



Business for the Arts <sup>TM</sup>  
Les affaires pour les arts



**10**  
**steps**  
to making  
sponsorship  
work for your  
cultural organization

# WELCOME TO OUR 10-STEP GUIDE

## to securing new, long-term partnerships with the businesses in your community!

Business sponsorship of arts and culture is an essential resource for ensuring a strong cultural sector and engaged, vibrant communities. Securing successful sponsorships requires a shift in focus from a cultural organization's activities to the mandate and goals of potential business sponsors. Developing a strategy, establishing a set of tactics, identifying synergies and articulating them in a proposal are key elements of the process. This guide will take you step-by-step through the process of securing mutually beneficial partnerships with the private sector. Make sponsorship work for you!

This booklet was developed to complement artsVest™, a program of Business for the Arts™ designed to spark new business sponsorship and corporate engagement in arts and culture at a local level. The program provides matching incentive funds and sponsorship training to cultural organizations in communities across Canada, working one community at a time to increase private sector support of the arts, to build capacity in the cultural sector and to create, sustainable, long-term partnerships between the private, public and cultural sectors.

For more information, visit [www.artsvest.com](http://www.artsvest.com) or email [artsvest@businessforthearts.org](mailto:artsvest@businessforthearts.org).

This booklet was developed by Business for the Arts™  
with Marian Ruston, Sponsorship Coach

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# STEP 1 FOCUS

Sponsorship is a business relationship. Therefore, your focus needs to be more on the business and less on your organization's activities.

In this partnership of equals, you will be aiming to show how you can help the business to achieve its objectives, while your sponsor's support will help you to achieve yours. You both want this to succeed.

You will ensure your own success by focusing outwards on your sponsor.

Focus on being innovative. Why offer only logo recognition when you exist to be creative?

Show how focused you are by asking, "What do you really want to achieve out of this partnership and how will you measure success?"

# STEP 2 CONTEXT

"To be successful you must know the context in which you are working"  
Tim Jones, CEO Artscape

Research the opportunities and challenges affecting business in your local economy – these businesses are your potential sponsors.

Find out what your local community thinks about you and what they value in your organization – these people are your audience.

Work towards success by becoming a contributing and engaged member of your own community.

## STEP 3 KNOWLEDGE

Know the unique perceptions or concerns that exist around cultural sponsorship in your community.

Some things we've heard:

"Organizations I don't even know think it's ok to come and ask me for a lot of money. Would you propose marriage before you've even had one date? My advice is to cultivate the relationship first."

"The arts are wonderful, essential even. However, stewardship of sponsors is awful! There's still too much of the 'take the cheque and run' mentality."

"The fit is everything. To be honest, if I can see a good fit, I'm willing to find a way to make the sponsorship work."

"Why don't I sponsor the arts? Nobody has ever asked me."

## STEP 4 AWARENESS

Know how relevant you are in the bigger picture.

Individually, arts and culture organizations are creative businesses.

Collectively, arts and culture are powerful drivers in the creative economy and an integral part of healthy, flourishing communities.

## STEP 5 SELF-AWARENESS

Being aware of and being able to articulate what your organization has to offer potential sponsors is paramount.

### Take a quick test:

Can you write down your Mission Statement?

List the top three reasons why people in the community value your organization.

List three compelling reasons why local businesses would value your organization.

Do you have a 60-Second Pitch for business? Practice your pitch before meeting any potential business sponsor. Write it down and practice, practice, practice so that it will be ready at all times.

## STEP 6 OBJECTIVES

Research the objectives of your individual sponsor targets.

The business objectives in sponsoring arts and culture are usually to:

- Raise awareness and increase visibility.
- Create change and contribute to the community.
- Fulfill a Corporate Social Responsibility mandate.
- Engage employees.
- Entertain Clients.
- Conduct niche marketing.

Ask questions and think about which goals you can help them achieve.

# STEP 7 DEFINITIONS

Know the difference between a donor and a sponsor.

## DONOR/DONATION

“A donor is anyone who gives resources – financial, social, intellectual and time – to a non-profit organization, public charity or fund. A donor is committed to making a difference in society.”

A donor receives recognition but neither expects nor receives gain or advantage in return for the donation.

A donor may receive a tax receipt.

## SPONSOR/SPONSORSHIP

A sponsor receives a number of business benefits in exchange for money or services. This constitutes an advantage or gain for the sponsor.

