



# Sponsorship Best Practices Guide

This Guide was created in January 2019 and is designed to assist Law Students' Societies and Associations with practical advice and considerations for sponsorship. Of course, every LSS/LSA, region and sponsor is different, so this Guide only provides general advice as a summary of previous years' Council discussions as well as tips going forward.

## Overview – what is sponsorship?

**A source of funding.** You have an LSS/LSA, you have your volunteers, you have ideas –now you need the resources to will those ideas into reality! Whilst there are various sources of financial funding, such as community grants, SSAF/university funds and ticketing of events, a popular option is sponsorship.

**Types of sponsorship.** There are two primary types of sponsorship: monetary and 'in-kind'. While monetary sponsorship refers to the actual value provided by sponsors to LSAs in exchange for initiatives and events, 'in-kind' sponsorship is where the sponsor provides goods or services.

**Why firms sponsor LSS/LSAs.** Primarily, it is a marketing opportunity for firms to build their image amongst prospective employees, as well as play part of a recruitment drive (generally for a 'clerkship', 'internship' or 'graduate' program). Whilst your Law school/faculty or university will generally have direct access to all students through emails or letters, it may not be appropriate for them to source corporate sponsorship or they just don't have the same reach or ability to organise events as an LSS/LSA. That is why LSS/LSAs are so important for firms – because you have the capacity to run all these events, distribute marketing material, and engage with students in a meaningful way outside of academics.



**Key stages.** There are four key stages in order to gain sponsorship: (1) approaching firms; (2) negotiations; (3) execution of sponsorship agreement; and (4) handover.

## (1) Approaching firms

Who, how (including your sponsorship prospectus) and when you approach firms/organisations can determine how willing they are to sponsor your LSS/LSA.

**Firstly, the who.** Think carefully about what you want to gain from sponsorship: are you trying to find a social event with alcohol? Are you trying to fund an equity grant/scholarship? Will the money go towards running a competition? Certain firms will be more receptive to certain types of events, depending on what they want to gain. Research different firms/organisations, see who they have sponsored in the past, and have a read of their 'corporate social responsibility' website page (pro tip: firms may have a different CSR page for their general website compared to their clerkship/graduate recruitment page, which will give insight into the firms' priorities).

**How to approach firms.** Most LSS/LSAs will contact firms by email, generally through an HR/recruitment manager contact; this information is readily available on firm websites, usually on their careers/recruitment pages. Alternatively, cold calling is an option, especially for smaller firms – this can be especially useful where there is not as much information about the firm, and so the call provides an immediate two-way conversation for you to also learn about them as much as they are learning about your LSS/LSA. It is also important to review and capitalise on existing your connections: utilising graduates, mentors and tutors can be a great way to get a foot in the door. Requesting face-to-face meetings with HR managers and partners is also an ideal way to build and strengthen relationships.

**Sponsorship Prospectus.** Your Prospectus is a document outlining your LSS/LSA and what the firm can offer. A few things to think about when preparing your Prospectus:



- Items v Packages: Your offerings can either be 'itemised' (a list of initiatives/events/productions where firms can pick and choose what they want to sponsor), or be 'packaged' (where you have already bundled together different offerings for a set price, such as offering 1x ad in publication and 5x social media posts for \$1000). Itemising your offering can be a good way to ease a firm into sponsoring you, rather than having to commit to a larger package. However, a package helps you get a few items sponsored in one go.
- Setting prices: Think carefully about setting prices, including how it will impact future years – if you set the price low as a strategy to 'enter the market', you will face difficulty justifying price increases in future years as your LSS/LSA grows (the flip side being there won't be any sponsorship to grow if you don't get it in the first place). Firms will also already have set budgets, usually under 'marketing' or 'recruitment', so be mindful not to demand too much. You should keep pricing consistent across all firms you approach, as HRs at firms (especially larger ones) talk to each other. You should also note under Australian consumer law, LSS/LSAs are generally not required to disclose GST in the pricing of their offerings, however must collect GST: see the [ACCC website](#) for more information, and seek legal/tax advice.
- In-kind sponsorship: Your LSS/LSA may simply be in need of resources, such as judges, speakers or someone to help draft problem questions and mark submissions. Rather than asking firms for money, an alternative is to ask them for their support in return for promoting the firm, such as through marketing or naming rights to an event. Before going down this path, you should consider all sources of resources – for example, ALSA has a problem question bank which can help you in running your competitions, or your Law faculty/school may have access to alumni who could volunteer to judge competitions.
- Design: A professional-looking Prospectus can make the great first impression to a potential sponsor. If you have the capacity or budget, using professional software such as InDesign or even outsourcing the designing of the Prospectus can help to polish your document. Alternatively, Word and online tools such as Canva are



