ASK NAAP: How to ask for an increase in programming and staffing budgets?

Requesting a budget increase for an activity department requires a strategic, professional, and well-documented approach. Here's how to make a strong case:

Build Your Case with Evidence

Gather Data:

- Show how current activities benefit residents (use photos, testimonials, participation logs).
- Share measurable outcomes: participation rates, improved mood, reduced behavioral issues.
- Note what you're unable to provide due to lack of funds (missed opportunities, limited supplies).

Sample phrase: “Based on participation records, resident feedback, and outcome tracking, we’ve seen a clear demand for more diverse and engaging programs that go beyond what our current budget allows.”

Show Return on Investment (ROI)

Emphasize how a budget increase can:

- Improve resident satisfaction scores
- Reduce loneliness, agitation, or staff calls due to idle time
- Enhance family satisfaction and community reputation
- Support compliance with state or federal quality-of-life requirements

Example: “An additional $100/month would allow us to host intergenerational programs or music therapy visits—both of which are known to support memory, reduce isolation, and meet CMS quality of life guidelines.”

Present a Clear, Modest Proposal

Don’t just ask for “more money”—ask for a specific amount with a purpose.

Break it down like this:

Item	Cost Estimate	Benefit
Monthly activity supplies	$75	Allows for consistent programming
Guest performer quarterly	$100	Enhances community engagement
Bingo/raffle prizes	$25	Improves participation/morale

Sample ask: “I’m requesting an additional $100/month for our activity budget to cover basic supplies and occasional guest programming. These funds will help us maintain meaningful engagement and support quality-of-life outcomes.”

Align With Administrator Goals

Frame the request around shared goals, such as:

- Resident retention
- Compliance
- Public perception
- Positive family reviews

Example: “Enhancing our activity offerings supports our mission to provide person-centered care and helps us remain competitive with other facilities offering more robust lifestyle programming.”

Be Professional and Prepared

Deliver the request in writing, ideally with:

- A 1-page proposal
- A budget breakdown
- Supporting quotes or testimonials

Offer to follow up with a short meeting or presentation.

When asking for increased staffing in the activity department, it requires professionalism, data, and a focus on how it directly supports resident care, compliance, and organizational goals. Here's how to do it effectively:

Identify the Reason for the Request

Be clear and specific. Are you asking for more staff because of:

- Increased resident population?
- Higher care needs (e.g., more memory care residents)?
- Mandated activity requirements?
- Burnout, schedule gaps, or turnover?
- Expansion of programming (evening/weekend needs)?

Example: “With our recent increase in residents, especially those with cognitive impairments, our current staffing levels are no longer sufficient to provide safe, person-centered activity programming.”

Back It Up with Data

Present quantifiable information:

- Resident-to-staff ratio
- Number of activity hours offered per week (vs. expected)
- Missed 1:1 visits or resident complaints
- Staff overtime or burnout concerns
- Decline in participation or resident engagement
- Create a time study

Example: “Currently, we have 1 staff member serving 45 residents, including 15 in memory care. This makes it difficult to deliver both group and individual engagement as outlined in CMS guidelines and our care plans.”

Emphasize the Risks of Understaffing

Help leadership understand the cost of not acting:

- Decreased resident satisfaction
- Compliance risk with surveyors (CMS, state)
- Staff burnout and turnover
- Increased incidents of agitation or isolation

Example: “Without additional support, we’re unable to meet individualized programming needs, which increases the risk of unmet care plan goals and negative outcomes in resident satisfaction surveys.”

Propose a Specific, Realistic Ask

Ask for precisely what you need: part-time or full-time? Even just a few hours?

Example: “I’m requesting one additional part-time Activity Aide, 20 hours/week, to support 1:1 visits and evening/weekend programs. This will ensure all residents, including those room-bound or in memory care, receive meaningful engagement.”

Align With Administration Goals

Make the ask in terms of:

- Improving survey readiness
- Boosting family satisfaction
- Supporting person-centered care
- Enhancing marketing appeal (tour-ready activities)

Example: “Increased staffing will strengthen our compliance with person-centered care standards, improve family satisfaction, and support consistent programming that boosts our community’s reputation.”

Follow Up in Writing

Provide a one-page written proposal or email that outlines:

- Why it’s needed
- Staffing comparison ratios (before/after)
- A brief cost-benefit statement

Here is a sample of how to schedule a meeting: “Hi [Administrator's Name], I’d like to request a short meeting to discuss the staffing (or budget) needs in the Activity Department. With our current resident numbers and the demand (cost) for individualized engagement, especially in memory care, our team is stretched thin. I believe adding even a part-time aide could significantly improve resident outcomes, compliance, and staff morale. I’ve put together a short proposal and would love to review it with you.”

August is the best time of year to request an increase in your budget as communities begin planning their budgets for the following year. It is important to be well-prepared and articulate your case during meetings with your administration. Maintain firmness and professionalism.