

Sponsorship Kit: Quick Start Guide

If you've hosted a fundraising event in the past, you know how important it is to find sponsors. Sponsorships can come from individuals, local businesses or large corporations; the more sponsorships you can get, the more event revenue goes directly towards the urgent needs of your mission.

To help, we developed a Winspire Sponsorship Kit. The easy-to-use templates and examples empower you to save time and seek new sponsorships.

What's in the kit

- Sponsorship Quick Start GUIDE (this document)
- Request Letter and Reward Tier Sheet EXAMPLE (pdf)
- Request Letter DIAGRAM (pdf)
- Request Letter TEMPLATE (.doc)
- Form TEMPLATE – write in sponsorship level (.doc)
- Form TEMPLATE – select tiers from 2-column table (.doc)
- Form TEMPLATE – select tiers from basic list (.doc)
- Thank You Letter TEMPLATE

Read on for practical tips to [\(1\)](#) set sponsor levels and rewards, [\(2\)](#) find sponsors, [\(3\)](#) write request letters, [\(4\)](#) follow up with potential sponsors and [\(5\)](#) retain sponsors for next year's event.

Wishing you the best of luck in event planning! If you have trouble using the files or additional feedback, please reach out to me via email or phone. Thank you for trying the Sponsorship Kit.

To your success,

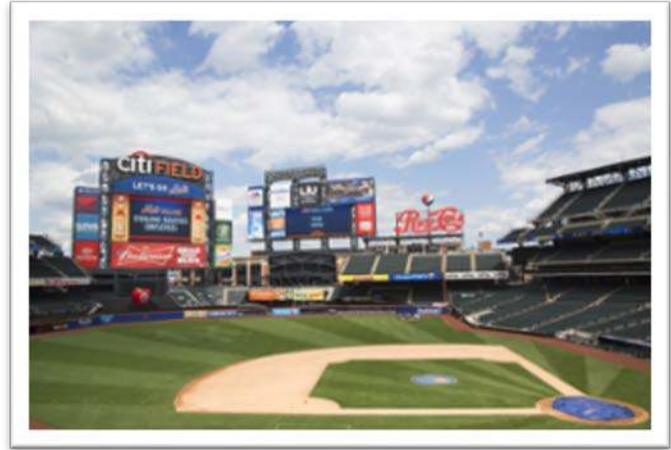
Summy at Winspire
Marketing Assistant
slau@winspireme.com
(949) 544-8556

Part 1: Rewarding Sponsors

Think of your favorite sport: basketball, baseball, football, hockey. Picture yourself in the stands, overlooking the court, field or rink.

Now try to imagine the scene without any corporate logos! Seems bare, doesn't it?

Fact is, corporations shell out millions to sponsor events, plaster their logos on equipment and even buy naming rights to whole stadiums for one reason: **It works**. People see the name, say the name and, in best cases, get attached to these beloved brands (think of the uproar when icons like the "Sears Tower" in Chicago are renamed).



Corporate sponsorship is a form of advertising that increases brand awareness and pays significant returns.

Likewise, event sponsorships are the perfect chance to offer local businesses the same benefit—brand recognition—with the added feel-great bonus of making a difference in the community, and possibly some valuable tax deductions. The best sponsorships form a relationship that's beneficial for both parties.

To do: Brainstorm a list of possible incentives.

Rewards are typically media impressions and logo placement, but the sky is the limit here in terms of creativity. There are no hard and fast rules. Consider these examples:

- onstage recognition during the live auction or peak of event
- dedicated [press release](#) announcing sponsorship
- complimentary team tent at the event
- complimentary event registrations (such as one golf foursome, a gala table for ten, 20 race registrations, etc)
- tickets to a pre-event VIP reception

- name and/or logo included on promotional materials and signage: t-shirts, flyers, website, postcards, banners, magazine ads, [auction catalog](#), newsletters and more
 - arrange and proportionally size sponsor logos and ad space according to giving level
 - Reach out to local papers for in-kind donations of ad space that you can offer as rewards as well
 - Remind sponsors that the earlier they commit, the more pre-event exposure and advertising they'll receive
- literature placement on each table
- free tent at the event
- commemorative plaque or framed letter
- featured mentions on social media



While it's important to clearly explain the nonprofit's mission, keep the focus on how *sponsors* will benefit. Make it clear: This isn't simply a donation. Your event is a *marketing opportunity* they can't afford to pass up.

