

TOOLKIT

Mastering Regional Event Sponsorship

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SPONSORSHIPS VS PARTNERSHIPS

- Partnerships between groups or individuals are cooperative and established to achieve mutually beneficial objectives and outcomes.
- Event sponsorships present an opportunity for a business to align with an independent organisation and to reach a captive audience of event patrons through a variety of tactics and mediums, raising the profile and image of the business.

Note that either arrangement should be flexible and governed by an agreement, which outlines the obligations and responsibilities of both (or all) parties involved.

As a community group, you value sponsorship because it offers much needed financial support and allows you to concentrate on the task at hand as opposed to worrying about event finances. While one of the most important sources of revenue for contemporary events is corporate sponsorship, there is a need to treat sponsorship as a 'bonus' when it comes to developing your event budget. Events should always be financially sustainable without grants or sponsorship - that's the goal anyway!

Sourcing corporate sponsorship is no easy task, especially for volunteers who are already overcommitted, somewhat stressed, and desperately trying to deliver an event which results in positive social, cultural and economic benefits for their community. Whether you're working on a small niche event for 50 - 250 people, or a community festival and event for 200 - 10,000 people, this checklist will assist you in developing an attractive proposal and give you the confidence to pitch it.

You could develop a package around any of the following sponsorship opportunities, to name a few:

- Naming Rights to the Event
- Naming Rights to Special Events within the program e.g. fireworks
- Transport or Transfers
- Start/Finish Lines or Entryways
- Arena Promotions
- Awards or Scholarships
- Kids Marquee's
- Speaker Gifts
- Intermission or Catering Breaks
- Stages, Main Acts or Presenters
- Hospitality Areas or Block Seating
- Auction Items and Prizes

Sponsorship or Partnership requests may be for:

- Cash is the most traditional form of sponsorship. Cash sponsorships are used to cover expenses, increase exposure for both the sponsor and the event and create event credibility.
- In-kind support (contra) helps to alleviate expenses through the offering of complementary or discounted products or services in return for branding.
- Soft sponsorships are formed out of a relationship with a business, individual or another event who may be able to provide support through promotional opportunities (e.g. media partners or retailers).

A business may enter into a sponsorship or partnership agreement to:

- Increase brand loyalty
- Create or increase brand awareness
- Establish or reinforce image
- Increase sales or usage
- Corporate/community responsibility
- Launch a new product/service or existing product/service to a new market

If this partnership is going to result in tangible benefits to both parties, you will need to consider the following:

- Does your market(s) match that of your potential sponsor? Do you share the same attributes or values?
- Are you striving to achieve the same or similar objectives? For example, if yours in a regional food festival, which celebrates local produce, is the sponsors product or service support the local economy?

What benefits can you offer?

- Many sponsors will be looking for category exclusivity. For example, you may only be able to sign one Silver Sponsor. Likewise, a Bank (for example) may desire to be the only Bank sponsoring an event
- Naming rights to an event/other
- Access to your mailing or distribution list
- Cooperative broadcast ad opportunities (TV, radio)
- Website (logo, information and a hyperlink to sponsor website)
- Digital marketing and promotion including e-Newsletters, blogs, digital ad's
- Acknowledgement or collaborative promotion/advertising on Social Media
- Logo displayed or business acknowledged in all media releases
- Verbal acknowledgement on the day(s)
- Co-branded merchandise including Club, committee or volunteer uniforms, hats, water bottles etc
- An ad in your program or other print collateral e.g. Show Schedule, souvenir program
- On-site signage or other promotional opportunities e.g. banners, pavement stickers, theming of a stage backdrop
- Sales, giveaways, samples and trials of partners products and services could be conducted at the event
- Complementary tickets, passes or food and beverage vouchers
- Speaking opportunities
- Staff or ambassador involvement
- Exhibition or trade booths
- Endorsements and testimonials

Additional questions to ask:

What is my sponsorship proposition?

How do I identify potential partners?

How do I prepare a professional pitch?

How do I develop a tailored package?

How do I manage the sponsorship moving forward?

