

Tips for Seeking Donations or Sponsorships

Definitions

There is a difference between sponsorships and donations. In general, **sponsorships** are given by a business or organization to a student organization in return for a measurable benefit, such as advertising, event participation, or signage. Donations are gifts (**typically money**) given to an organization with no expectation of a measurable benefit to the donor.

Important Notes

- In order for your student organization to utilize the MSU Foundation account, the donation or sponsorship must be in the form of MONEY, not items or in-kind (such as advertising space, food, etc.).
- If asking an individual or business for a charitable donation, you **MUST be very clear you are not soliciting on behalf of Montana State University or the Foundation**. Rather, you are acting **on behalf of your student organization only**. If it is revealed you are breaking this rule, the Foundation has the right to refuse the donation.

Tips

- If asking a business for a donation or sponsorship, find out who will be reading your letter and address it to them personally. This is usually a general manager or perhaps a business owner.
- Check, double-check and triple-check grammar and spelling. Have your advisor look over as well as multiple leaders. Sending out a donation letter with mistakes is the fastest way to get your request thrown in the trash.
- ALWAYS address the letter to the specific business or individual. This shows you have done your initial research. Do not send out generic letters.
- Send your letter via mail or drop it off directly. Follow-up with a phone call within a week. Continue to follow-up until you get a firm yes or no. Do not expect them to reach out to you first! Have a copy of the letter in front of you when making this phone call so you can refer to important information if asked. If you cannot speak to the correct individual ask when a better time may be.
- Businesses may be more willing to give items instead of money. Keep in mind the value of those items are not considered tax-deductible by the Foundation, so a receipt cannot be written.
- ALWAYS follow-up ANY donations with a thank-you card, letter or email.
- Divide & conquer! Members & leaders can brainstorm possible names and businesses. Ensure your message is consistent and your donation letters have the same content, with a little fine-tuning to reflect the donor/business.
- Have a master list of who you have sent letters to, who you have made follow-up calls to, their donation amount, if you have sent a thank-you, etc. Hand this down to future leadership!
- When you list your contact information at the end of the letter, be sure you are not listing email addresses that could be deemed inappropriate and be sure the outgoing voice mail message on any phone number you list sounds professional....no music or inappropriate language. Remember, these facets of you reflect back on your group and ignoring this simple advice is another sure way to have your request disregarded by potential funders.