



EVENTS
NOVA SCOTIA



Inspiring times

CHAPTER 6: PARTNERS & SPONSORS

Sponsorship programs are increasingly important to the financial success of festivals. They are an exchange – you offer something of value to the sponsor and they give you something in exchange – money, services and/or in-kind donations.

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Community and Local Business Support

If you have been able to build a strong network of support within your community for the festival project, you should be able to mobilize this support toward fundraising efforts.

When developing your community sponsorship plans, remember you can also target in-kind contributions as well as cash. Local companies and individuals that are unable to donate cash may be able and willing to donate materials, supplies, and services.

You may want to consider online crowdsourcing to engage the public in supporting your event. You can find information on crowdsourcing in Canada at <https://ncfacanada.org/frequently-asked-questions-faqs>.

You should establish a separate sponsorship committee, since sponsorship is often a major task in the planning for a festival. Make sure you have a clear vision of what you are trying to accomplish. Sponsorship is addressed in detail later in this chapter.

Government Support

Government investment is available through Events Nova Scotia, a division of the Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage (CCH). Events Nova Scotia and CCH invest in events and festivals that help deliver on the Nova Scotia Culture Action Plan and the Nova Scotia Event Strategy.

You can find and review the goals in each of these documents:

Nova Scotia Event Strategy: <http://eventsnovascotia.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Events-Strategy-English.pdf>

Nova Scotia Culture Action Plan: <https://novascotia.ca/culture/Culture-Action-Plan--English.pdf>

The Nova Scotia Event Strategy's goal is to attract and develop authentic Nova Scotian events, harnessing our natural assets and unique culture to create social and economic benefits for all Nova Scotians, while leaving a legacy of growth for culture and sport.

The strategy revolves around six key pillars which provide focus for government and communities on the development and attraction of events:

- New Event Funding Themes
- Event Culture
- Education and Capacity Building
- Positioning Nova Scotia
- Measurement
- Legacy

Contact the Events Nova Scotia team to discuss your festival or event idea before applying for funding: <http://eventsnovascotia.com/contact-us/>

Sponsorships

Many festivals and events rely on sponsorship programs as a means of raising capital and operating funds for their event. To be successful, festivals need a good combination of public- and private-sector funding. If your festival is a large one and you are seeking extensive sponsorships, contracting a professional fundraising group may be worth your while.

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Having the right people on your board of directors can help with attracting sponsors. Look for board members with good connections in the community and corporate sector and get them to facilitate introductions and open doors for you.

Sponsorship

"In addition to brand awareness and visibility, sponsors have been increasingly supporting social responsibility and prefer to be aligned with event partners that can deliver positive results in the community."

Larry Peach, Marketing Coordinator
Gran Fondo Baie Sainte-Marie, Clare

Understand What You Have to Offer

Before you set out to sell sponsorships, you must understand what you have to offer. You must be able to articulate and clearly identify the value your event has to offer a potential sponsor.

- Who is your target market?
- What skills does your team bring to the event, project, and promotional acumen?
- Does your audience align with the mission and business priorities of the sponsor you are approaching?
- What can your potential sponsor hope to achieve by partnering with you?

- Look at each line item in your budget and think about whether anything can be offset by a sponsor – through cash or a service, such as hotel rooms or car rentals, or a combination of cash and in-kind contributions. Figure out how much in cash contributions you will need to succeed.
- Break down the amounts you will be asking for and what the sponsor in each price bracket will receive, remembering that this will be negotiable, and you may want to add something after listening to their target goals.