To do: Determine sponsorship levels and allocate rewards.

The next step is to figure out how to arrange these rewards into appropriate sponsorship tiers. The “golden rule” of sponsorship rewards is simple: Those who give more, get more.

• Valuating Sponsorship Tiers

Most fundraising events offer sponsorship levels in at least 3 tiers. The wider range of sponsorship levels you offer, the more likely businesses of any size can find a tier within their philanthropic budget. (Of course, you won’t want to offer too *many* options, either, which can overwhelm or paralyze sponsors from making any decision at all.)

Typically top-tier sponsorships (such as the right to present the entire event) are limited as “exclusive” to increase the perceived value of these sponsorships, but quantities of all other levels can be left open-ended.

How much to ask from each sponsor depends on your overall fundraising goals. Bigger organizations and events can ask for corporate sponsorships well into the tens of thousands of dollars, while smaller events may offer sponsorships worth \$1,000 and under, in exchange for rewards like ad space in the catalog or flyers.

Nonprofits also usually name the tiers after medals (gold, silver, bronze) but you can get creative according to the theme. (For a golf tournament, one of our clients offers the chance to become a “Putting Green Sponsor”, “Golf Cart Sponsor” and more.) You can also make businesses the official sponsors of certain areas of the event, like the driving range, beverage station, Kids’ Fun Run and so forth.

[Example: Sponsorship levels from a nonprofit with total annual revenue of over \\$10 million](#)

- Presenting Sponsor: \$50,000
- Diamond Sponsor: \$25,000
- Platinum: \$15,000
- Gold: \$10,000
- Silver: \$5,000
- Bronze: \$2,500

[Example: Sponsorship levels from a nonprofit with an annual revenue under \\$500,000](#)

- Gold: \$5,000
- Silver: \$2,500
- Ruby: \$1,250

No matter how you name or sort your levels, be very clear about what each level receives. Also important: Keep each tier's rewards distinct from one another. Why? If a sponsor is on the fence between two levels, *significantly* better rewards at the next tier gives the sponsor a reason to go higher.

• In-Kind and Customized Sponsorships

In addition to direct cash pledges, you can also offer the chance to give in-kind or volunteer their services.

One great example is media sponsorships. Reach out to local magazines, radio stations, TV stations and newspapers for donated advertising to promote both your event and your other sponsors. For in-kind donations, volunteering of services and any other mix-and-match rewards, let potential sponsors know in your solicitation if they have the option to customize a sponsorship package.

• Underwriting Big-ticket Consignment Items

Featured high quality, unique auction items like no-risk [travel Experiences](#) drives ticket sales and elevate the reputation of your entire event. Unfortunately, these items are also typically the most challenging to get donated. Give bidders the chance to spend their [travel budget](#) at your event by reserving no-risk trips from Winspire on consignment. Then, leverage sponsorships to capture 100% of the winning bid!

Underwriting a trip offers all the media perks of a cash pledge, plus on-stage recognition (in a live auction) and/or brand visibility on the item display (in a silent auction).

Help potential sponsors imagine the extra rewards of underwriting, say, an amazing [Napa Wine Country VIP Insiders Tour](#) for \$4,000...



This amazing 3-night trip is the high point of your live auction. All ears are on the auctioneer as he recognizes your company's generous gift, to the cheers and applause of a sophisticated local audience. Your gift encourages long-time donors Mr. and Mrs. Smith to enthusiastically bid at \$6,000, knowing all of the proceeds go to a great cause—which then encourages their friends to bid at the same price, and then another couple. Before long the package (which can be sold virtually limitless times) has sold to four happy couples, and your \$4,000 gift has multiplied into a \$12,000 net profit for the organization. When the group returns from their unforgettable experience, they come thank you personally for making these wonderful memories possible.

