

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY RECREATION

SPORT CLUBS SPONSORSHIP GUIDE

HOW CAN SPORT CLUBS OBTAIN SPONSORSHIPS?

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WHAT IS SPONSORSHIP?

To sponsor something is to support an event, activity, person, or organization financially or through the provision of products or services. Ideally, both parties should benefit from the arrangement and should look to future and further development of the arrangement. The club is provided with valuable resources in kind, in cash and in many other forms, while sponsors benefit by promoting or advertising their goods and services, building brand association with the event participants and audience and/or by simply generating good will.

Finding sponsorship is not easy and it does require the commitment to both seeking out partnerships and, once those partnerships have been made, fulfilling your end of the agreement. You will need to be able to show potential sponsors the benefits of associating themselves with your team.

GUIDELINES

Because your club is under the umbrella of UREC and JMU, there are a number of factors that you must consider and rules that you must abide by in order to create successful partnerships. Remember, we want you to be successful – these guidelines are meant to save you trouble in the long run and give you an understanding of the risks and benefits of pursuing sponsorships.

1. Alert Kristin to your interest in obtaining sponsorships that will exceed \$1000 (either cash or gifts-in-kind). If you plan to ask for more than \$5000, Kristin will need to involve the Office of Development. This may slow down the process as more stakeholders will be involved.
2. Please send the following to Kristin:
 - a. Initial letter
 - b. List of organizations you will be contacting
 - c. Any contracts that follow

The reasoning behind this is to offer suggestions for improvement and to catch any potential conflicts or problems.

3. If you will be contacting any national corporations, that list will need to be sent by Kristin to the Office of Development for approval before you should make contact with the corporation. The Office of Development will approve, deny or collaborate with you for each corporation. Remember, you are a part of a larger organization that may already have relationships with these organizations.
4. You must refer to your club as “The ____ Club at James Madison University” in any written or verbal correspondence.
5. Do not make promises that you cannot keep. It is better to be safe than sorry – use Kristin as a resource to decide in advance what is and is not possible or realistic to offer a sponsor.
6. Decide if you want to focus on donations as opposed to sponsorships. Donations are tax-deductible (if sent to your JMU Foundation account), which can be very appealing to potential partners. However, you cannot provide anything in return, namely advertising. Once advertising

occurs (sponsorships), it is a business transaction and the sponsor is paying for you to promote their company.

7. Your team cannot promise University resources without UREC's (and potentially JMU's) approval. For example, agreeing to post a banner inside of UREC or on JMU property without approval of both parties would be unacceptable and could cause you to default on your end of the agreement.
8. Think about all of your stakeholders. For example, if your team uses multiple ski slopes, you would need to check with each slope to learn if you can post any banners or set up any merchandise tables.

STEP BY STEP GUIDE

Phase 1: The Letter

1. Write individually to each potential sponsor, on letterhead paper if possible, never send a hand written or duplicated note. Present an honest and realistic case and list any likely benefits to the sponsor.
2. Personalize your requests for sponsorship. Why would this be a good match?
3. Be flexible with your proposal. 'Packages' are a good guide but rarely fit the sponsor's values perfectly.
4. Suggest figures of money or details of in-kind help or support. It is not uncommon to have individual sponsors for separate items.
5. Give a full but brief description of your club.
6. Don't wait too long in making an approach to sponsors. Send your request well ahead of the event.

Phase 2: The Meeting or Call

7. Try to arrange an initial meeting; you will make a bigger impact talking face to face than through lengthy telephone calls. Ask questions; find out the sponsors' needs and how your event or league can help them achieve these goals. If possible invite them to meet your club at a practice or game.
8. Try to agree all sponsorship deals in writing, either by a letter of agreement or a written contract to be signed by authorized signatories of both parties.

Phase 3: Finalizing & Follow Up

9. Use sponsorship income or goods as a useful resource but don't rely on sponsorship as the success factor of your tournament or league.

10. Obtaining an agreement for a sponsorship deal is the start, not the end of a relationship. Work hard to look after the sponsor's interests as this may reap future rewards. Create a personal relationship, and be sure to invite the sponsor to the tournament or league.
11. Follow up with a hand-written thank you note emphasizing how their sponsorship directly affected your success.

Remember the sponsor is associating its name with your tournament or league and its public image. It is important that its name is enhanced not damaged by the image of the club.

