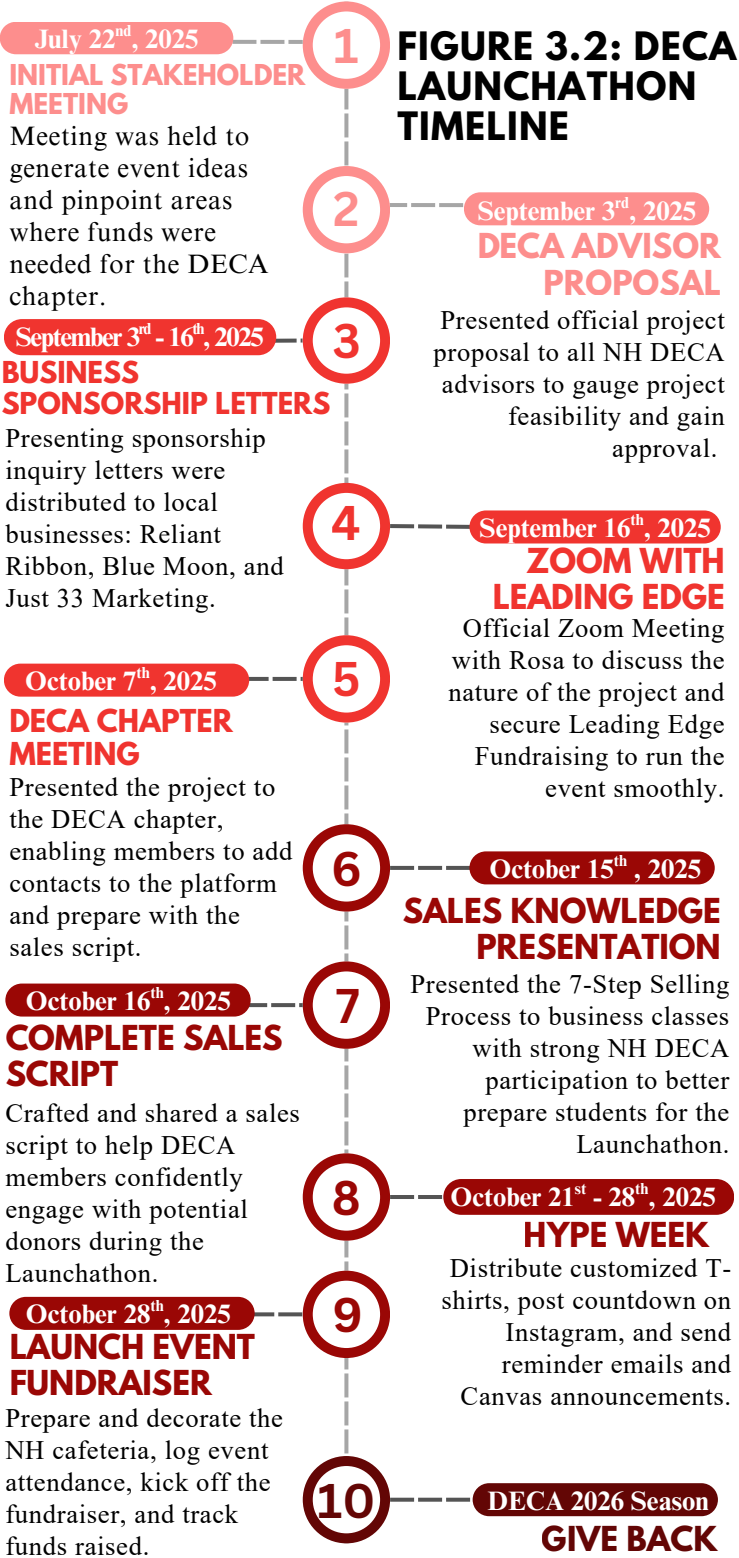
Achieving strong chapter engagement is a key planning milestone for the Launchathon. After logistics are approved, this phase focuses on a coordinated communication and promotion strategy, using chapter meetings, email, signage, and social media to inform and motivate NH DECA members and parents. Student sign-ups and platform familiarization support participation, while messaging to parents and teachers clarifies expectations to ensure successful event execution.

LAUNCH Fundraiser Execution and Chapter Impact

The final milestone focuses on executing the Launchathon and leveraging the funds raised to support and impact NH DECA. It combines partnerships, student training, and participation strategies to run a student-led fundraising event. Post-event efforts include thanking supporters and reinforcing community engagement. Funds raised help offset state conference costs, highlighting student leadership and the project's long-term impact.

ii. Timeline to reach each milestone

The timeline shown in Figure 3.2 outlines the key steps of **Operation DIAL** that we will follow to prepare for and execute the Launchathon, allowing us to maintain a clear focus on the project's overall scope.



D. Quality management plan

To assess the quality and success of the Launchathon, we have established key metrics to ensure the project meets its objectives through effective execution. Figure 3.3 illustrates the metrics we will use to monitor its success.

FIGURE 3.3:

	PLAN	GOAL	METRIC
D	Develop Partnerships and Administrative Support	To establish partnerships with a fundraising company and local businesses required for the project, ensuring that at least three local businesses also serve as event sponsors.	Partner with Leading Edge Fundraising, NHRHS Admin, and garner five sponsorships.
I	Instruct Students	Educate students on sales and phone etiquette to maximize amount of sales closed during the Launchathon.	50 % of NH DECA members working the event will be able to close the sale. Tracked through the Leading Edge software.
A	Activate Student Engagement	Facilitate chapter involvement through the many opportunities available for members to participate.	75 % of NH DECA members will participate in the project. Tracked through donation solicitation spreadsheet and event attendance spreadsheet.
L	LAUNCH Fundraiser Execution and Chapter Impact	Promote the event through emails, announcements, and flyers, and raise at least \$14,000 .	Measure chapter involvement through the attendance sheet (75%) and assess funds through the Leading Edge platform (over \$14,000).