Anyone can underwrite a package, and **busy individuals and local businesses alike will appreciate how easy it is to underwrite a trip**. They'll get significant name recognition at your event without having to do any additional work.

Your guests win an incredible trip; sponsors underwrite the cost in one easy step; and 100% of the proceeds go to your organization and programs. *A triple win!*

👉 To do: Demonstrate how their donation will make an impact.

As mentioned, it's best to focus your letter on how sponsors benefit from their contributions. However, companies want to know they're supporting reputable and worthy causes. **An estimated 71 percent of consumers say they would switch brands** based on their connection with certain causes, so it's more important than ever for companies to make the most of their philanthropic funds.

If you don't have one already, create a 1-page organization "hot sheet" of facts, figures and moving stories that demonstrate your impact. Include the sheet with your proposal letter or have it ready to hand over for in-person solicitation.



Why not give your donors the option to spend some of their travel budget at your event?

Winspire offers incredible consigned travel packages to use in auctions that cost your organization nothing if they don't sell for the profitable price you set. Plus, secure a sponsor or underwriter for the trip and **net 100% of the proceeds!** View the entire catalog of 200+ unique, high quality Winspire Experiences at www.winspireme.com/packages.

Part 2: Finding Sponsors

Now that you've figured out exactly *why* your event is worth sponsoring, it's time to figure out *who* to contact regarding sponsorships. While canvassing the area with a thoughtful, polite ask generally never hurts, **make the most of your limited time** by targeting past sponsors and those *most likely* to support your cause.

To do: Prioritize past sponsors.

When handled correctly, sponsorships lead to long-lasting relationships between your organization and business leaders in the community.

Each year, list out people and businesses that have sponsored your event in the past. They have already exhibited interest in and familiarity with your cause, so these repeat donors should be prioritized and treated with “white glove”, VIP service.



Since this isn't a cold call, reaching out to each prior sponsor personally is your best bet. If local, consider taking these important contacts out to lunch or inviting them to tour your building.

Let them know it was a pleasure to work with them the year before, then reiterate the value of their sponsorship by quantifying **how many people** attended the previous event and **how many media impressions** they received as an event sponsor

(via promotional materials like flyers posted, invites mailed, catalogs distributed, hits on the website and social media, and so forth).

If they expressed particular enthusiasm with your nonprofit or satisfaction at your event, try brainstorming together how they might be able to increase their involvement. You might suggest a modest increase in their contribution from the year before (along with greater or more exclusive rewards), or ask for their feedback as you plan the event.

Lastly, don't be discouraged if former sponsors don't take you up on the offer to sponsor again.

It's unlikely they were satisfied with their treatment or event coverage last year (though you'll want to check for potential improvements going forward). More than likely, they are looking

to increase their networks in the area by sponsoring other events and have already allocated their philanthropic budget.

**Don't find customers for your products,
find products for your customers.**

- Seth Godin, author and entrepreneur

To do: Tap your networks for references.

In addition to past sponsors, seek out potential sponsors with whom you have connections or references. Go through your own contacts for business owners you know personally, then ask committee and board members to do the same. Be sure to mention your contact by name in the introductory paragraph of the letter, or even adjust your sponsorship request template to come directly from them.

To do: Target like-minded potential sponsors.

Attracting new donors is always a top challenge for nonprofits, so events are a great way to get brand new, one-time support that may lead to repeat giving.

That said, not every business is the right fit to sponsor your event. Some may be looking for more media coverage than your event can reasonably achieve, while others may simply not be interested in donating at this time. To save time and increase the likelihood of a successful proposition, try focusing on businesses that *are* a good fit for not just your cause, but also your audience.

Who would be most interested in reaching the people who attend your event?