Identifying and Closing Sponsor Opportunities

Follow this process to identify and close sponsor opportunities

Step 1: Research

Research similar festivals/events. Pay close attention to their sponsors and partners, especially if you are a niche festival/event. Their partners may suggest some opportunities for you. Use their sponsorship packages as a template for identifying sponsorship opportunities. Think about which of the following you can offer:

- Logo exposure (where and how?)
- Naming rights (Festival, stages, rooms, workshops)
- Tickets for clients/staff
- On-site activation/sampling
- Hosting and VIP opportunities
- Speaking opportunities
- Banners and signage
- Handouts
- Inclusions in guest packages

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- Promotion print/radio/social media
- Contesting opportunities
- Discounts
- Website and social media coverage
- Souvenir program ad placement
- Networking opportunities; a chance to meet other corporate leaders; an opportunity to meet the mayor or other important government representatives; a perk for their suppliers or employees
- A beer or other beverage sponsor could be awarded “pouring rights” and the festival would serve only their product

Some sponsors want the opportunity to speak on stage or introduce a performer; they want to be acknowledged and given an opportunity to speak at any press conferences or receptions (especially when there is media in attendance). They are looking for that special item or programming element that will set them apart from other sponsors.

The point to remember is that sponsorship is an exchange ... they give you something and you give them something back. It's a win-win.

Step 2: Identify Potential Sponsor Prospects

With the assistance of your board of directors and your team, identify potential groups of sponsors:

- a) In-kind
- b) Major sponsors with a larger cash contribution
- c) Smaller cash sponsors
- d) Combination sponsors

Sponsorships must be a win for both the event and the sponsor. Once you identify potential businesses, make a list of why they would be a good fit. Consider the following:

- Who else has the business sponsored in the past?
- Do they have a policy regarding sponsorship and community relations on their website that will give you an idea of their priority corporate interests?
- What is their target market? Will your event target a similar market?
- Is there a connection to your festival/event? Do you align with their mission?
- What can the company contribute over and above money (i.e. in-kind support)?
- Who has the authority in the company to make the final decisions?
- Does someone on your board of directors know someone at the company?



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Step 3: Set Up a Sponsorship Contact Spreadsheet

This spreadsheet will become the sponsorship “bible” you will work from for the current year’s events and keep notes on for years to come. For example, sponsors who may say no to you this time but might develop an interest once they see the event. In other words, they want to know it is going to be a success before they will commit. You will want to approach them as soon as the event is over to start courting them for the next year. Speak of your successes at that time. The spreadsheet will also help you track progress and follow up.

If you have multiple people accessing this information, set it up as a Google Doc (or something similar). This way you can track changes as a group and have a fluid document to work from.

Helpful Tip: Possible Sponsors

Court the potential big sponsors for the first edition of your festival. Invite them to attend as your guests so they experience the event first-hand. Their experience and understanding of what you are doing will make them a much easier sell for next year.

Step 4: Create a Sponsorship Package

Once all of these items have been thoroughly researched, create a general sponsorship package with various levels and recognition opportunities. Make sure it is flexible.

Step 5: Approach the Sponsor Prospects

Don’t cold call potential sponsors; you need to do your research first and then meet in person. The goal of this initial meeting is to find out what is important to the potential sponsor. Is it logo exposure? Is it an event they’d like their staff to be part of? Is it a cause they are close to? Have an excellent understanding of their company before you meet.

Sponsorship

“Securing sponsorship is the beginning of a long-term relationship. It is important to show sponsors value by creating brand awareness and visibility as well as marketing and sales opportunities. Once sponsors feel your event is delivering value and results, they will continue to support it. Our accommodation sponsorships have been successful due to this strategy.”

Larry Peach, Marketing Coordinator
Gran Fondo Baie Sainte-Marie, Clare

Make an appointment with the person who has the authority to say yes. You do not want it to get watered down or misrepresented by a middle person.

Take your sponsorship package to the meeting, informing the prospective sponsor that it is an outline of what can be offered and that you are open to working on a partnership that works best for them.

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Listen and ask questions so you understand your potential sponsor. This meeting will be more of a fact-finding mission. You want to find out what the sponsor is interested in in terms of their community involvement and inform them about the event and your vision.

If the prospect is interested, follow up after the meeting with a formal proposal (see Step 6 below) that takes into consideration what was discussed in the meeting. The sponsor may come back with changes, but it gives them an idea of what the event can offer.

