

**External Sponsorship Guidelines**

**Contents**

Introduction…………………………………………………………………… 3

Important Things to Consider………………………………………………. 4

What can the Sponsor do for you?.......................................................... 5

What can you do for the Sponsor?.......................................................... 6

Steps for Obtaining a Sponsor……………………………………………… 8

What Not to Do……………………………………………………………… 12

**Introduction**

This guide has been created to help clubs and societies with their search to secure external sponsorship. It seeks to clarify the process which you need to go through in obtaining a sponsor, reminding you of the responsibilities this entails, and ultimately protecting your student group.

Local businesses are often keen to sponsor student clubs/societies in return for advertisement or guaranteed custom. This can be a very successful way of guaranteeing a lump sum of money, but it can also have risks attached if you are not fully aware of what you are both signing up for.





**Important things to Consider**

Below are four key things to consider when looking to establish sponsorship for your club or society.

**1 – Sponsorship is a Two-Way Agreement**

It is very rare that you will receive money for doing nothing and sponsorship is no different. You must remember that the prospective sponsor will be looking for something from you in return for their investment, and it is important to establish early on what this may look like. You and your club/society will be expected to honour any obligations listed to maintain the sponsorship, so do not expect to take the money and run.

**2 – Keep it Simple. Be Realistic in What You Can Offer**

The more straightforward the sponsorship agreement, the easier it will be for your club/society to uphold. Do not enter into an agreement if you are not confident that your club or society will be able to honour your end of the agreement. Remember, not everyone will share your commitment and enthusiasm, so think of your members and what they will be prepared to give in return for sponsorship.

**3. Keep the Agreement Short**

Your club/societies are likely to change yearly, with new members and a new committee bringing in different ideas. As a result, what you are prepared to do for sponsorship, and what you will need to gain from that, will vary year to year. With this in mind, it can be risky to commit to lengthy sponsorship agreements, as in the future they may not seem such a good deal.

SUSU advises seeking sponsorship agreements on a yearly basis and including an option to renew should both parties wish to continue. It is much easier to do this than attempt to break a long-term contract that no longer suits your needs.

**4. Seek Common Goals**

As a sponsorship represents a partnership between your club and an external organisation, it is best to approach potential sponsors to whom you know you can offer something genuine in return. Think about companies or businesses which you and your club or society are regularly in contact with, or those who have similar aims to yourselves.

**What can the Sponsor**

**do for you?**

It is not necessarily all about money. Although a financial contribution is what most clubs and societies seek from their sponsor, a sponsor can aid and benefit your club in many more ways.

**1 – Provide Finance**

This is the most obvious contribution that a sponsor can make. This is where they are ready to provide money in return for the club advertising (maybe on team shirts) or for using their products or services exclusively.

**2 – Provide Clothing**

A sponsor may offer to provide kit or clothing for your club or society in return for their name being displayed on it. Please check with SUSU that any kit is in line with our branding policy.

**3 – Discounts**

If you and your club or society are regular customers of a particular business, then you may be able to negotiate sponsorship in the form of a discount on their products and services. This could be money off equipment or supplies ordered from a specific shop, a reduced admission price to events when taking all of your club or society, or a discount when hiring specific services or facilities, to name but a few examples.

**4 – Provide Alternative Facilities or Venues**

If you club or society has specific equipment or facility needs that cannot be met by the union, or you are struggling for enough space/availability, then effective sponsorship could involve the agreement for the use of an alternative venue at the cost of the sponsor. In some cases, a company may be willing to let you use their venue in return for advertising or involvement in other activities.

**What can you do for the**

**Sponsor?**

As mentioned earlier, it is very rare that you will receive money for doing nothing, you need to consider what your club can offer in return. Playing kit sponsorship is very common, however there is a chance that sponsors may not see this as an effective marketing tool at university level, so be prepared to think outside the box and use the strengths of your club or society that can benefit both parties.