Sports tournaments (like 5Ks, golf tournaments and bowl-a-thons) can reach out to related businesses (like running clubs and athletic clothing providers) interested in marketing to athletes. Nonprofits that serve children can reach out to kids' clothing retailers, amusement parks, toy stores and more. Relevant organizations may also be able to donate in-kind products, auction items, services and expertise to support your event.

In addition to related businesses, talk to your board, staff and volunteers for ideas and connections. They may work for companies with corporate giving programs. Also smart: looking at similar events in your area and checking their sponsor lists.

Target your sponsorship asks strategically and even if they choose not to sponsor this year, they are more likely to consider it next year; they may even change their minds once they start seeing your promotional materials around town.



Part 3: Requesting Sponsorship

Here are the top 10 elements of an effective sponsorship proposal letter.

1. Sponsor rewards - how they'll benefit.

First, using bullet points, clearly delineate the names and cost of all sponsorship opportunities available, along with a general overview of the promotional rewards sponsors will receive. Along with the typical reward tiers, consider including the opportunity to underwrite some costs of your event, like [no-risk travel packages](#) in your auction, printing costs for the auction catalog, catering and booking the venue.

Companies are frequently inundated with sponsorship requests, so try and distinguish your event from other fundraisers if possible. For example, point out if there's a reason a particular company would be a good match for your event (think: a running club sponsoring a 5K).

You can also mention tax benefits from a sponsorship, then direct them to their accountant or CPA with any questions.

2. Information on your event and organization.

Event: Include the name and date of the event and invite recipients to attend, regardless of whether or not they choose to become a sponsor. Also briefly touch upon key metrics to help them understand the size and scope of your event, such as your fundraising goal, the expected audience size and demographics.

Organization: If your nonprofit doesn't have one already at hand, prepare a one-page fact sheet, brochure or pamphlet to include with each letter. Consider outlining your history, mission and vision, key statistics, awards or accolades you've received and goals for the upcoming year.

3. A Personalized Salutation

Think of your letter as a time-saving substitute for the ideal face-to-face sponsorship ask. You'll want to recreate as personal of a feeling in the letter as you can.

Avoid addressing "to whom it may concern," and instead call the company or conduct online research to find the proper contact person. Local branches of major corporations, like banks and department

stores, will have someone designated to evaluate all sponsorship proposals; for smaller companies, most likely the appropriate contact will be the head of the HR department or even the CEO.

While researching, try to find out whether or not the organization has a charitable giving policy which you can reference in your letter.

4. Your Event and Organization Logos

Print each letter on nice letterhead to make your organization look credible. Similarly, design and include an event logo, making the event appear polished and professional. This mailing is their first impression of not only your nonprofit but the kind of graphic design style and quality they can expect from your marketing materials, so sophistication is key.

5. A specific, bolded ask

Establish as soon as possible the point of your correspondence ("We would like to invite Your Company to become a sponsor for this year's event.") Bold and/or underline one clear call-to-action.

6. Deadline for sponsorship submission

Remind potential sponsors that the earlier they submit, the more media impressions they will receive from your social media and website. The deadline is especially important for time-sensitive rewards like print advertising and TV spots.

7. Details on submitting their sponsorship

Local companies and small business owners are extremely busy, so make it as easy as possible to sponsor your event. Include contact information (phone and email) in both your return address on top and signature on bottom.

8. A personal story or anecdote

If you have space, tug at their heartstrings with a quick, heartfelt anecdote related to your cause. Tell a story of one person whose life has been changed by your programs, or how the community is better because of the funds raised from last year's event.

9. A picture

A story packs even more of a punch—and gives your organization credibility and dimension—when accompanied by a related picture.

10. A self-addressed, stamped envelope

Every additional step the potential sponsor must take to submit their registration is another point at which they might get distracted, change their mind or forget. Including an envelope makes the registration process that much smoother—and the cost of any one stamp could turn into thousands of dollars in sponsorships!

GENERAL TIPS

- Keep your letter to **one page**, then include additional inserts as needed for details on your organization and/or publicity rewards. Concentrate the letter on the exposure the company will receive, not how the donation will help you.
- Structure the letter in **standard business letter** format.
- Upload sponsorship opportunities **online** so you can quickly link to them in emails and on the website.
- **Personalize the templates** in this kit so you don't miss any of these essential components.

