

How To Solicit Sponsorship Funding for ACA Meeting Sessions & Workshops

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1. Ask early!

- a. *Most sponsors earmark donations for the following year during annual budgeting, and that occurs before the end of the calendar year.* Try to submit funding requests in late summer/early fall of the year preceding the meeting.

2. What potential sponsors should you target?

- a. *Consult last year's meeting program booklet and the meeting web site to find out who sponsored social events and meeting sessions.* You can also request this information from the ACA Director of Administrative Services, Kristin Stevens.
- b. *Don't just ask the usual suspects.* There are many companies (both large and small) that do not purchase booths at the ACA annual meeting yet supply goods and services to our members. Give them an opportunity to contribute sums appropriate to their corporate size and their impact to our community. Last year's ACA meeting web site lists meeting sponsors by dollar amount, so you can use that as a preliminary guide for determining dollar amounts. Think about the companies that supply your laboratory with equipment, chemicals, services (including computing) and make a shortlist that you can share with your co-organizers and your speakers for more sponsorship ideas.
- c. *Tailor your sponsors to the scientific topic of the sessions.* For example, if you're organizing a session on fiber diffraction, sponsorship by companies that utilize the results of fiber diffraction is a logical fit. Ask pharmaceutical companies to sponsor a session on macromolecules involved in mental health. Tell them that they will be given appropriate recognition. Be creative.

3. Identify the correct person to contact.

- a. *For many small companies, this could be the manager.* You might actually know this person and could call them directly, although you will still want to send an official letter requesting sponsorship. Personal connections can be very useful when soliciting sponsorship, so put your connections to good use. This is often the most important aspect of fundraising. There is a saying, "People give to people, not to causes," so be sure to emphasize that the ACA is important to you and to them, and try to make that personal connection, if possible. Don't say something like "we buy a lot of stuff from you, so would you donate money?"—that's inappropriate and counterproductive.
- b. *For larger companies, you will have to do some investigating.* It will probably require you to do some web site searching and/or make some phone calls to track down the correct department/person to send the funding request. Doing this will increase your chances that the request makes it to the correct person in a reasonable amount of time. Be sure to get a mailing address and a telephone number.

4. Write a persuasive letter on official letterhead that contains the appropriate amount of information.

- a. Address the letter to the appropriate person/department.
- b. Include a heading that indicates you are seeking a sponsorship arrangement. Don't be shy, say it up front.
- c. Write a short but informative paragraph explaining the event (including the number of attendees at last year's meeting; for 2019, this was 567) and describing the session. Emphasize the relationship of your session to the sponsor, and why their sponsorship is a good fit for your session.
- d. Clearly state the amount of funds you need for the event and suggest an amount that you would like the sponsor to contribute.
- e. Clearly state what the sponsor will get in return for sponsorship.
- f. Give the sponsor the contact information for the person in the ACA to contact regarding more information about sponsorship and the official route for sending the funds. In this case, that would be the Director of Administrative Services, Kristin Stevens.
- g. Include your organization's charity registration number. The ACA is tax-exempt under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service code, and the EIN is 22-6075182.
- h. Sign the letter.

5. Follow up with a telephone call within 1-2 weeks, especially if there's been no response.

- a. Call to see if the letter made it to the correct person who can make charitable contributions.
- b. Call to remind that person about the funding request, and to see if a decision has been made. You are looking to find out in a reasonable amount of time if the potential sponsor does or does not want to provide sponsorship.

6. Once the sponsor commits to sponsorship, make sure that the funds will be transferred and the promised publicity is fulfilled.

- a. It's important to establish the means of getting the funds transferred to the ACA. Usually this means the sponsor needs to be invoiced, so make sure that Kristin Stevens is notified about the commitment.
- b. Fulfillment is a common shortfall in non-profit sponsorship; check with Kristin Stevens and make sure that your sponsors are appropriately acknowledged on the web site and in the program.

7. A written thank you letter on official ACA letterhead to the sponsor is very important.

- a. All organizers of a session should send thank you letters to all sponsors of the session.
- b. Send the letters after the end of the meeting.
- c. Include descriptive details about the session (titles of talks, number of speakers, number of people attending, etc.).
- d. Include one or two photos of the speakers and the session.