E. Risk management plan

Prior to the Launchathon, we carefully identified several risks that could impact the project's success and color-coded them by threat level, as shown in Figure 3.4. For each risk, we implemented steps to prevent it from occurring. Figure 3.5 outlines each potential risk and its corresponding mitigation strategy if it were to occur.

FIGURE 3.4:

IMPACT			
	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW
	LOW	LOW	LOW
			LIKELIHOOD
			LOW
			MEDIUM
			HIGH

FIGURE 3.5:

POTENTIAL ISSUES	POTENTIAL IMPACT	RESPONSE STRATEGY
Bad Weather Conditions	Students are not able to get to NH for the Launchathon on October 28th.	We will have a backup date of November 11th prepared for the Launchathon.
Wi-fi Outage	Students are not able to enter their contacts or make their phone calls during the event.	We will have the NHRHS technology team on standby during the event to combat any technological issues that students face.
Students are not Comfortable with the Sales Script Provided	They are not able to effectively close the sale during phone calls with their contacts.	The NH DECA Leadership Team will be walking around to provide assistance to any students who need it.
Student Burnout During the Event	As the event progresses, students' engagement may decline, resulting in slower outreach to potential donors.	We will incentivize student participation with gift cards and use music, refreshments, and grade-level competition to maintain energy and motivation.
Low Event Turnout	We are not able to involve a majority of the chapter and struggle to meet our monetary goals.	Promote the event through social media and announcements, market the event as required for members, and award DECA Dollars for attendance.

F. Proposed project budget

We estimate that the Launchathon expenses will total **\$2,700**, with **85% attributed to the cost of chapter t-shirts**. To determine the expenses accounted for, we considered in-kind donations as well as costs covered by NH DECA. The proposed budget for our event is low, as team members will handle marketing, and the event will be held in-house. Seen in Figure 3.6 is a detailed proposed budget for the Launchathon.

FIGURE 3.6:

EXPENSE	VALUE	DONOR	NOTES
MARKETING	\$0	N/A	All marketing will be completed in-house by our team (e.g., flyers, bulletin board, social media, etc.).
EVENT DECORATIONS	\$150	2024 DECA Chapter Funds	Event decoration supplies which will include balloons, tablecloths, streamers, etc.
EVENT VENUE	\$0	NHRHS	We plan on running the event in-house at NH, which will come at no cost.
FOOD/BEVERAGE	\$300	In-Kind Donations/ Local Business Sponsorships	We will inquire with our local sponsors regarding food/beverage donations (e.g. water, candy, chips, etc.).
CHAPTER T-SHIRTS	\$2300	In-Kind Donations/ 2024 DECA Chapter Funds	These T-Shirts will act dually as our 2026 DECA chapter t-shirts as well as the Launchathon t-shirts. We will need to order enough for every chapter member as well as extras.
TOTAL:	\$2750		



IV. EXECUTION

With the planning phase complete, the Launchathon entered the execution stage, where previously outlined strategies and preparations were carefully implemented, resulting in a well-organized and successful fundraising event.



DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

1. COORDINATING WITH NORTHERN HIGHLANDS ADMINISTRATION

Execution: To initiate the fundraiser, we coordinated logistics with NHRHS administration to ensure the event ran seamlessly. We worked directly with Principal Joseph Occhino, Vice Principal Tony LaRocca, and Director of Facilities Jamie Atchison to brainstorm and facilitate the logistics of this major 359 NH DECA member event. Together, we confirmed the date, time, and location, ultimately selecting the main cafeteria as the optimal space due to its size and access to important technology. We also held a formal meeting with our school's Director of Technology, Jose Madhavasseril, to coordinate access to audiovisual equipment, including the projector, screen, microphone, and speaker system necessary for the fundraiser's success. At the conclusion of these meetings, our fundraiser was officially approved for **LAUNCH**.

2. PARTNER WITH LEADING-EDGE

Execution: After coordinating with NH, Operations Manager Nicole Fox initiated a meeting with **Leading-Edge Representative Eric Rosa** to establish the company's role in supporting the Launchathon (logo in Figure 4.1). During this meeting, we discussed the software's capabilities and created our fundraising account. Using his guidance, we established our fundraising timeline, monetary goal, and event structure.

FIGURE 4.1: LEADING-EDGE LOGO



3. SECURE PRESENTING SPONSORS

Execution: After establishing our partnership with Leading-Edge and finalizing the fundraising framework, our next step was to secure community sponsors who could help bring the Launchathon to life. To effectively obtain community partners, Sponsorship & Relations Manager Grey DeLeon crafted a professional sponsorship inquiry letter. The letter outlined the purpose of the Launchathon and what the company would receive in return for their monetary and in-kind donations. Using this approach, we partnered with **three primary sponsors**: Just33 Marketing, Blue Moon Mexican Cafe, and Reliant Ribbon. Just 33 Marketing supplied matching t-shirts for all participants at a discounted price, which also acted as the official NH DECA chapter t-shirts for the 2025/2026 year. Blue Moon Mexican Cafe catered chips and salsa for each table at the Launchathon, in addition to making a monetary donation. Reliant Ribbon also kindly contributed a substantial monetary donation. In return, all three companies were featured on the event T-shirts, recognized on social media, and highlighted on flyers at the event.