Part 4: Following Up with Potential Sponsors

Now that you've written and signed your letters, printed out the forms and shipped out all your sponsorship proposals, you might be wondering...now what?

Initial requests are only half the story. Now is your chance to **maximize the impact of those letters** by following up well with prospective sponsors. Event volunteers and committee members need to prepare an organized follow up strategy. Here are the fundamental do's and don'ts of pursuing charity event sponsorships. Learn how to turn a "no" into an enthusiastic "yes"!

✓ **DO: Follow up over the phone in a timely manner**

Sending sponsorship proposal letters is like submitting your resume for a job application. That piece of paper gets lost in a big stack of other papers *unless* you can do something to make yours stand out.

Companies get plenty of sponsorship requests year-round, so speaking to them directly is key.

The vast majority of businesses will not take the initiative to follow up with your letter, so you'll need to contact prospects over the phone in a timely fashion. Try to do this about one week after you've sent it out (when the proposal is still fresh in their minds, but they've also had some time to look it over).

Once you've got the right contact on the phone, make sure they received your letter. Quickly outline the most important components of the proposal, the sponsorship opportunities and publicity rewards. Ask if they have any questions, then go ahead and make a clear ask: ***"Would you be interested in sponsoring this event?"***



IF THEY SAY YES...

✓ **DO:** Thank sponsors in a timely manner

Congratulations, you've secured a sponsorship commitment! Now is the time to make sure sponsors immediately feel valued and prioritized. Send a thank-you letter right away that recaps the benefits of the sponsorship level they've chosen (see the [Winspire Sponsorship Kit](#) for an easily customizable thank you letter template). It's also smart to email a copy as well for their immediate reference.

Once you receive their payment via check or credit card, send another thank you, perhaps this time via a different medium like a handwritten card or commemorative letter.

✗ **DON'T:** Overlook any rewards

Go through the sponsorship agreement line by line to make sure you deliver on each of these promises. I recommend investing in high quality printers for anything displaying sponsor logos: event signage, auction catalogs, free giveaways, collateral, print ads and more. The more sophisticated these marketing pieces look, the more professional your event appears to new sponsors.

✓ **DO:** Treat sponsors with “white glove” service

Brainstorm ways you can *overdeliver* and give sponsors the VIP treatment.

One easy way to do this is to designate a point person to handle all sponsor requests, questions and feedback. Sponsors may have questions about registering for your event, buying raffle tickets or donating online; want to update their logos; or have leads for other sponsors worth pursuing...you get the idea.

It's important your event's biggest donors have a reliable, professional contact at your organization to assist with these issues. If a sponsor has a concern or question, make it a priority to address as soon as possible (within 24 hours) and connect them to a live person.

Bottom line: Ask what it will take to make sure a sponsor feels their investment was well worth it.

IF THEY'RE NOT SURE...

✓ **DO:** Set up in-person meetings where strategic

If you've got a potential sponsor on the fence, or if they need more time, find out if you could take just 30 minutes (or less) of their time to meet in person. **Face-to-face meetings are the most effective way to transform that "no" into a "yes."**

Take them out to lunch or coffee to discuss the history and vision of your organization, the goals of the event and how their company can step up to make a difference. Genuine passion is infectious, and meeting in person lets your enthusiasm shine through.

Potential sponsors may also just need more time to read over the proposal and pitch a sponsorship to their higher-ups. If that's the case, go ahead and schedule another follow-up phone call: **Would it be okay if I followed up with you again at this same time next week?**

IF THEY SAY NO...

✓ **DO:** Suggest customizing a package

Perhaps none of your listed sponsorship rewards appealed to this business, but they are still interested in helping your cause and/or reaching your audience. It doesn't hurt to ask if there's a different way they can participate in your event. Find out if there are rewards they've received at other events you might be able to provide, or if they'd be interested in sponsoring a smaller expense.

