



# Ultimate Guide to Corporate Sponsorships for Nonprofit

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Corporate sponsorships can be a game-changer for both nonprofits and companies. For nonprofits, they bring in more money and business know-how. For companies, they are able to connect with a bigger cause and get access to a new audience.

Still, for many nonprofits, the world of sponsorships can feel overwhelming. How do you find the right companies? What do you offer? How do you land a corporate sponsorship, and what do you need to do to continue working with big companies?

In this ultimate guide we cover everything you need to know. By the end you will be equipped with the knowledge you need to build stronger, smarter corporate partnerships.

- What Is A Corporate Sponsorship?
- Why Corporate Sponsorships Are Important
- What Types Of Corporate Sponsorships Are There?
- What Sponsors Want
- Three Steps To Landing Your First Corporate Sponsorships
- Five Common Mistakes To Avoid
- Tools And Resources
- Conclusion

Let's get started!

## WHAT IS A CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP?

There are of course intricacies of corporate sponsorships, but we will stick with a brief explanation.

Put simply, a corporate sponsorship is a **business agreement between a company and a nonprofit**. The company provides some kind of support to the nonprofit. This is often financial, but can also take various other forms. In return, the nonprofit offers visibility and alignment with a worthy cause.

The best sponsorships are **more than just transactional**. They're strategic alliances. The company isn't just a funder. Instead, they're a collaborator on a cause that actually matters. Likewise, the nonprofit isn't just a beneficiary. Instead, they're a partner in storytelling and a source of goodwill for a brand.

Here is the mindset shift you need to make to fully understand corporate sponsorships:

- A **donation** becomes a gift.
- A sponsorship becomes a deal.
- A partnership becomes a relationship.

This relationship, when thoughtfully planned and built out, can be incredibly powerful for both parties.

## WHY CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS ARE IMPORTANT

Nonprofit organizations are always looking for ways to drive more funding. Corporate sponsorships offer them a solution in a unique way. Not only do they bring in more cash, but they can also result in **increased visibility**, credibility, and access to a broader network.

Here are a few specific reasons why corporate sponsorships might be worth pursuing:

### 1. Diversified Funding Streams

Let's be honest: there are a ton of risks that come from relying too heavily on individual grants or **donors**. Corporate sponsorships add a new stream of funding to your organization. This can offer stability and long-term potential if managed well.



### 2. "In-Kind" Resources

Beyond the money that they offer, companies are also sometimes willing to provide additional services. This might include anything from legal help and IT support to general **marketing advice**. These resources can offset costs for nonprofits and elevate their effectiveness.

### 3. Stronger Brand Credibility

Every nonprofit can benefit from more trust and legitimacy. And when a recognized company puts their name next to yours, that's exactly what you get. It shows the public (as well as other potential sponsors) that your mission is worth supporting.

### 4. Broader Reach + Exposure

A corporate sponsorship can, and often does, get broadcast to a company's audience. This means social media exposure, **mentions in newsletters**, and potentially even press coverage. The result? Your sponsor's audience becomes your audience — and you enjoy the benefits as a result.

## WHAT TYPES OF CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS ARE THERE?

Not all sponsorships look the same. While it's tempting to only consider direct payments from corporate partners, there are a lot of things these sponsors can offer.

This is good news. It means there's quite a bit of flexibility when it comes to finding partnerships that fit your specific goals and resources.

Here are the major types to consider, as well as an example for each one:

### 1. Financial Sponsorship

This is the most straightforward kind of corporate sponsorship. A company gives you money, and in exchange they get visibility and **various benefits**. This will often take the form of supporting an event, program, or annual fund.

*Example: A local bank gives \$10,000 to sponsor your annual **in-person event**. In return, it receives a logo placement and mentions in your press release and social posts.*

### 2. In-Kind Sponsorship

The company donates goods or services instead of money. There are a number of possibilities here: food for an event, help with graphic design, or consulting services.