4. DONATION SOLICITATION AND TRACKING

Execution: Finally, once all operational logistics were accounted for, our focus shifted to enhancing the Launchathon through strategic community partnerships. Sponsorship & Relations Manager, Grey DeLeon, created a structured spreadsheet, assigning members of the NH DECA leadership team to visit local businesses, inform them of project goals, and promote partnership opportunities. As seen in Figure 4.2, **30 community businesses were contacted, and 50% were converted into committed partners who provided either monetary or in-kind donations, a record-breaking partnership conversion rate for NH DECA.** These partnerships

FIGURE 4.2: DONATION TRACKING SPREADSHEET

Delivered to a DECA Advisor	Assigned Leadership Team Member	Business	Location	Value of donation	Detailed Description of donation- this will be used for our program so please be as specific as possible
✓	Skylar Gross	Horizon Nail Salon	Ramsey, NJ	\$25	Free manicure (One)
✓	Zoey Gershengorn	Stateline Diner	Mahwah, NJ	\$30	\$30 Gift card
✓	Corey Begleiter	Anthony's Coal Fire	984 State Route 17, Ramsey	50\$	\$50 Gift Card
✓	Taylor Phillips	Three Chicas	637 Wyckoff Ave, Wyckoff, NJ	\$100	\$10 Coupon (Ten)
✓	Emily Vaccarino	Andrea's	Waldwick, NJ	\$150	\$75 Gift Card (Two)
✓	Ryan McCarthy	Chick-fil-a	Ramsey, NJ	\$50	\$25 Gift Card (Two)
✓	Leila Shamash	Allendale Bar and Grill	Allendale, NJ	\$50	\$50 Gift Card
✓	Erica Miller	Curbside Confection's	Parkridge, NJ	\$50	\$50 Gift Card
✓	Reet Sachdev	Beets Juice Bar	Allendale NJ	\$100	\$100 gift card

transformed the Launchathon into a professionally supported and community-backed event, providing more than **\$2,000 in monetary and in-kind donations**, enhancing the event experience while strengthening NH DECA's presence in the community. To honor their generosity, every partner received recognition across multiple channels, through branded flyers, social media highlights, live event announcements, and a professionally designed sponsor display showcased at the front of the venue and on every table (Figure 4.3).

FIGURE 4.3: DONOR RECOGNITION DISPLAY



INSTRUCT STUDENTS

1. MEMBER SALES TRAINING

Execution: In the weeks leading up to the Launchathon, we executed a structured sales training initiative for all Introduction to Business classes, which consist primarily of our youngest NH DECA members, who have not yet been exposed to advanced business coursework. By concentrating on these foundational skills, we were able to personally train nearly 180 NH DECA students in essential sales techniques. As shown in Figure 4.4, these sessions covered the 7 Steps of the Sale: prospecting, preparation, approach, presentation, handling objections, closing the sale, and follow-up. The presentations also covered how to show donor appreciation after the event. By reinforcing these fundamentals, we ensured participants were prepared to engage confidently with potential donors and apply real-world selling techniques during the Launchathon.

FIGURE 4.4: SALES PRESENTATION



FIGURE 4.5: SALES SCRIPT

NH DECA LAUNCHATHON SALES SCRIPT

Hi ___, this is ___. I'm reaching out because we're running a fundraiser to support Northern Highlands DECA, our school's business and leadership organization. I just sent you a link to our official fundraising page — it includes a short video that explains what DECA is all about. You can easily donate through the page, and any amount of support would mean a lot to us and help our club continue to grow and succeed.



2. SALES SCRIPT

Execution: To supplement our in-person teaching strategies and ensure our entire chapter was prepared, we crafted a professional sales script to support participants when speaking with potential donors over the phone. Copies of the script were distributed to all NH DECA members prior to the Launchathon, and additional copies were placed on each table during the event. This ensured that all participants were able to confidently and consistently guide conversations with their potential donors. The provided sales script can be seen in Figure 4.5.

3. LEADERSHIP TEAM TRAINING

Execution: Prior to the Launchathon, it was necessary to prepare the NH DECA leadership team for their responsibilities to ensure that the event ran smoothly. Team members were responsible for organizing the event t-shirts (Figure 4.6) and planning how to distribute them. Training sessions were also held in the leadership team's homeroom to familiarize leadership team members with the Leading Edge platform and make sure that they were prepared to assist chapter members during the event. Leaders were also trained on their specific assigned roles and responsibilities so they knew exactly what to do during the Launchathon, allowing them to confidently support students, manage logistics, and maintain a professional and organized event environment.



FIGURE 4.6: T-SHIRT ORGANIZATION

ACTIVATE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

1. NH DECA CHAPTER MEETING

Execution: Because of its size, NH DECA only hosts one full mandatory chapter meeting for all members per year. Due to its required in-person nature, we knew this was the perfect opportunity to **LAUNCH** the fundraiser to our members. As shown in Figure 4.7, we introduced the event in person to all **359 chapter members** on October 6th, and clearly explained its purpose: raising money to fund our events and subsidizing our travel costs. This kickoff meeting served as the formal launch point for the fundraiser, ensuring all members understood the event's structure, expectations, and competitive framework. By setting clear goals and generating enthusiasm, we established a strong foundation for high chapter engagement throughout the fundraising period.

2. CONTACT INPUT

Execution: To prepare for donor outreach, all members were asked to input a minimum of **25 contacts** into the Leading Edge fundraising platform. This process was introduced and explained in detail to members during our mandatory chapter meeting. This step allowed for efficient and immediate outreach on event night, ensuring that each student arrived with a fully prepared and pre-approved list of potential donors. Leadership team members verified contact completion through the platform dashboard, ensuring chapter-wide accountability and preventing any delays. This early data-entry requirement also familiarized students with the digital fundraising system, reducing technical questions during the event and allowing them to focus entirely on professional communication and donor engagement.

