

Community Connections

As you prepare for your MLK Day of Service project, you may find that there are some things you need or would like to do that aren't covered by the grant. They could be items that are

- specifically excluded from the grant: speakers, banquets, awards, voter registration or any religious activities.
- add-ons that you think would enhance the benefit of the event for the recipients or the volunteers (t-shirts, caps, take-aways for volunteers, give-aways to organizations you are serving, community promotion, etc)
- necessities that would take you over your budget—transportation, tent, equipment rental, food for participants, beverages for participants, special signage to promote event
- promotion for the event that will increase community awareness and/or participation

The people and organizations who provide you with these things for a specific event are your **sponsors**, and they generally fall into 3 categories: financial sponsors, in-kind sponsors and media sponsors.

Financial Sponsorship

What it is: donations of money to purchase specific things you need to make your event the best it can be

What it is not: financial donations for the agency you are serving—leave that to them. The only exception to this would be if you wish to take up a collection during the event from the participants to give to the agency.

Who provides: any individual, organization or company with money in their pocket or coffer

Examples: Money for items that you can't get directly donated, either incidental expenses or specific items like, purchase of t-shirts for agency, a new piece of equipment for agency to accompany your efforts, special equipment rental.

In-Kind Sponsorship

What it is: direct donations of things or services from suppliers, with no exchange of money. In-kind sponsorships are often the easiest to get if you approach the right people for the right things.

Who provides: any local supplier for anything you need. Be creative. When you're creating your first "wish list" don't initially be deterred by "we can't get that"—an idea may arise from you brainstorming that makes it possible.

Examples: vehicle for the day of the event (rental agency or dealership), beverages or snacks for volunteers (beverage distributor, vending company), food or supplies drive for your companion organization (at grocery store, campus shops, shoppers' warehouses), tables, chairs or other equipment (rental agency, church, community center), venue (a space suitable for the event), signs or flyers (print shop, copy center), significant discount on something you must purchase, a truck & driver to make a delivery, etc.

Media Sponsorship

What it is: support to publicize, report on, and otherwise communicate about your event before, during and after the big day. Use to recruit volunteers, generate excitement about your organization and the agency you serve, report during and after the event.

Who provides: radio or TV personalities and their stations, bloggers, tweeters, local newspapers & magazines, print shops, copy centers

Examples: signs or flyers (print shop, copy center), social networks (campus organization websites, blogs & tweets), live coverage the day of the event (local TV station), national service websites & blogs (mlkday.gov, campus kitchens blog, your organization/CK blog, facebook...)

Note: in order to get the story, you have to create it. Write the story you want to tell in a way that's compelling in a press release, practice the details (see press release example).

BEST PRACTICES:

Before you ask for anything, know what you need. For specific events (as opposed to general fundraisers) it is always better to make specific asks. Chart out what you want with brainstorm ideas of possible donors by type: financial, in-kind or media. Cross off items from the wish list that are just fluff or overreaching so that you don't waste your energy. Also, knowing what you need will keep you from accepting donations that will just be distractions from the main event. Only approach after you have vetted the prospect for appropriateness.

Be direct and brief in your ask. In about 1 ½ minutes, be able to say **who** you are, **what** your organization is doing and the goal of the event, **where** and **when** you need the services and **how** the listener can help.

Start with people you know and tailor your ask to resources you think are available.

Honor your donors. All gifts received, regardless of amount, should receive a public thank you on your website, in any program for the day and in any remarks you make that day..

Invite your donors to participate. Everyone who gives you money, in-kind donations or media assistance should be invited (but not required) to participate in the service project at some level.

Acknowledge the gift in thank-you letters within 1 week of the gift and again within 1 week of the event. The first letter should include tax language for their records, something like *XXX is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization, EIN number XXXXX. Your donation is tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. You have received no goods or services in exchange for your gift.* The second letter should thank them again for helping to make it happen and cite specific results of the event.