*Example: A software company gives your team access to **premium tools** for free.*

### 3. Employee Engagement Sponsorship

In this version of corporate sponsorships, a company will support your nonprofit by encouraging employee involvement. This could be anything from **volunteer programs** and fundraising to **donation matching**.

*Example: A company sponsors your nonprofit's "Volunteer Day." They send 100 employees to help build a community garden.*

### 4. Media / Promotional Sponsorship

This corporate sponsorship is all about amplification. A company will use its platforms, connections, or marketing team to amplify a nonprofit's message. Depending on the audience size, this sponsorship can be the most influential.

*Example: A radio station becomes your media sponsor and runs free PSA's about your upcoming walkathon.*



## WHAT SPONSORS WANT

Before we share our system for finding sponsors, it's important to know how exactly businesses benefit from this relationship. Too often, nonprofits approach sponsors with only their needs in mind. This is the wrong approach. If you start by asking what the company wants, and how you can help them get it, you will be much more successful.

Here are five things that most sponsors are looking for:

### 1. Visibility

Companies that are interested in corporate sponsorships often want some kind of exposure. The big reminder here? They want the right kind. Their name on a poster isn't enough. Rather, think of connection to something meaningful, inspirational... and **alignment with their values**.

### 2. Community Engagement

**Corporate social responsibility** (CSR) is increasingly important to companies everywhere. More and more, it's becoming a central part of their overall business strategy. Companies want to show not only that they care about their community, but that they are also investing in solutions.

### 3. Audience Access

Let's be honest: sponsors are interested in your audience. This includes everything from your donors and event attendees to your email list. If your general demographic matches their target customer (or represents a group they want to reach), a corporate sponsorship can be a **huge opportunity** for them.

### 4. Employee Connection

For most companies, having a team that is proud of their employer is a huge asset. Sponsoring a nonprofit can have a number of related benefits: better morale, improved recruitment, and retained talent.

### 5. Measurable ROI

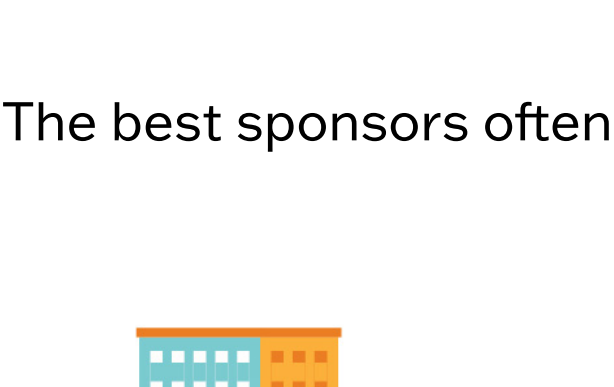
Lastly, ROI is perhaps the most important factor that corporate sponsors are looking for. They want to know: did this sponsorship achieve anything? The thing here is that every corporate sponsorship will be unique. Be prepared to share data on impressions, reach, participation, or engagement. Even small nonprofits can **track this**.

## THREE STEPS TO LANDING YOUR FIRST CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS

### 1. Find The Right Sponsors

Start by identifying companies that have a natural alignment with your values and audience. The best sponsors often come from:

- Existing relationships (**past donors** are an especially good place to start)
- Companies in your local community
- Businesses that already support similar causes
- Brands with public goals that match your mission



As for where you find these companies? There are a few places to start your search:

- Event sponsors from similar nonprofits
- **LinkedIn** or social media mentions
- Publicly available annual reports. Larger companies

Make sure you do your research here. Before you reach out to companies, you need to understand what they care about. Have they supported similar causes in the past? Do they often run campaigns along with nonprofits? Tailor your approach accordingly.

### 2. Build A Sponsorship Proposal That Works

Never treat your proposal for a corporate sponsorship as a sales pitch. This will almost always come across as too transactional. Instead, look at it as an invitation to collaborate.