3. LAUNCHATHON MULTI-CHANNEL PROMOTIONS

Execution: To supplement the information discussed during the initial meeting, we executed a multi-channel promotion strategy. First, flyers, shown in Figure 4.8, were created that listed all important event information and Leading Edge Platform directions. These flyers were distributed during the chapter meeting, posted strategically around the school, added to our chapter's Canvas page, and emailed to NH DECA members and their parents. To generate awareness beyond the school building, the flyer was also shared on the NH DECA and NH social media

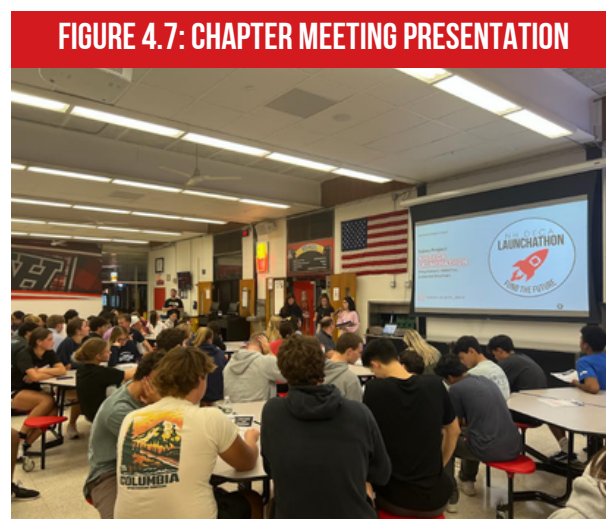


FIGURE 4.7: CHAPTER MEETING PRESENTATION

pages, generating **over 1,000 impressions** as potential donors and families learned about the upcoming event. In addition, leading up to the Launchathon, the project managers reinforced event readiness through a series of **3 informational emails and supplemented Canvas announcements**. These messages reminded students of the date and time, shared educational materials and sales scripts, discussed directions for adding 25+ contacts, and reminded students to wear their new grade-specific competition t-shirt.

4. BULLETIN BOARD DESIGN

Execution: To supplement digital promotions, we redesigned the bulletin board in the NH business hallway (shown in Figure 4.9) to capture attention and generate excitement surrounding the event. This location was strategically chosen for its high traffic, with hundreds of students passing daily. The bulletin board included all the essential information members would need about the Launchathon, highlighted all of our event sponsors and donors, and emphasized the opportunity to significantly lower SCDC travel costs.

5. INSTAGRAM “HYPE-WEEK POSTS”

Execution: In the week leading up to the Launchathon, we executed a **five-day social media Hype-Week countdown** (Figure 4.10) created to build community awareness and excitement for the event. These posts included reminders and helpful tips to prepare members for success. This “Hype-Week” kept the Launchathon at the forefront of members’ minds and generated enthusiasm leading up to the event.

FIGURE 4.8: LAUNCHATHON PROMOTIONAL FLYER

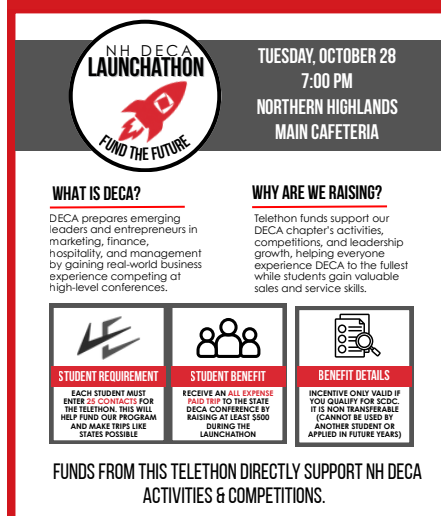


FIGURE 4.9: REVAMPED DECA BULLETIN BOARD



FIGURE 4.10: HYPE WEEK POST



6. PROMOTIONAL VIDEO

Execution: Finally, to effectively encourage potential donors to contribute to our fundraiser, Marketing & Advertising Manager Rachel Shulman created a promotional video featuring current NH DECA members and advisors that highlighted how DECA has supported their educational development and growth as leaders. This video was posted on the NH DECA social media pages and directly emailed to parents and community members. Additionally, when NH DECA members sent their donation inquiries via text message, the link included directed recipients to the video alongside the option to donate. By the time the fundraiser ended, this video had generated more than **9,000 community impressions**, allowing donors to truly see the importance of supporting our DECA program.



LAUNCH Fundraiser Execution and Chapter Impact

1. ATTENDANCE

Execution: To take accurate attendance at this large-scale event, we knew a simple sign-in form wouldn't do. We again met with the NHRHS Administration to leverage digital student check-ins, which our school currently uses for field trips. With logistical help from NHRHS administration and NH DECA advisors, we created a streamlined digital check-in system in which students scanned their school IDs upon arrival (Figure 4.11). This new initiative enabled us to efficiently organize

FIGURE 4.11: ATTENDANCE CHECK-IN



attendance records, keep members accountable, and create a **new and improved system that will now be used for all future NH DECA events**. “The digital check-in system completely streamlined attendance tracking. It saved time, improved accuracy, and set a new standard for how we’ll manage NH DECA events going forward,” says DECA Advisor Sagliocca. Overall, this innovation strengthened event execution and established a sustainable, long-term solution for effective attendance management within NH DECA.

2. FOOD AND BEVERAGE

Execution: To keep energy high, chips and salsa donated by Blue Moon, water bottles donated by Three Chicas, and a variety of candy and drink options were placed on each table for members to enjoy, creating a fun environment for students (Figure 4.12).



FIGURE 4.13: LEADERSHIP MEMBERS



3. LEADERSHIP TEAM MEMBERS

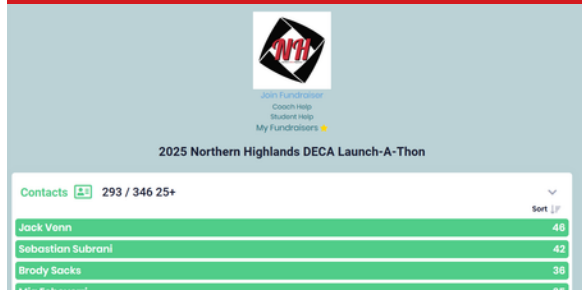
Execution: The NH DECA leadership team played an important role during the Launchathon; members were assigned different roles to ensure that all areas of the event ran smoothly. Our operational workflow ran with the precision of a professional corporate event. Leadership members rotated through pre-assigned roles such as logistics, event photos, tech support, and hospitality (as seen in Figure 4.13). This guaranteed zero disruptions in event flow while also contributing to increasing students’ professional communication skills, as leadership members enhanced their business knowledge and gained hands-on experience in event management and organization. By the end of the event, **26 NH DECA leadership members had significantly contributed to the success of the event.**

4. GRADE COMPETITION

Execution: During the Launchathon, sophomores, juniors, and seniors were divided into respective teams to compete to raise the most money (Figure 4.14). The three teams each wore different colored shirts and sat by grade in the cafeteria to cultivate team spirit. As team captains, we each motivated our team throughout the event to continue making phone calls and sending text messages to their potential donors. According to Forbes, competition in sales can boost motivation and increase productivity, adding an encouraging competitive element to our event.