YOUR SPONSORSHIP CHECKLIST

PRE EVENT

- Develop your event budget and identify
 - a. Your cash sponsorship target and,
 - b. The expenses which you may be able to directly offset through in-kind sponsorship and donations.
- Assign a Sponsorship Coordinator who knows what you have to offer e.g. your target market, reach, promotional opportunities, assets etc and be prepared to explain how your partnership offering will help the business to achieve its goals. This will help you to be up-beat, confident and process driven in your approach.
- Develop a major sponsorship or local supporter prospectus that will guide your discussion not act as a sales tool. You don't want to push corporates to be too prescriptive - you want to be a problem-solver that develops customised solutions. Make yours a personal approach. The prospectus should;
 - a. Provide an overview of your event and how it can benefit their business (e.g. shared objectives, target market, values and attributes),
 - b. Include an outline of your planned marketing and PR activity,
 - c. Consider your target market in further details (e.g. demographic, psychographic),
 - d. Include a sample program and outlines potential partnership opportunities as well as the benefits a sponsor can expect to receive. Within this prospectus, we would recommend you include an agreement (form), information surrounding what the sponsor will need to provide and when, marketing and PR deadlines, contact information, terms and conditions etc.
- Develop a database of potential sponsors that includes: business, contact name, number and email, website, other and identify which level of sponsorship you'll be pitching to them. If you have multiple people working on sponsorship, divide up and communicate this list to all involved so there is no miscommunication or duplication of efforts.
- Touch base! For all major sponsorships, we would recommend you arrange a face-to-face meeting with the appropriate person at least ten months prior to your event to discuss what they are aiming to achieve for their organisation. This may not always be possible, as some larger corporations will have a strict procedure you will need to follow and time-frames you will need to adhere to in order to submit a sponsorship or partnership request.
- Remember, the main objective(s) of each business or potential sponsor/partner will vary. That said, you may be required to demonstrate how your event could improve employee satisfaction, result in increased sales, increase brand awareness, commitment to community, etc. Likewise, some companies may be interested in a longer term commitment, while others will be unable to commit financially beyond the current financial year. Nonetheless, committees should strive to secure a major sponsor(s) for a three-year term to ensure event sustainability.

Tip:

Do your research and come prepared.

If a business outlines their needs and requirements, make sure you adhere to them.

Have an understanding of the community involvement the business is looking for and be familiar with events the business currently sponsors or has sponsored in the past. Piece together a presentation or a 30 second pitch which summarises the main aims and objectives of the event and what you can offer the business. Develop a cover letter and a folder of relevant supporting information which provides background and demonstrates professionalism and credibility.

- Develop and maintain a checklist of tasks, which you have agreed to carry out as part of your sponsorship. This could include; acknowledging the sponsor on your Facebook brand page, including the sponsors logo on all media releases, sending out a proof of any print collateral before print etc.
- Add the sponsors primary contact email to your e-Newsletter subscriber list to ensure they receive regular updates. Issue other updates at major milestones e.g. the program is launched, ticket sales open, etc. This might be by phone or email relevant to your sponsors preferences. Consider this an important part of building the rapport and relationship between the event and the sponsor.
- Encourage your corporate sponsor to leverage the partnership by integrating the message into existing marketing activities, e.g. print and digital advertising, publicity, sales incentives etc.

ONE-WEEK OUT

- Collect sponsor signage, banners and print collateral.
- Distribute tickets and explain the admission procedure.
- Prepare run-sheets for your MC's, auctioneers, etc, which include verbal acknowledgement of sponsors.

DURING THE EVENT

- Meet and greet. Show the sponsor to the VIP hospitality area.
- Capture photos of the sponsor signage, banners and print collateral onsite.
- If you've agreed to help the sponsor promote their product or service during the event, be sure to implement this. For example, if you are doing a cooperative social media campaign, post photos using the predetermined hash-tag.

POST EVENT

- Debrief e.g. phone or survey.
- Send through a letter of thanks with a copy of your post event media release which outlines the overall success of the event, as well as a collection of all relevant media clippings, digital and traditional advertisements, promotional collateral, photos, etc. Provide evidence of other results and achievements e.g. website data, an info-graphic showing social media impressions, reach and engagement.
- Review the arrangement and ascertain their interest to partake in your next event - or perhaps the next 2-3 events. Sign this away if appropriate.
- Network and attend other events to build relationships and gain perspective.

Commit to building long term, strategically sound partnerships that deliver bottom line results for both parties.

Tip:

Leave yourself plenty of time to liaise with major sponsors (particularly those involving cash sponsorships) as it may take six or MORE months to develop and negotiate a package that suits both parties, and actual budgets are involved.

Further, it is important that you secure all major agreements prior to commencing significant marketing activity, otherwise you may not be able to honour all aspects of the agreement.