**1 – Advertising**

Helping to get a company’s name into the University and the community is the most accepted form of sponsorship. This can be achieved by displaying your sponsor’s logo on playing, training or social kit, or possibly even displaying company banners at club or society events.

**2 – Attendance at their venue/business**

The attendance of your club and society can provide companies with quite a boost. Arranging to hold events with potential sponsors can be a good tool to aid in repaying their investment. Additionally, simply ensuring that your members regularly use a sponsor’s service or products could be deemed a significant contribution.

**3 – Aiding with Promotions**

Young, enthusiastic and vibrant people can be great ambassadors for businesses or companies. Working to your club or societies strengths and agreeing to put on an activity or perform at a company’s events or promotions can go a long way. Just offering the services of your members to help publicise your potential sponsors could prove valuable.

**4 – Involvement in Activities**

The experience and knowledge of your club and society is another valuable commodity and you may be able to offer this to potential sponsors for the benefit of your group. For example, if you are working with an external venue, you may be able to get the use of their facilities at a reduced rate if you agree to offer your experience to help with their other activities, such as coaching community groups.

**5 – Fundraising**

Larger businesses, and in particular larger chains, will have an expectation to give something back to the community, which is known as Corporate Social Responsibility. Student clubs and societies can be really good ambassadors and people on the ground to help businesses do this. This can be via means such as fundraising activities for charity (remember to discuss any fundraising activities with SUSU before proceeding) and to demonstrate their positive impact on Southampton.

**Steps for Obtaining a**

**Sponsor**

Once you have read and considered the previous sections, you are probably wondering where to start. This section aims to break the process for obtaining a sponsor down into clear easy steps by asking 4 questions. A separate Sponsorship Framework Breakdown document is available to help you understand the below within your clubs context.

**Why?**

The key question that you first need to consider is “Why would any company or organisation want to sponsor my club or society?”

If you are not convinced or clear why your group should be sponsored, then you will struggle to convince anyone else. Consider the following three themes to aid in ensuring sponsors see your group as an attractive prospect:

**Clarity**

Ensure that you have a firm grasp on your club/society’s vision. If you had 30 seconds to describe what your club/society is about, what would you say? Would the person hearing this be able to accurately communicate this back to you?

**Consistency**

Ensure that you have some track record of success as a club/society. What have you done well over the last part year? Have you won any competitions or awards or been publicly recognised?

**Confidence**

Ensure that your club/society is making progress towards its vision. What are you intending to do in the coming year that you have not done this year?

**What?**

The next key question to consider is “What do you actually want from a sponsor?”.

As mentioned on page 5, sponsorship is not necessarily all about money. Financial input is what most clubs/societies will be seeking, but there are other ways that you can benefit from a sponsor.

Make sure you have fully considered the options on page 5 and are clear on what you want from a sponsor prior to contacting prospective companies. Consider the following questions:

If you are seeking finances, how much and for what purpose?

If you are seeking equipment, what equipment, how much will this equipment cost, what is it needed for and when do you need it?

If you are seeking discounts or clothing/kit, for what purpose? Can you provide guarantees that all club/society members will use their service?

If you are seeking alternative venues or facilities, what is your reason for this and how much will this cost?

**Who?**

Now that you have considered why someone would sponsor your club or society and what you require sponsorship for, it is time to consider who to approach. Will you make use of personal connections or seek local companies? Maybe those with allied aims? Make sure that their values are in line with the SUSU strategy.

**Personal**

Who do you personally know? Everyone in your student group will have personal connections to draw on. One of the biggest opportunities here is with alumni. Those who were part of the club or society during their time at the University will probably have very fond memories and many will be keen to invest money to enable current members to enjoy activities. Alumni love to be kept updated, consider putting together a termly newsletter or even an annual dinner with the opportunity for alumni to give money.

**Local**

Local organisations are often keen to be associated with university clubs and societies particularly if those clubs and societies represent the local community well.