FIGURE 4.15: PARTICIPANT OUTREACH

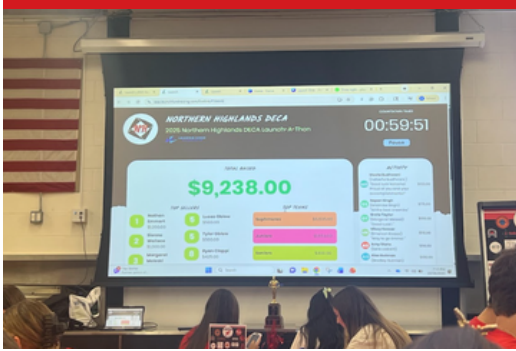


5. MEMBER OUTREACH

Execution: With most members adding 25+ contacts to the Leading Edge Platform before the event (Figure 4.15), we were able to **LAUNCH** as soon as our one-hour time clock started. During the course of the hour, more than **8,000 combined touchpoints were reached**, with NH DECA members using the provided sales script to energetically call and text their contacts for support. For many students, this was the first time they had ever

made a professional sales call, and at the conclusion of the event, **300 students (84% of chapter members)** had completed their **first-ever real-world sales experience**.

FIGURE 4.16: LIVE DONATION TRACKER



6. LIVE DONATION TRACKER

Execution: Shown in Figure 4.16, donations were projected live on a big screen at the front of the main cafeteria. The energy in the cafeteria was electric! According to **the goal gradient effect**, when individuals can see that they are approaching a goal, they become more motivated to achieve it faster, making the live donation tracker an effective tool to increase donations; each time we got closer to a milestone, more donations came in. Every time a donation milestone was reached on the live tracker, the cafeteria was filled with cheers and energy; upbeat

music was played, and the competition amongst the grades intensified. Members were competing for top individual donations as well as encouraging their teammates to get donations to maximize team potential. It was truly a high-energy experience that kept members engaged for the full hour.

7. EVENT PRIZES

Execution: Rosa supplied and distributed event prizes as part of our initial agreement with the company. This included \$10 Chipotle and Starbucks gift cards that were awarded to the members as select donation milestones were surpassed. In addition, all in-kind donation gift cards from local community businesses were distributed to students who facilitated the largest amount of donations. In total, **30 prizes** were awarded (as seen in Figure 4.17), keeping the energy high and creating a fun and competitive experience for all.

FIGURE 4.17: PRIZE AWARDED



FIGURE 4.18: ACTIVE LINK REMINDER



8. FINAL WEEKS

Execution: After the Launchathon, the fundraiser remained open for an additional two weeks to maximize donor participation and provide an opportunity for those who were not available during the event to donate. During this extended window, the Leading Edge system sent out two follow-up reminder messages to all contacts entered by chapter members to prompt additional donations and maximize donor participation. In addition, NH DECA posted a reminder on the chapter's Instagram account that the donation link was still active, as shown in Figure 4.18. Extending the fundraiser beyond the hour-long event ensured no potential supporters were missed and demonstrated NH DECA's commitment to sustained outreach. By exemplifying these practices, we demonstrated skills aligned with those expected of future leaders in business and marketing.

8. THANK-YOU MESSAGES & DONOR FOLLOW-UP

Execution: To uphold professionalism and maintain long-term relationships with our supporters, all NH DECA members who received support from their contacts were instructed to send personalized thank-you messages following the Launchathon to recognize donors for their support. We provided a professional thank-you script via email to make sure students did all of the following: expressed appreciation, referenced the purpose of the Launchathon, and communicated the impact of each donation. We emphasized the importance of this step, as maintaining relationships is extremely important in the business world. This helped students build strong networking skills, which they will continue to utilize in the future.

V. MONITORING & CONTROLLING

A. Monitoring

Schedule: Throughout **Operation DIAL**, we utilized **Google Calendar** and the project management software **Trello** for schedule management and to monitor upcoming meetings, deadlines, and the event. We found Google Calendar to be the most efficient method for monitoring schedules because it kept everyone informed of upcoming deadlines through frequent reminders. The calendar, shown in Figure 5.1, was populated with reminders regarding upcoming team and stakeholder meetings, predetermined dates to send student and parent emails leading up to the Launchathon, reminders to post the “Hype-Week” countdown on Instagram, and the confirmed date of the event. Additionally, by utilizing Trello, we were able to create a **kanban board** to collaboratively monitor project progress in real-time, making consistent updates as project components advanced or were completed (Figure 5.2). This allowed us to keep the project organized and on schedule.