TYPES OF SPONSORSHIP

The key to being successful in acquiring quality sponsorships is creativity and flexibility. The most successful sponsor seekers are people that listen to the needs of their potential sponsors and adapt their sponsorship offerings to those needs.

The first thought for each club should be to start locally and then expand to region and then national. Nike might be the bigger brand name, but a local company may be more excited about helping locally.

Another starting point is to review the historical budget for the most costly items. Ask your current suppliers if they would be interested in providing supplies at a discount or free in exchange for advertising.

The best way to maximize the appeal of sponsorships is to have a lot of options organized creatively such as a tiered approach. Create several tiers of sponsorship, each with different, exclusive benefits. Remember though, some benefits will overlap into many or even all categories - benefits such as being mentioned on sponsorship webpage or event program.

Cash Sponsorships

The reality of sponsorship in general is that 'in-kind' sponsorships are your best bet for success in. This is because cash paid or donated as sponsorship has a recovery rate that is very unfriendly to potential sponsors. It is helpful to keep this in mind when attaching a dollar cost to any item for which you solicit sponsorship.

Gifts in Kind Sponsorships

If you are not able to get money from a sponsor, ask them what they are able to give to your team. (Remember, anything donated cuts the costs of what the club has to pay for.)

Apparel Sponsors are often the easiest sponsors to obtain. Many organizations like to have their logo placed in front of the public, and using apparel to achieve this is one the most cost effective approaches.

Offer organizations the option to pay for clothing you intend to have at your event for sale or giveaway in exchange for placing their logo on the clothing.

Logistics Sponsorships

The “Logistic Sponsorships” are a place to get creative. These types of sponsorships can range from anything to merchandise booth sponsor, field sponsor, or first aid sponsor.

These are usually appealing to many organizations especially if they feel the sponsorship fits their mission. These sponsorships can be facilitated as easily as placing a placard near the sponsored areas (e.g. a field, a first aid tent, etc).

Accommodation Sponsorships

Every club needs a place to stay when they travel. Why not strike an agreement with a hotel? It would be difficult to get direct funding from a hotel for this type of sponsorship, however, it is customary for hotels to offer group discounts and give financial kickbacks back to the event for every room booked.

EXAMPLE OF SPONSORSHIP REQUEST

Please note: this is just an example. Every team should have a very different letter and should also personalize it to the company you are soliciting.

Date

Dear (Company's Name):

The (Team Name) Club at James Madison University (JMU) is seeking sponsorships for the upcoming season. Our team has been in existence for 12 years and currently, we have 43 dedicated JMU students on our roster. Last year, our club placed first in the Virginia State Championships and we hope to travel to the National Tournament this year.

Due to the nature of your business, we believe that a sponsor partnership with your organization can be very beneficial to both parties. The combination of our practices, regular season games, playoffs and prominence on campus exposes us to JMU students, faculty/staff, alumni and members of the local, regional and national communities. Our participants, combined with supportive spectators, range in ages from 18-50+, so we believe this provides your company with a unique opportunity for exposure.

We are currently seeking the following partnerships. Please note that these are just suggestions and we are excited to work out an agreement that meets both of our needs. Any support you can offer, whether monetary donations and/or merchandise would contribute greatly to the overall success of our team this year.

- Uniform Sponsor (\$2500 – One opportunity available)
- Lodging Sponsor (\$2000)
- Travel Sponsor (\$1500)
- Equipment Sponsor
- Title Sponsor for Home Tournament (\$2500)
- Web Page Sponsor (\$500 – Multiple opportunities available)

- Practice Tee Shirt Sponsor (\$500 – Multiple opportunities available)

We appreciate your time in considering this opportunity to support (Team Name). We will be following up with a phone call in the next week and look forward to the opportunity to discuss this potential partnership.

Sincerely,

Signature Here

Jane Doe, Club Sport President
James Madison University Recreation
doejx@jmu.edu
540-568-1111

Signature Here

Joe Practice, Club Sport Vice President
James Madison University Recreation
practijx@jmu.edu
540-568-2222

EXAMPLE CONTRACT

Coming Soon.

RESOURCES

http://www.beachultimate.org/blog/sponsorship_guide.pdf

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sponsor_\(commercial\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sponsor_(commercial))