surprisingly powerful, albeit with less features and flexibility compared to InDesign. You should also consider putting pictures of your President/key sponsorship contact to make it more personable, as well as pictures taken at your LSS/LSAs' events to help potential firms envision how their sponsorship will support you.

**When is the right time.** Generally, LSS/LSAs approach firms for sponsorship towards the end of the year, which is generally timed with handover between different terms. Note however firms likely set their budget months before as part of their End of Financial Year reviews, especially accounting and consulting firms (you may find approaching them in December will be too late). If you are emailing towards the end of the year, you may consider waiting until the new year to send off any emails, so that your email will be at the top of the HRs' inbox when they return from break. Timing will also depend on when you need the sponsorship to come in – you should allow 1-2 months for sponsorship to be negotiated and finalised.



## (2) Negotiations

So the firm is interested and they're willing to discuss – now how do you go about sealing the deal?

**Primary point of contact.** Keep points of contact to a minimum. The role of attaining sponsorships is usually left to the Vice-President of Finance/Treasurer, or the President. At the end of tenure, the main point of contact should send sponsors an email updating them on the incoming President and Vice-President. It is important to recognise that while LSAs often have a good relationship with their Law Faculties, sponsorship may overlap between the two. LSAs may communicate with their Faculties to offer those sponsors distinct initiatives each.

**Know your Prospectus.** When going into a meeting or call with a potential sponsor, you should know your Prospectus back-to-front. This will allow you to quickly answer questions firms may have, but also allow you to discreetly and quickly consider alternative strategies (rather than flicking through a print-out of the Prospectus, if you are able to offer something off the top of your head it demonstrates creativity and also that you are tailoring something specific to the firm).

**Know the firm.** As flagged above, do your research. Know the firms' priorities, what they have sponsored in the past (for your LSS/LSA, as well as other LSS/LSAs in your geographical area). This could mean you go into a meeting or call pre-empting what they are interested in, thereby getting to your intended sponsorship goal quicker and with less distractions. You should also use existing contacts at the firms to get deeper insight into the firm and their priorities for the upcoming year.

**Try not to deviate too far from your set pricing.** Consistency between firms is important, as firms often discuss sponsorship with each other – they will compare how expensive your LSS/LSA is to others, but also how much other firms have sponsored your



LSS/LSA for. This is also important to ensuring you do not go below any 'cost-recovery' floor (if your sponsorship is geared towards funding events, you should ensure the sponsorship actually covers the full cost of the event, the risk being you will compromise the quality of the event in return for sponsorship).

**Be careful not to show off.** There is the temptation to say 'X firm has sponsored this in the past' or 'you really shouldn't miss out, everyone else is sponsoring us already' – however, it can come off as an aggressive and arrogant tactic. Instead focus on the potential benefits for that specific firm, and tailor what you can offer to them.

**Be patient.** Firms may not commit to sponsoring your LSS/LSA in the first email or meeting – they may have to go back to their superiors for advice/approval, or they might just want more information, so don't take it as them cold-shouldering you! If firms say 'we will get back to you', you should follow up every few weeks. Negotiations can take months and multiple meetings/calls, but keep in mind your ultimate goal!



### (3) Execution of sponsorship agreement

You've done it – you've secured sponsorship from a firm for the year! Whilst this is extremely exciting and a great achievement, the work is just beginning. How you document and execute your agreed sponsorship can determine the relationship your LSS/LSA will have with the firm, and in turn how willing they are to sponsor in the coming years.