Keep in mind that this face-to-face approach is essential for the larger, higher-end sponsorship asks. For the smaller \$1,000 – \$3,000 levels, the face-to-face approach is also best; in fact, you may find that smaller local sponsors require more handholding. Sometimes, an introductory phone call and a generic

Step 6: Build the Sponsorship Proposal

Once you've researched your potential sponsors, you should have established

- the sponsor's marketing objectives
- your ability to meet the objectives (and provide extras)
- agreement as to what success looks like to the sponsor (what measurable results they want to see)

You must now decide at what level to pitch them.

If you go in at too high a level, sponsors may say "no thank you, it's not in our budget" without giving you a chance to scale back your offering or your cash contribution requirement. Be cautious the first year – under-promise and over-deliver.

Prepare a sponsorship proposal for each of the higher-end prospects. Keep it limited to a few paragraphs explaining the event. Use bullet points for easy reading so the client can skim through to see if you align with their needs. A potential sponsor should be able to come away without having to work too hard to understand exactly what is in it for them.

Make sure to cover:

- The sponsorship opportunity. Who you are, what you are selling, and how you will be a good partner for them and a good fit for their company? Use visuals — logos and any photos are helpful in lieu of too much writing.
- How you are unique. How your event is different from others OR how it is the same as others that have been successful, how they were successful, and why the formula works and is a fit for your community. The history of successes of the same kind of events makes for a compelling sales pitch because the proof is already established.

Helpful Tip:

Follow-up within 24 hours. Thank them for their time; let them know they can expect something from you and when it will be sent.

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Step 7: Close the Deal

Once you get a yes, be sure to follow up with a contract. This will ensure the sponsor, as well as you, is aware of each other's expectations. Before putting together a final contract, send a follow-up email outlining what had been discussed at the meeting and your understanding of the terms and conditions.

Stewardship

Your obligation does not stop once you get a yes. Your team must ensure the sponsors receive all the benefits agreed upon. Your sponsorship person is tasked with following up with the sponsor to be sure all logos, print ads, and materials have been received before the promotion of the event takes place.

During the event, be sure to stop by the sponsors' tent or VIP reception to check in and see how things are going.

After the festival, you or a board member must follow up with a phone call to thank the sponsor for their support and ask how they felt it went. Find out what you could do better and if they are interested in returning the following year.

Once you have attendance numbers, social media reach, and other measurables, put together a short wrap-up report outlining the sponsor's involvement and their return on investment (ROI). Present this to them as soon as you can post-event, while it is still fresh in everyone's minds. This allows for constructive feedback. Outline ideas to engage them further the next year.



Working with Tourism Partners

“As a lean team of two year-round – planning, programming and fundraising for Devour! – it became evident that we needed to involve experts along the way. We struck a volunteer Advisory Council with members from both the film and food industries. These people open doors for us, suggest programming, work with us at the event and in their respective markets. We also partner and work with other like-minded festivals and events to share programming and connections. These kinds of relationships are invaluable.”