However, if their offer is significantly smaller than what you proposed, it's probably not worth your time or fair to other sponsors to accept a sponsorship. They may be better off simply making a donation instead.

✗ **DON'T:** Expect a "yes" from everyone

That said, not every event is a fit for every sponsor. Whether the company has already pledged its entire philanthropic budget to a different cause; doesn't have charitable funds; is looking for a much bigger

event or isn't interested in giving for whatever reason, there's endless reasons they might not want to sponsor.

That's okay. Potential sponsors may change their mind when they see your marketing materials in action around the community or hear about your event through word of mouth. You've planted a seed, and you never know what partnership might be sparked in the future just by asking.

X DON'T: Cease communication with non-sponsors

While companies may choose not to sponsor your event for any number of reasons, that doesn't mean people at the company would not be interested in attending themselves. Try inviting decliners to attend or volunteer during the event. If they expressed remorse at not being able to give this year, why not offer a couple complimentary tickets to your event? If they're impressed by the gala and [high-end auction items](#), for example, they'll make a note to budget money next year for your event.

By developing an organized and persistent follow-up strategy, your nonprofit will not only secure more event sponsorships *this* year but cultivate enthusiastic, long-lasting relationships **for years to come**.

Part 5: Retaining Sponsors

You've done all the hard work to *obtain* sponsorships for this year's event. The final piece: taking simple actions after your event to *retain* them.

Check out 3 simple opportunities you can do after your event that leave a great impression with sponsors. Come next year, you'll be glad you did!

To do: Send an event summary and thank you letters

When the event is said and done, sponsors want to know how it went and, more importantly, how their company's brand was positively impacted.

Send all sponsors a final thank-you letter summarizing the night's fundraising and attendance results, plus how many media hits, impressions and views their logos received during pre-event promotion.

If applicable, let them know specifically what aspect of the event was made possible by their donation: *"Your [underwriting](#) of an incredible [4-night getaway to Maui](#) allowed our organization to receive 100% of the winning bid from long-time donors Mr. and Mrs. Smith."*

Take pictures of signage or collateral featuring their logos, then send along or feature online. Bonus points if you can get pictures of people looking at, interacting with or using these items!

To do: Brainstorm post-event promotional opportunities

At the conclusion of a big fundraiser, the focus of event organizers tends to shift to administrative tasks like final bookkeeping and accounting, following up with winning bidders, updating the auction binder and more. So it's understandable that post-event promotion falls to the bottom of the to-do list.

Fortunately there are a variety of simple ways to continue increasing awareness of your nonprofit after the event, plus show your sponsors more love (and nudge supporters on the fence about donating).



First, try writing a [press release](#) that publicizes the results of your event and prominently mentions your biggest sponsors. This elevates your event's status and credibility, and may inspire other businesses in the community to support your next event knowing they'll get such positive press. You can also create a summary video for YouTube using video clips from the event, which will be a key marketing piece next year.

Post pictures from the event on the event website and Facebook page. Sponsors and attendees will want to relive the night, tag themselves and their friends, and hopefully "Like" your page to stay connected. Consider including your major sponsors' logos in a photo watermark, and thanking sponsors for their contributions on social media.

The more additional shout-outs you can provide, the better. You'll not only capitalize on event momentum but have more concrete marketing examples to entice potential sponsors.

To do: Debrief the process with your team

Finally, schedule a meeting with your sponsorship acquisition team to debrief together. Some questions you might cover:

- Overall, what worked well?
- What methods of contacting sponsors (letters, emails, phone calls, in-person meetings) were most successful?
- What types of local businesses, individuals and brands were a natural fit for the event?
- Which sponsors were most *and least* satisfied, and why?
- Were any rewards left unfulfilled? What do you need to do to fulfill or substitute with an equivalent incentive?
- Which rewards were most exciting to sponsors, or reached the greatest audience?
- **Who expressed interest in sponsoring again?**

Take careful notes and save in your auction binder or checklist. Now you've got a great head start for next year's sponsorship enrollment process.