**Allied Aims**

Consider people or organisations that have similar aims and objectives to yours. If you are a sports club, then equipment suppliers are a natural connection to make. If you are an academic society, there may be employers in the field represented by your society that could be a good fit.

**How?**

The last big question is “How do we actually make this happen?”

**Identify Potential Sponsors**

Craft an A4 document describing your society, its vision, its successes, what it wants from the sponsor and what it can offer a sponsor. You are proposing a partnership beneficial to both sides. Communicate what you can offer. Advertising your sponsor through your social media channels? Aiding with promotions of the sponsor? Agreeing that a minimum number of members will regularly use the services of the sponsor? This can work well with bars, cafes and restaurants.

**Build your Proposal**

The most effective way is to send a letter or email to a named person in the organisation with your proposal. This initial communication should include an expression of desire to follow-up with a telephone call or face-to-face meeting if appropriate.

**Build a Relationship**

**Complete the Contract**

Work with your potential sponsor to discuss what might be favourable terms for both sides. It is key that both sides understand each other, so ask questions, find out the vision of the organisation and discuss how your club or society might help them to get there. Be open minded!

**Negotiate Terms**

**Make the Approach**

No contract, no deal. Ensure that you understand the terms of the contract and are happy with them. Without a signatory from both parties, there is no deal. Once the contract is signed ensure that there is a copy for both parties. Some companies draw up the contracts themselves, however there is a SUSU template contract available if you wish to draw up your own.

**PLEASE NOTE – DO NOT SIGN A CONTRACT WITHOUT FIRST SEEKING APPROVAL FROM SUSU**

Your sponsor has a vested interest in the success of your society. Keep them updated with how things are going. A sponsor that can see how their investment is bringing a return will be keen to continue partnership with you in the future. A phone call or email once a term to your sponsor isn’t particularly time intensive and can be hugely beneficial in the long run for your student group.

**What Not to Do**

In addition to all the advice provided in the previous sections, there is also some guidance around what not to do.

**1 – Sign Any Contract Without SUSU Approval**

It is vital that clubs and societies do not sign a contract until it has been approved by SUSU. This is to help and support your club and society and ensure that you are not signing up to anything that you cannot deliver.

**2 – Approach Any Old Company**

Try to think of companies that are relevant to your club or society. Attempt to avoid going to the same old pubs and clubs (they will be inundated with sponsorship requests). Be innovative, try to think of what kind of company or organisation want to want to target the students in your club/society.

**3 – Be Unrealistic**

Try and be realistic in what you offer companies and what you would like to get back in return. Companies are very savvy; if you’re a small club/society, do not go asking for thousands of pounds!

**4 – Be Unprepared**

Avoid going into any meeting or phone call unprepared. Any possible sponsor is going to have a lot of questions as to why it should part with its investment. Make you sure you can answer them first time around. If you cannot, another club or society will!

Before contacting a potential sponsor, it is also wise to check to see if the company in question is legitimate – for example, they may be against SUSU’s ethical policy, or they may be bad debtors.

**5 – Promise Anything That Goes Against SUSU Guidelines**

Although SUSU encourages external group sponsorship, it **does not** allow companies access to campus, the Student Union buildings, bars or events, halls of residence, Freshers Week, the Wessex Scene, the website, or any of our publications/publicity via clubs or societies.

It is fine for companies to sponsor you (for example your shirts, hoodies, posters, flyers, websites, events etc.) but they **cannot** use a club/society to directly market itself or its products without prior approval from the SUSU team to limit/prevent conflict of interest or undesirable company practices. Likewise, members of the club/society may not carry out marketing or promotions on the company’s behalf off camps and/or without prior approval from SUSU. When in doubt, please email [suactivities@soton.ac.uk](mailto:suactivities@soton.ac.uk) for advice and guidance.

**Further Information**

If you require any further guidance, support, help or information around obtaining external sponsorship, please come and speak to the Activities Team, located on Level 2 of Building 42. Or alternatively email [suactivities@soton.ac.uk](mailto:suactivities@soton.ac.uk)