Lia Rinaldo, Managing Director, Devour!
The Food Film Fest, Wolfville

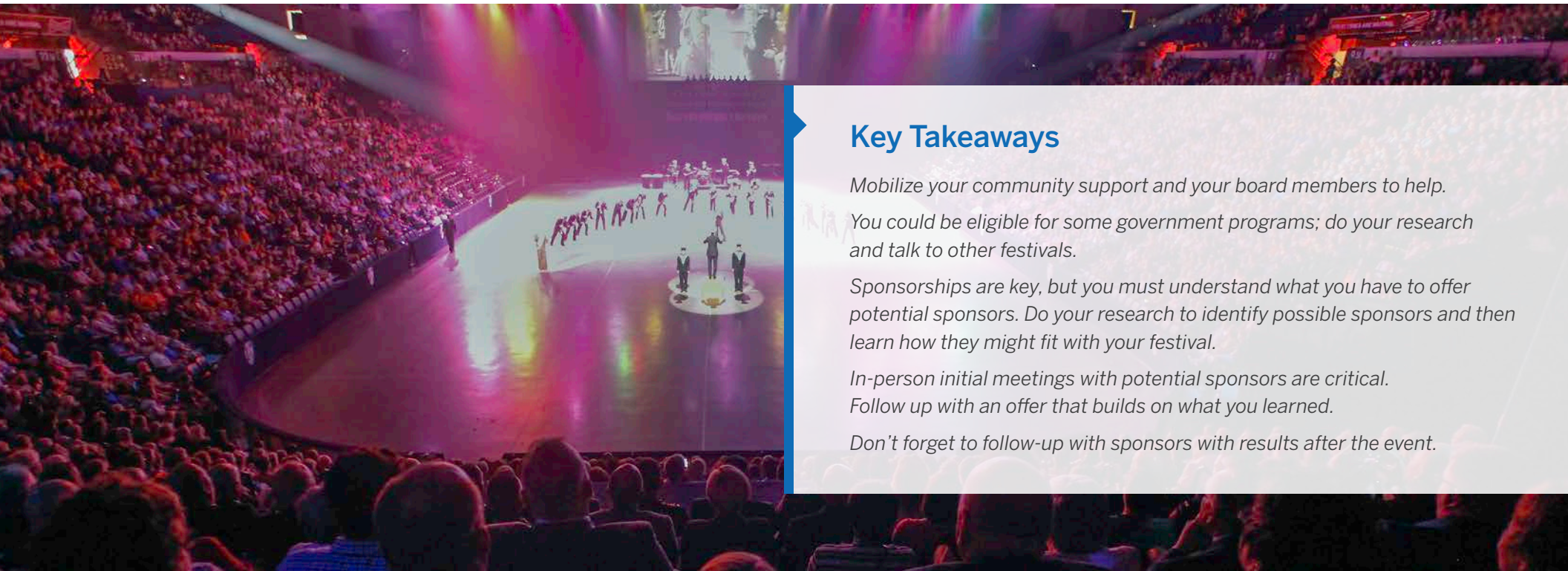
Tourism and Community Partners

Beyond sponsorships, you may be able to establish partnerships with the tourism operators in your area who stand to benefit from having visitors come to the area for the festival. While a tourism operator may also become a sponsor, they may be prepared to work with the festival organization on various marketing and promotional activities.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, you may find opportunities to involve other community organizations as partners in some of the tasks involved in staging the festival, perhaps providing volunteers to assist with different functions. Examples might include traffic and parking control, on-site displays and programming,

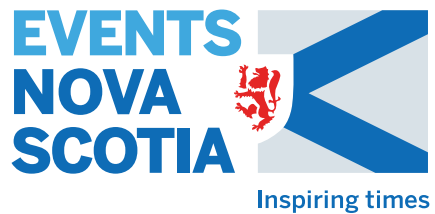
visitor information services, and so on. Where money is involved, some of it might be shared in return for the assistance.

Another part of working with your local tourism partners is creating and marketing packages. A package is two or more tourism products and services that are sold in one transaction at a single price. The idea behind packaging is to create and market a product that is customized for a particular target visitor, to entice them to take part in the festival or event and increase how much they spend. Some tips on developing and marketing packages are provided in Chapter 11.



Key Takeaways

- Mobilize your community support and your board members to help.*
- You could be eligible for some government programs; do your research and talk to other festivals.*
- Sponsorships are key, but you must understand what you have to offer potential sponsors. Do your research to identify possible sponsors and then learn how they might fit with your festival.*
- In-person initial meetings with potential sponsors are critical. Follow up with an offer that builds on what you learned.*
- Don't forget to follow-up with sponsors with results after the event.*



For more information, please contact our Events Nova Scotia staff at Communities, Culture and Heritage:

Stacey Oxner
Director of Events

902 424 0921

Neal Alderson
Senior Event Advisor

902 424 6010

Stephen MacDougall
Senior Event Advisor

902 424 3876

Caitlin Harlow
Event Officer

902 424 5249

[eventsnovascotia.com](https://www.eventsnovascotia.com)