

Sponsorships & Partnerships

What does it mean to sponsor an event?

- A corporate event sponsor is a company that makes a donation to ARFOP by aligning its support of our mission, its commitment to our community, and/or its marketing objectives with one of ARFOP's outstanding community events.
- Sponsorship takes the form of a mutually beneficial partnership agreement between the donor and ARFOP – in the form of a contract or a signed letter of commitment.
- A successful sponsorship provides:
 - Funding or in-kind goods/services for ARFOP to reduce the cost of the event and thus contribute to the net proceeds.
 - Value to the donor. This value can be increased brand exposure through event promotion, access to attendees and ARFOP followers, event tickets, and other considerations.
- An in-kind sponsorship is for the donation of goods or services valued at a minimum level that ARFOP would need to purchase if they were not donated.
- The minimum donation to be a Presenting Sponsor of an ARFOP event is \$10,000.
- All organizations providing cash support of \$10,000 or more annually receive global recognition across all ARFOP-managed channels. All event sponsorships include recognition of varying degrees and tickets to the event.

Why do we want sponsors?

- To boost event proceeds.
- To create partnerships that have potential to repeat year-to-year, thus creating sustainability for our events.
- To increase the event's credibility.
- To increase exposure in the community.

What types of sponsors do we have?

- Financial – donation of funds
- In-Kind – donors of products or services
- Promotional – social media and influencers
- Media (print and digital) – magazines, radio, etc.

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How do we find sponsors with whom to partner?

- Identify companies who are logical fits for sponsorship (lighting company -> Luminary Walk).
- Identify companies which have a record of community involvement and support.
- Look to our network of Friends to identify potential prospects.
- Consider outreach to members.

What solicitation tools do we need? [ARFOP marketing staff will produce with your input. See Section 5 - Marketing Section.

- Promotional brochure or fact sheet – what to expect, photos, statistics, etc.
- Sponsorship levels and benefits (see examples and explanation below)
- Web page
- Sponsorship commitment form (see examples and explanation below)
- Some solicitations will require a customized sponsorship proposal.

How do we solicit sponsorships?

1. Connect with ARFOP to determine if a relationship with a prospect already exists. This will help determine how much cultivation is needed.
2. Develop a plan of action:
 - Determine what help you need from ARFOP Development staff.
 - Determine who the prospects' decision makers are. Is there a formal process/application? Will you be soliciting the community affairs officer, or someone in the marketing department, or perhaps the director of the company's foundation?
 - If the prospect does not have a history with ARFOP or the event, employ cultivation techniques – give decision makers a tour, invite decision makers to the event in preparation for an ask the following year, etc.
 - Ask advisory board members and other volunteers for prospect leads, and ask them to make the introduction to you and the ARFOP Development staff.
 - Track all contacts with prospects and follow through until we have a definitive response – “yes,” “no,” “maybe next year,” etc.
 - Always thank prospects for their consideration in a personal and meaningful way – whether they become a sponsor or not! (A hand-written note is very effective.)

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Design the sponsorship levels and determine the benefits for each. ARFOP Development staff will assist.

- Tickets
- Recognition
- Additional exposure opportunities

Make the ask!

- Keep record of outreach and conversations.
- If you don't want to go alone, ask the ARFOP Development Director to accompany you.
- The worst thing that can happen is that they say "no."
- And even then, you can suggest that they consider purchasing a couple of tickets instead.

Contractual Agreements with sponsors and partners

- Many corporate sponsors/partners require written agreements to define the sponsorship relationship.
- In many cases, the sponsor will initiate the agreement – usually written by their legal department. [See sample.]
- If the sponsor is willing to have ARFOP initiate the agreement, ask the ARFOP Executive Director to create the contract. To do so, the E.D. will need a complete description of the relationship – at a minimum a listing of the responsibility of each side. [See sample.]
- All sponsorship agreements/contracts must be signed by the ARFOP Executive Director.
- The ARFOP Executive Director will consult with one or more of the lawyers that serve on the ARFOP Board to review all agreements initiated by the sponsor.
- Often these contracts include responsibilities to be provided by staff at the venue. If this is the case, get approval from Arboretum or Farmstead staff before adding any of their responsibilities to the contract/agreement.

Results!

- Celebrate the new partnership, OR
- File away that prospect based on the response (ask again, ask for a different event, not a viable prospect, etc.).