

Short Guide to **i-genius** Obtaining Sponsorship

Corporations are increasingly interested in supporting social enterprises. Many have sophisticated Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Programmes and partnering with social entrepreneurs and their projects helps corporations develop their community programmes, enabling them to demonstrate to their customers and stakeholders (governments, shareholders, other groups) that they are actively engaged in doing good in the community. Many are often keen to engage their employees in their CSR programmes as it helps develop their skills and promotes a sense of good will within the company. If your project aligns with their core business strategy, they are more likely to be interested in you.

This guide provides a brief outline of how you can seek to benefit from partnerships with corporations but many of the points listed also apply to other forms of funding sources including governmental, foundations and NGO.

It is not intended to be a complete guide. Far from it, we hope you will add your own ideas and experiences and how these relate to your particular situation. Different countries and cultures will require different approaches. We hope this guide combined with members contributions will create a valuable and comprehensive tool which everyone can benefit from.

- Ask yourself some basic questions
- Research
- Mix and match
- Produce a plan for the project
- Make contact
- Preparing your presentation
- The presentation
- Follow up
- Deliver!

Step one

– Ask yourself some basic questions

- Who are you
- What you do
- How you are going to do it
- Why you are doing it
- What you need
- How it would transform your business and where your money will go
- What will the sponsors get? Benefits and visibility

Step two

– Research

Which organisations would you like to have supporting you and which would you not? Are there any ethical considerations e.g. environmental damage, human rights? What corporations/ organisations would be interested in your work and why? Does it fit within their objectives? Is what you are doing compatible with them? For instance, if you work in the field of education, which organisations are also interested in this and why? What have they done so far in supporting similar projects? Does your project offer something new? Have they supported your competitor?

Once you have identified the organisations check their website, annual reports and other material to find out as much as you can about them. If they have an event in your area, go along and meet their representatives. Ask them questions about their strategy - what are they trying to achieve and how are they trying to achieve it? Can you help them?

Step three

– Mix and match

Having done your research into your target organisations, have a closer look at what you are doing and see where there could be an alignment. If the corporation wants to engage their employees in community activities, could working with you be a way for them to achieve this? If they are interested in supporting something new and original in the environment is your project also new and original – would it fit with what they are trying to achieve? How would this work?

Step four

– Produce a plan for the project

Be clear about what you are trying to achieve and set out how you are planning to achieve it.

- What is the objective of the project?
- How will it operate?
- What is the time scale?
- What resources are needed, e.g. people, money?

Step five

– Make contact

Contact the corporation and ask who is responsible for the area of work you are interested in. Then call this person and introduce your self. [Note: phoning works more effectively for initial introductions than email]. Better still, if you know someone who is a friend or knows the person you want to speak to, ask if they would introduce you. When you do make contact, keep it brief and to the point as they are likely to be busy people but follow up the contact immediately with an email or letter. Offer to come and talk in person to them and present a proposal.

Step six

– Preparing your presentation

Once you have made contact and you know they are interested in your idea, it is important that you prepare a good presentation. This usually requires something in writing and ideally, something that is well designed.

Set out your proposal in clear easy to understand language. Use charts, graphs, photos and even videos or sound tracks to make it more stimulating to the viewer. If you are not good at designing material like this, find someone who is to help you.

The presentation should cover:

- Background information about you – who are you?
- What the project is trying to achieve?
- How it plans to achieve this?
- How does the corporation you are presenting to fit in?
- What support are you asking for e.g. funding, technical assistance, etc? Be clear about this.
- How will the corporation benefit from supporting you? Be specific, e.g. profile and good will from a wider audience, media exposure, opportunities for their staff to get engaged and develop new skills are good examples. Almost all will want their logo displayed in some way as a demonstration of their support.

Step seven

- The presentation

Think carefully about who you are meeting, what do you know about them? Where is the meeting taking place? Will it be in a quiet office or a noisy restaurant? Do you need to show them something on the internet or do you need a projector screen – if so, arrange before hand and have a backup plan if the technology fails on the day. Are you going to do the presentation alone or is it better to bring a colleague or another partner organisation? What are you going to wear?

What are you going to say? Keep it focused on the core area of discussion and rehearse before hand. Think about what questions you are likely to be asked and have answers prepared (if you do not know the answer, say you will follow up with a reply later – never lie or bullshit!). In the meeting, be friendly ensuring them that you are someone who is easy to work with. Be professional at all times and show passion for your work.

Step eight

– Follow up

After the meeting, follow up with a call or email asking if they have made a decision and offering some new information or a new element to your proposal in response to any request they may have made. Find out when they are going to make a decision and contact them again around this time.

Once an agreement has been made it will usually be followed by a contract or letter setting out the terms, often this will list what you will be required to deliver as part of their condition on supporting you. Read this carefully and make sure you are comfortable with the terms. Check if there are any legal implications and if so, make sure you take independent legal advice.

Step nine

– Deliver!

It's important that you deliver on your side of the agreement (this may take the form of a valuation procedure). If so, you are likely to be considered for future support from the corporation and you will build up a good reputation which will help you gain additional support from other organisations. It is good practice to keep your supporter fully informed throughout the project or involve them in some way. If a problem does arise, it is best to inform them and tell them how you are going to handle it.

Try to demonstrate early success, however small. This helps build confidence.

This guide is based on the outcome of a brainstorm by i-genius members: Mark Chapman, Tommy Hutchinson (editor), Joanna Matthews, Mike Ward, Achsah Carter, Gina Bale