**Documenting your agreement.** Even if the sponsorship amount is small, it is extremely important to document what has been agreed for financial, legal and strategic reasons. If you have accounting software, you can easily produce and issue tax invoices to the firms (which is also a neat way of keeping track of your revenue, both for internal record keeping, tax and legal purposes). You should also document your agreement in a sponsorship contract/agreement – this document should summarise what has been agreed, but also what happens when things go wrong. There are various templates online, however you should seek legal advice when drafting this document (your student guild/union or Law faculty/school may provide free advice).

**Keeping track of sponsorship.** As well as through sponsorship contracts/agreements, you should keep track of sponsorship in a single place – this is so you can keep track of its execution, but also so other executive/committee members know what is needed from their initiative/event/production. A Google Spreadsheet should suffice, however there may be free or paid software to help you keep track of contracts.

**Maintain contact throughout the year.** You should not simply shake hands, take the money and part ways. Especially if a firm is sponsoring a major event/production, it may be useful to run your high-level ideas by them so they are happy with what they are signing up for. They may even assist you by providing resources and guest speakers, or negotiate alternative arrangements. If a firm is sending representatives to an event, you



should send them a courtesy reminder a few weeks out, as firms will often have multiple events they are juggling and resourcing.

**Monitor your Facebook feed.** Firms can and will monitor your LSS/LSA's Facebook page feed, so be wary of what photos/statuses from events go up and how the event is portrayed – you want to put your best foot forward, and keep it that way. If there is an incident at a sponsored initiative/event, depending on its seriousness you may wish to let the firm know in advance before the news gets to them.

**Crisis management.** Things go wrong, that's just life. But how you manage something going wrong can go a long way to mending a relationship. Being upfront with the firm generally will be helpful, as it demonstrates honesty and willingness to address the problem. You may also wish to rely on former Presidents or your Law faculty/school for advice, as they may have gone through a similar situation. A face-to-face meeting may also be useful to provide a 'circuit breaker', as tone and body language is often lost in email/phone communication.

**Repairing a sponsorship relationship.** Relationship with sponsors can break down for many reasons (eg poor management of expectations, attendance or behaviour issues at sponsored events, ineffective communication). LSS/LSAs looking to repair the relationship should start by reaching out to the sponsor and honestly acknowledging the 'state of play'. An in-person conversation will often allow the problem to be addressed immediately and collaboratively, avoiding the back-and-forth of email. Proactively setting a plan to remedy the situation or prevent incidents from recurring will show a genuine commitment to strengthening the relationship.





## (4) Handover

Sponsorship is predominantly about creating sustained relationships. An effective handover both externally with the sponsor and internally within the LSA is essential to this.

Some recommendations include:

- writing a sponsorship report for the incoming team;
- maintaining an internal sponsorship database;
- sending a 'thank you' email or gift to sponsors;
- running a survey of students on their views of a firm post-sponsorship or a particular initiative/event/production;
- running a survey of sponsors on how they have viewed the relationship with your LSS/LSA (alternatively, you could set-up a relationship meeting at the end of the year as part of handover)



## Conclusions and other resources

Again, this Guide is to provide general advice due to the differing nature of sponsorship. You should seek further advice from previous Presidents/executives, your Law faculty/school, or online at the [ACNC website](#). **You should also seek legal and tax advice on how to advertise your prices, document your sponsorship and whether any taxes are applicable to your revenue.**

Please also feel free to contact the ALSA Sponsorship Officer, William Vu, for further advice or more detailed discussions: [sponsorship@alsa.asn.au](mailto:sponsorship@alsa.asn.au); 0433 293 289.



**William Vu**  
**Sponsorship Officer**

E: [sponsorship@alsa.asn.au](mailto:sponsorship@alsa.asn.au)

M: 0433 293 289

With thanks to

**Margaret Cai**  
**Vice-President (Administration)**  
E: [administration@alsa.asn.au](mailto:administration@alsa.asn.au)

**Erin Ritchie**  
**President**  
E: [president@alsa.asn.au](mailto:president@alsa.asn.au)