

# HANDY HINTS: Corporate Support

## WHAT IS CORPORATE SUPPORT?

Support from businesses is commonly referred to as 'corporate support'. Corporate support can come in various forms, including financial donations, contracts and gifts in-kind/pro bono support. The most successful charity-corporate relationships are built on mutually beneficial partnerships. If managed well, what may start as a small donation or volunteering, can develop into long-term support.

### +PROS

- Access to different types of support (financial, expertise, in-kind, etc.)
- Access to new contacts/networks
- Raise profile
- Possibility to use brand association to leverage additional support
- Can develop into long-term support
- Often more flexible and less demanding reporting requirements than support from government, trusts and foundations

### -CONS

- Time from initial contact to partnership
- Risk to brand/ethical issues
- Relationship management (time required)
- Unrealistic expectations/overly demanding
- Imbalance between what you give vs. what you get

### Types of corporate support

- Corporate partnerships (financial/in-kind)
- Company charity/foundation donations
- Procurement/contracts
- Cause-related marketing
- Sponsorship
- Workplace giving
- In-kind/pro bono support
- Staff participation (fundraising, volunteering, etc.)

## GET READY – PLAN & PREPARE

### Things to consider

- **Time & resources:** Who will lead on this work? Do they have the time, experience, etc.
- **Are your website and social media up-to-date?** Most potential partners will check these. An out-of-date website or inactive social media account can put people off.
- **Exclusions:** Are there any industries/businesses you won't accept support from? Get input from your board. It's good to be clear on this before starting the research stage.

- **What can you offer? And for what level of support?** Benefits could include branding, press releases, social media mentions, invitations to events, etc. Think creatively to offer benefits that meet their needs and yours. Be careful not to offer too much for too little.
- **Measurement:** It's good practice to put evaluation processes in place at the start to measure how effective your efforts have been. What are your expectations/targets? What resources were required (time, money, staff)?

## Research

- **Start with who you know:** Get your board and team involved. Speak to friends and family. Who do they know? Who have they recently met? Can they introduce you?
- **Current supporters:** Grow existing support by giving other options for how to support you and offering benefits in return. Individual supporters may be able to introduce you to their company &/or nominate you for their company's charity scheme.
- **Previous supporters/organisations contacted:** Organisations that may have said 'no' in the past to a financial donation may be open to discussing partnership opportunities.
- **Similar causes:** Who supports organisations similar to yours (cause, location, etc.)?
- **Focus areas:** Break down what you do into key areas and research who supports work in those areas.
- **Stay up-to-date:** Read newspapers, magazines, sector news and follow relevant social media so that you can stay up-to-date and are able to identify new potential opportunities. Google alerts can be a useful tool for this.
- **Keep track of who you've met:** Who have you/your colleagues met at events that could be potential new leads?
- **Be systematic:** Keep a record of your research including companies that aren't relevant and the reason to avoid duplicating research in the future. A simple excel is fine.

## NEXT STEPS

- **Website:** Do you have a 'corporate support' section on your 'Support Us' / 'How you can help' page? Include details on ways they can get involved i.e. donations, in-kind, volunteering, fundraising, workplace giving, etc. Also, include examples of benefits, relevant images, name other partners/use logos and add a quote from a beneficiary and an existing partner. If no existing partners, use a quote from another supporter.
- **Overview document:** Create a brief overview that's easy to tailor with potential benefits, contact details, images and quotes or case studies.
- **Shortlist targets:** Are they a good fit? Have they received negative press recently? Could a partnership damage your brand?
- **Research:** Find specific contact details and research recent sector/company news.
- **Template emails/scripts:** Be clear, concise and personal. Explain why you're getting in contact and why it's relevant to them. Consider having a phone script to hand.

## MAKING CONTACT

- **Prepare:** Research the company, sector and person you're going to meet/speak to. Think of questions they might ask and your answers. Be clear on why you're approaching them.
- **Initial contact:** Can someone in your network provide an introduction? Either way, make sure to tailor emails to each contact. Where possible, contact the most senior relevant person. Mention when you'll follow up to encourage a response. It can also be a good idea to frame initial emails as asking for advice.
- **Try to secure a meeting with a decision maker**

### Key components for a successful partnership

- Win-win (benefits both parties)
- Aligned/shared values
- Clear expectations
- Personal relationships
- Across the business (from CEO to junior staff)
- Open & regular communication

## AGREEMENT & DELIVERY

- **Agreement:** It's important to have an agreement in writing so it's clear what both parties have agreed to do and the timeframe.
- **Thank them:** An obvious but sometimes overlooked step. Make sure to thank the relevant people. If someone introduced you to the contact or company, let them know. Also, if you'd initially been in contact with another person at the company then thank them also. Where relevant, thank the new partner publicly.
- **Relationship management:** Allocate one person to manage the relationship. This can help strengthen the partnership and make the partner feel more valued. It also helps to ensure clear communication and avoid things being overlooked.
- **Do what you said you'd do:** Make sure all relevant members of your team are aware of the agreement and the requirements. If you're no longer able to do something, let the partner know and offer suggestions of alternative things you can do instead.
- **Updates:** Find out how often they'd like you to be in contact and any reporting requirements they may have. Keep the partner in the loop with news, updating them when you've done what you said you would. For example, send them images of branding at events or links to coverage, etc.
- **End of partnership:** Send a report highlighting the benefits they have received, including numbers reached. Meet to get feedback and discuss possible next steps/ future opportunities.

## NO RESPONSE OR NO SUPPORT AVAILABLE

- **No response doesn't mean 'no':** Send regular follow ups until you hear back. Leave a gap of a few weeks to a month between each so that you don't come across as pushy but instead that you're politely following up so that they don't miss out on the opportunity.
- **When it is a no:** Ask if you can contact them again in six months/next year. Note their response and make sure to follow up if you said you would.

## GOOD LUCK!