A sponsor may not receive a tax receipt.

“Sponsorship is Strategic Co-operative Marketing”.

- Bernie Colterman, Colterman Marketing Group (CMG)

Strategic: Every good plan starts with a logical reason for doing it, plus clear, measurable outcomes.

Co-operative: Co-operation to achieve other’s objectives.

Marketing: Basis for why the company will invest in you.

# STEP 8 STRATEGY

Always start by developing a strategy.

Create a list of potential business targets by thinking outside of the box; consider retailers, restaurants, dentists, lawyers, malls.

Brainstorm natural business alignments or synergies.

Research national and local newspapers or business pages every day.

Research trade papers and magazines every week or month.

Talk to and engage your board.

Be an engaged and interested member of your own community.

Cultivate every relationship.

# STEP 9 TACTICS

Develop a strong proposal and set of actionable tactics based on your strategy.

## **THE PROPOSAL** *Two pages maximum*

It should include:

Mission & Vision; Board; Awards; Testimonials.

Contact info: ED, Board Chair, Development Manager.

Charitable registration number.

State the opportunity, linking it to the goals and objectives of the company.

State: "This will support your current marketing efforts by ..."

and include three ways.

State the benefits (tailored to each targeted sponsor).

The cost.

## **GETTING THE MEETING**

Telephone approach is best; it helps you to connect with your target.

Ask if it is a convenient time to talk.

Be brief, be aware, smile.

Don't try to sell on the telephone; aim to get a meeting.

## **PREPARING FOR THE MEETING**

Refer to your research notes.

Feel secure about the fit.

Know your points of negotiation and limitations.

Consider taking the ED or a board member with you.

## **AT THE MEETING**

Try to connect (photos, personal links).

Get them talking.

Actively listen.

Ask open questions.

Be flexible and responsive.

Use what you have just been told when talking about your sponsorship property.

Ask how they will measure success.

## **THE FOLLOW-UP**

Letter of thanks, with a date on which YOU will get back to them (one week latest).

Make sure to follow up exactly on that date.

If necessary, ask, "What would make this work for you?"

Be prepared to negotiate.

Write a Letter of Agreement.

## **DEALING WITH "NO"!**

Find out why.

Can you do anything about the objection?

Deduce from what you have learned whether you can cultivate this target for the future.

If yes, invite the prospect to the event anyhow.

If no, send a letter of thanks for their consideration of the opportunity.

## **IDEAS FOR ACTION**

Network and collaborate with peers.

Cultivate business organizations – host a Chamber of Commerce Business Meeting in return for the opportunity to make a five-minute presentation about your organization; host any Business Breakfast event for the same purpose; be creative about how you make your presentation e.g, let a performer/artist/artifact say it all.

Cultivate employees of local businesses e.g, host an Employees Day and invite businesses to engage; host a Family Day and do the same.

Offer your creative space to business for their training days.

Keep your local media and local councilor informed about who you are and what you are doing.

# STEP 10 STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship refers to managing and enhancing sponsor relationships by recognizing them and conveying the positive impact of the sponsorship.

This is the single most important activity after securing the sponsorship.

Aim to exceed expectations.

Refer to the signed Letter of Agreement constantly and tick the benefits as you achieve them.

At the conclusion, write a letter of thanks with a summary of the event, samples of print, a note of other recognition e.g, verbal acknowledgement, reviews, results of any evaluation you may have carried out e.g, audience survey; anecdotal evidence.

Report regularly.

Engage the sponsor e.g, opportunities for employee volunteering; host a sponsor appreciation event where businesses can network together; introduce the sponsor to the Board; show you value the relationship by unexpected gestures e.g, invitation to an event they have not sponsored; consider extending an invitation to become a volunteer or inviting onto the Board if appropriate.

*Remember, stay sponsor-focused, steward well and you will make sponsorship work for your cultural organization!*

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Business for the Arts is Canada's national association of business leaders who support the arts, with a mission to:

**CONNECT** private sector funders and volunteers to arts and culture organizations in their community through our programs.

**COMMUNICATE** the value of business investment in arts and culture through our surveys, research, advocacy and publications.

**RECOGNIZE** outstanding business leaders who support arts and culture through our annual Globe & Mail, Business for the Arts Partnership Awards.

For more information, visit [www.businessforthearts.org](http://www.businessforthearts.org) or call 416-869-3016.