FIGURE 5.1: GOOGLE CALENDAR

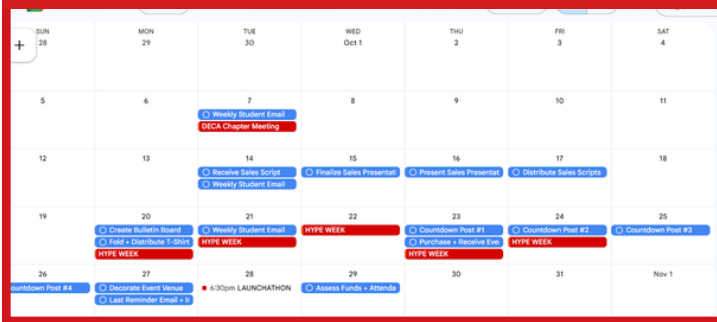
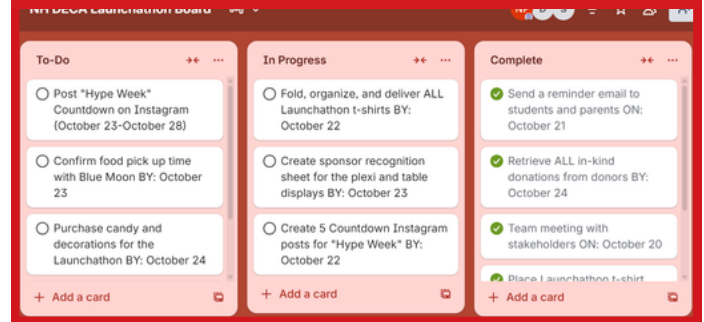


FIGURE 5.2: TRELLO BOARD



As indicated previously, a **WBS** was also used to break the project down into manageable tasks, and a **RACI matrix** was utilized to clarify project roles and responsibilities. These tools prevented confusion and improved team communication.

Budget: To monitor **Operation DIAL's** budget, a **Microsoft Excel spreadsheet** was created to manage expenses and donations. Shown in Figure 5.3, the spreadsheet was arranged to follow **Operation DIAL** to maintain organization. The spreadsheet was consistently updated after each subsequent purchase and donation to ensure all financial details were recorded properly.

Quality: To monitor project quality, we held **bi-weekly meetings** in person or over Zoom each Monday. Meetings included our team, two NH DECA advisors acting on behalf of all advisors, and Rosa, from Leading Edge. Here, we would present the current status of **Operation DIAL** and our plan for the following weeks. A **Google Drive** folder was shared with all involved parties to ensure all documents were easily accessible, and team members could track updates and provide concurrent feedback; this created a **feedback loop** that helped confirm the project met quality standards. Additionally, a **Personal Accountability and Collaboration Tracking (PACT) Agreement** (Figure 5.4) was created to ensure that all individual and collaborative responsibilities were clearly defined for members, and the project was efficiently tracked. The PACT ensured that expectations were met as group members were held accountable for their assigned tasks.

FIGURE 5.3: MICROSOFT EXCEL BUDGET

Operation	Expense	Value	Donor
D	Business Sponsorship Letters	\$0.00	DIAL Team
	Business Solicitation Sheets	\$0.00	DIAL Team
	Sales Presentations	\$0.00	DIAL Team
I	Sales Scripts	\$0.00	DIAL Team
A	Event Marketing	\$0.00	DIAL Team
	Chapter T-Shirts	\$2,300.00	Just 33 Marketing/ 2024 DECA Funds
L	Event Decorations	\$138.56	2024 DECA Funds
	Food/Beverage	\$277.56	Local Business Sponsorships
	Event Venue	\$0.00	Northern Highlands Regional HS
Total			\$2,716.12

Fundraising Platform: The Leading Edge Platform, shown in Figure 5.5, monitored project quality, as it kept track of members' contacts and who entered their 25+ contacts. It also monitored how many calls and texts were sent during the event, and sent out automated messages after the Launchathon was completed. The platform actively tracked the funds raised throughout and after the event, ensuring that the final amount stated was accurate.

B. Controlling

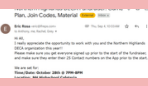
The controlling phase is essential in ensuring the Launchathon achieves its objectives. Project managers monitored the project's progress by comparing performance against the original budget, timeline, and goals. Figure 5.6 outlines the challenges encountered throughout the project, the strategies that setbacks were met with, and the resulting outcomes. Throughout the project, we anticipated several potential issues that fortunately did not occur, such as a lack of contacts, low attendance, and insufficient funds raised. We asked all NH DECA members to enter 25 contacts each into the fundraising software. By incentivizing participants with our chapter's accountability system, DECA Dollars, requiring at least 5 DECA dollars to attend a regional competition and 8 to qualify for the state competition, **93% of the requested contacts were successfully entered**. Additionally, by emphasizing the Launchathon's importance for our chapter, just under 85% of NH DECA members participated, with 300 club members present.

FIGURE 5.4: PACT AGREEMENT

NH DECA LAUNCHATHON PACT AGREEMENT

PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND COLLABORATION TRACKING AGREEMENT

Sponsorship & Relations Manager Grey DeLeon
Operations Manager Nicole Fox
Marketing & Advertising Manager Rachel Shulman

GROUP MEMBER	DATE	DELIVERABLE	DOCUMENTATION
Grey, Nicole, & Rachel	9/16/25	Initial stakeholder meeting with Leading Edge representative Eric Rosa to confirm partnership and event logistics.	
Grey	9/17/25	Sponsorship inquiry left with Blue Moon manager to determine if they would like to be one of our presenting sponsors.	
Nicole	9/17/25	Confirmed NH Cafeteria as event venue with NH Administration.	
Rachel	9/17/25	Drafted and finalized flyer to promote the Launchathon.	

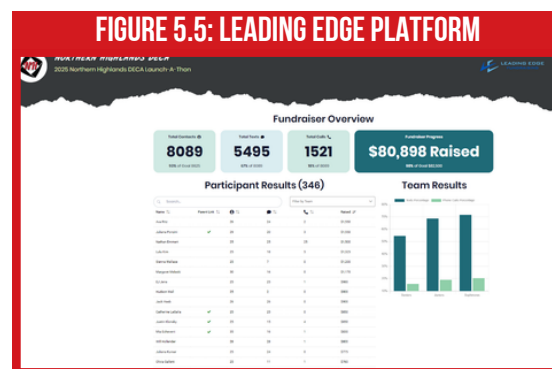


FIGURE 5.6:

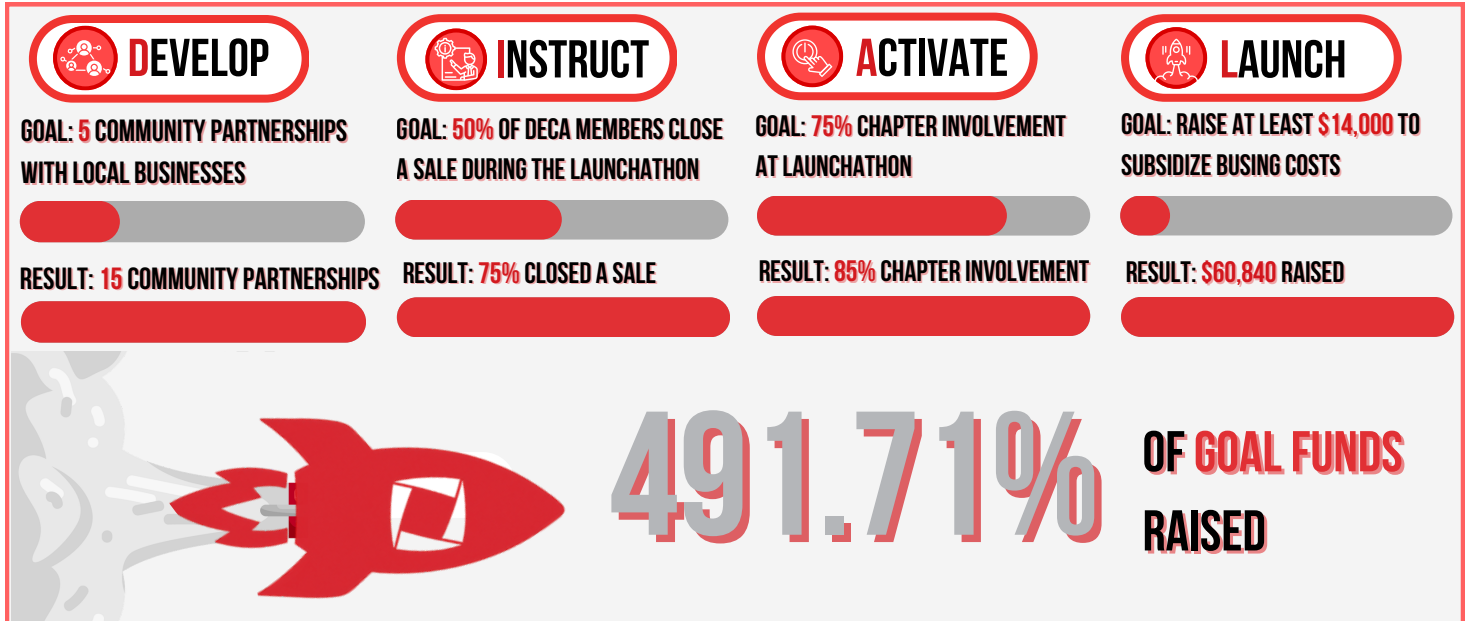
ISSUES ENCOUNTERED	STRATEGY	FINAL OUTCOME
FORGOTTEN LOGIN DETAILS	Participants had created logins to access their fundraising accounts, but many forgot their passwords on the day of the event. Project managers assisted by walking around and guiding them to click 'Forgot my Password' and follow the prompts.	All participants were able to access their fundraising accounts during the event.
UNSTABLE INTERNET CONNECTION	The service in the NH cafeteria was at times unstable; therefore, participants were instructed to use their school-issued devices, if available, which had access to the school WiFi, unlike their mobile devices.	All participants were able to access the fundraising software despite internet difficulties.
STUDENT BURNOUT	As the launchathon progressed, donations gradually slowed down due to fewer sales calls being made. To address this, Rosa began to incentivize members with gift cards as we reached new fundraising milestones. Additionally, project managers cheered on their team and encouraged them to make more phone calls.	Event funds grew at a steady pace for the rest of the event, and all participants continued to make calls through the end of the launchathon.

VI. CLOSING THE PROJECT

A. Evaluation of key metrics

As seen in Figure 6.1, we are pleased to report that we accomplished and exceeded our initial goals.

FIGURE 6.1: EVALUATION OF KEY METRICS



Closing Metrics and Outcomes: The Launchathon exceeded expectations, raising a total of **\$80,989** against an original goal of \$14,000 (approximately 579% of the target goal). After Leading Edge applied its 15% fee (\$12,148), the project generated a net total of **\$68,840** in funds for NH DECA. With a total project budget of \$2,716, this resulted in approximately 25 times the original cost, or a 2,534% ROI. Most importantly, **the primary goal of funding SCDC transportation buses has been fully achieved.**

Qualitative Metrics: In addition to our quantitative metrics, qualitative data must be used and analyzed to show the success of **Operation DIAL**. The following quotes illustrate the impact of this project:

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK	STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK
"It was the best fundraiser I have ever been a part of! Everything was well run and organized." - Associate with Leading Edge Fundraising	"This has been our most successful fundraiser in all my years as an advisor." - Head NH DECA Advisor
MEMBER FEEDBACK	STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK
"The energy was amazing in the cafeteria! Every time we reached a new donation milestone, it was so exciting." - Anonymous NH DECA Member and Launchathon Attendee	"The girls did an amazing job with emphasizing the true importance of DECA to us parents with their emailing system and social media presence." - Anonymous NH DECA Parent

Give Back: Since the Launchathon far exceeded our fundraising goals, NH DECA was able to extend the impact of this project far beyond covering transportation expenses; with the additional funds, our first priority was to provide **nightly meals for all state conference attendees**. In the past, NH DECA could only provide one chapter dinner during the trip, highlighting the significant impact of Launchathon funding on our chapter. This support will ease the financial strain on families and ensure every member can fully participate without concern for additional costs, boosting morale at SCDC.

Additionally, a portion of the remaining funds was invested in expanding our chapter’s competition and classroom resources. These purchases include updated **DECA preparation materials and brand-new presentation monitors** (pictured in Figure 6.2) designed to enhance students’ ability to develop and deliver professional-level projects. These resources directly support our mission of educating and empowering members to excel academically and competitively, ensuring NH DECA continues to offer high-quality, hands-on learning opportunities for years to come.