For the best results, here are some things to include in your sponsorship proposals:

- **Introduction and mission.** Begin with your story. Who are you and what do you do? Also, why does it matter? No matter who is reading your proposal, you want to make it compelling (but concise).
- **The opportunity.** What event, program, or campaign are you seeking a sponsorship for? Be clear here about what you need and how their support will be used.
- **Audience overview.** This is a big one. A potential corporate sponsor will want to know who exactly you serve. This includes key data like event attendees, social media reach, email list size, and demographic insights.
- **Marketing exposure.** Show your potential sponsor exactly how they'll be promoted. This will usually include one (or several) of the following: website mention, newsletter plug, **signage**, press release, or social media shoutout.
- **Impact reporting.** How will you measure success and share results? This is essential information, as it properly sets expectations. Also remember this: an in-depth report can be the key to renewing the relationship.
- **Next steps.** Close your proposal with a clear ask. Invite them to an initial call or request a response by a specific date. This will keep the ball rolling and makes it easier to get a "yes."

### 3. Keep Sponsors Engaged

Getting a sponsor is only half the battle. The real value in corporate sponsorships is how partnerships grow over time. Here are a few tips to keeping partners engaged (and continuing working with them):

- **Overdeliver.** Go above and beyond what you promised. A business is already taking a chance on your nonprofit. Overdeliver and you heighten the odds of a long-term partnership.
- Communicate often. Send updates before they ask. Keep them in the loop at all times. Aim for communicating too often versus not enough.
- **Thank them** publicly. Tag them in social posts, give shoutouts at events, and celebrate their involvement. Not only does this increase their exposure (exactly what they're looking for), but it shows that you care.
- Share real impact. Any partnership will be more successful if you focus on real results. Be careful here of relying on metrics too much. These are important, but **real stories** from people that have benefited from the sponsorship are even more powerful.
- Bring new ideas. There's no rule that partnerships can't evolve over time. Consider pitching creative ways to advance your work together (employee events, co-branded campaigns, or storytelling videos). You never know which new idea is going to be a game-changer!

## FIVE COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

Even the most experienced nonprofits make mistakes when it comes to sponsorships. While this is natural, avoiding the most common mistakes will set you up for success.

Here are five of them:

1. Sending generic proposals to dozens of companies. A **"spray and pray" approach** to outreach is instantly obnoxious to anybody opening your proposal.
2. Focusing only on your needs, not theirs. This is one of the most destructive pitfalls that nonprofits fall into. A corporate sponsorship is a partnership — treat it like one.
3. Failing to do proper research. The best proposal in the world means nothing if it's sent to the wrong company. Make sure you're contacting companies that are actually a good fit.
4. Neglecting **follow-up** or impact reporting. A company needs to be well-informed about results. Sharing stats and overall impact should be an absolute priority.
5. Treating sponsors like donors, not partners. Donors are great. That said, it's a very different type of relationship from a sponsorship. Be sure to follow best practices for interacting with your sponsor.



## TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Lastly, let's cover some tools and resources that are especially useful for corporate sponsorships. These will all help you find more corporate sponsorships for your nonprofit — and keep them happy and engaged once you do.

**SponsorPitch:** This is a comprehensive sponsorship database. It offers insights into different kinds of partnerships across industries, which can help you more easily identify and pitch the right partners.

**Instrumentl:** Primarily a grant tool, Instrumentl also tracks corporate funders. This can reveal sponsorship opportunities that you might otherwise miss during your research phase.

**NXUnite:** Are you a mission-driven organization that wants this entire process to be easier. That's where NXUnite comes in. As a growing hub of nonprofit webinars and sponsor opportunities, finding the right sponsor has never been easier.

**LinkedIn Sales Navigator:** Once you're ready for outreach, this is the tool we recommend. Ideal for prospecting and direct outreach, LinkedIn's Sales Navigator can help you identify and connect with key corporate decision-makers.

## CONCLUSION

Finding the right corporate sponsorships for nonprofits is difficult. That said, it's worth it. With the right partner, you establish a mutually beneficial relationship, and most of your organizational goals become easier as a result.

Implement the tips and action steps in this ultimate guide, and you are well on your way to finding more sponsorship opportunities. Let us know if you ever need advice — we are always here to help!