Finally, we made the meaningful decision to give back to the Highlands community by allocating support to the **Sandy Helfand Memorial Scholarship**. This scholarship honors Sandy Helfand, a cherished NH DECA advisor who devoted his career to uplifting NH students before losing his battle with cancer. This scholarship is awarded annually to a student who demonstrates high achievement in business education, and it reflects NH DECA’s mission of preparing emerging leaders and entrepreneurs for success. By contributing to this scholarship, we honor Helfand’s legacy and ensure his passion for business education and student growth will continue to inspire future NH DECA members.

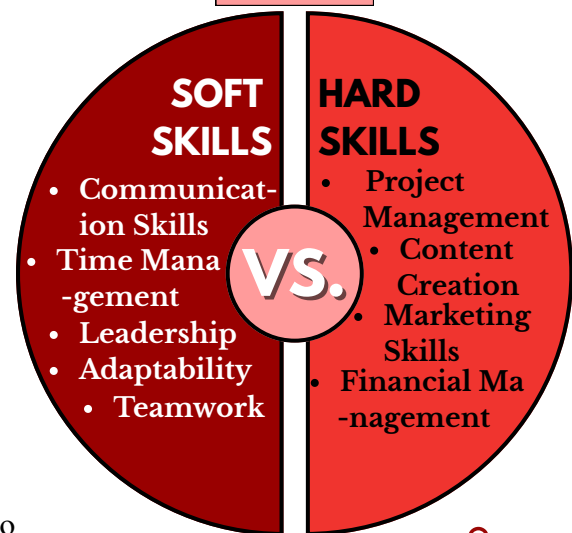
The remaining funds remain with the NH DECA program, which will **continue to subsidize transportation costs in future years**, ensuring our project has a lasting impact on the chapter even after we graduate.

B. Lessons learned

Lessons learned come from reflecting on what worked and what could have been done better during **Operation DIAL** (Figure 6.3). By learning from our mistakes, we were able to improve, avoid repeating errors, and strengthen our project. This process also helped us grow as a team and reflect on our work. Additionally, the Launchathon enabled us to acquire a wide variety of **soft skills** and **hard skills**, shown in Figure 6.4. Soft skills are personal and interpersonal qualities, whereas hard skills are specific, teachable, and measurable abilities.

FIGURE 6.3:	INITIATING	PLANNING	EXECUTION	MONITORING
What was Done Well:	Creating a simplified rationale, along with three streamlined expected benefits, allowed us to concentrate our efforts towards ensuring that our event achieves everything it’s predicted to.	By following Operation DIAL’s outlined milestones and using the charts created at the start of the project, we were able to clearly divide responsibilities and stay on track with deadlines.	Starting early helped us stay organized, and frequent communication with teammates, stakeholders, and community partners ensured each phase met expectations.	Strategically formatting charts like our RACI matrix and issues and responses chart allowed us to be in control of any problems that arose or missed deadlines.
Areas for Improvement:	The initiating process would have benefited from gathering earlier stakeholder input to better anticipate challenges, further refine our goals, and ensure alignment with chapter priorities before moving into execution.	We could have allocated more time towards follow-up with each of our 15 sponsorships. By doing so, we would better inform them on the successes of the project and how DECA training produces real-life solutions.	Non-perishable food, beverages, and decorations were purchased shortly before or received the day of the event, creating a last-minute rush that could have been reduced with better time management.	Using one platform for our charts would have made them easier to update consistently, as switching between Excel, Canva, and Trello was a tedious process that created spaces for error in our monitoring and controlling process.

FIGURE 6.4:



C. Recommendations for future projects

We are so grateful to have had the opportunity to work with Leading Edge and NH DECA to successfully execute the Launchathon and **FUND THE FUTURE** with their support. We recommend that NH DECA continue its partnership with Leading Edge on a three-year cycle; this ensures a steady stream of funding while also guaranteeing that no member participates in the Launchathon more than once during their time in NH DECA. Three future recommendations that we have made for the NH DECA Launchathon are listed below:

1. EARLY PLANNING

While the Launchathon saw great success, we could have benefited from starting the project at an earlier date. This would have allowed us to interact with more community partnerships, making the event more widespread. Additionally, an earlier start date would have allowed us to allot more time to plan possible uses for the funds raised during the event; this could have included subsequent events for chapter members to promote chapter engagement.

2. THREE-YEAR CYCLE

The funds raised during the Launchathon made a substantial impact on the NH DECA chapter. However, due to the nature of the Launchathon, if it were held every year, students would repeatedly contact the same individuals, reducing outreach and effectiveness. Additionally, the money raised during the Launchathon is sufficient to support chapter travels and activities for the following two years. With this in mind, we recommend that the Launchathon take place on a three-year cycle. This ensures that students don't participate in the Launchathon more than once while in NH DECA, and that each cycle reaches a new set of contacts.



3. FURTHER SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

With the funds raised from the Launchathon, we encourage more scholarship opportunities to be created for NH DECA members in the future. We recommend that a "Project Management Gala" be organized to have a panel of judges review the NH DECA Project Management presentations and award scholarships to groups and individuals with exceptional projects. This allocates the funds in a way that directly gives back to NH DECA and the students who work hard to drive the chapter's success.



Overall, we are extremely proud of not only the success of the Launchathon but also the quality of our work throughout every stage of the project. We have valued making such a substantial impact on NH DECA and fostering the success of future members. We are so honored to have worked with such an incredible team of advisors and a generous group of sponsors to bring the Launchathon to life. **Operation DIAL** not only proved to us that sales and proper project management provide real solutions to real problems, but it also equipped us with skills that we will carry on to our collegiate and professional careers. This project has instilled the principles of teamwork and innovation that will guide future NH DECA events and years.

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