



THE LONGER TABLE INITIATIVE

A Guide to Sponsorship Development

Sponsorship development is a rewarding and occasionally frustrating process. While many individuals and groups have interest in sponsorship, it often takes time for them to make a commitment. This is due to a variety of reasons including limited time, competing priorities, and fear of failure. It is our responsibility to promote sponsorship as a meaningful form of activism with life-changing consequences, and to ensure that those who are interested receive the information and support needed to make the commitment. Following are some guidelines that can help you in guiding people through this process.

Prompt and Consistent Follow-Up is Key

When an individual or group indicates interest in sponsorship, it is critical that they receive a prompt response. I recommend connecting with them via phone (preferred) or email no more than two days after the initial indication of interest. As it takes time for someone to make the decision to sponsor, ongoing communication will likely be necessary. Take your cue from the individual or group. If they ask for time to review the information that you've shared or discuss with their group, let them know that you'll check in again. Depending on the situation, set a reminder to yourself to follow up a few days to a few weeks later. When you reach out again, they will likely be surprised that you kept your word. If they aren't prepared to chat when you reach out again, let them know that you'll try back again. Set a reminder for that contact as well. Keep following up until they share that they aren't interested, and even then, ask if they foresee a time when they might reconsider. If they suggest they could be interested in six months, set a reminder for that day and again follow up. **Remember: If they feel it isn't a priority to you, it won't be a priority to them.**

Build Relationships

The key to building relationships is to take the time to learn about the individual or group with whom you are speaking. Ask about their past experience with refugees and what's driving their interest now. You may learn through the course of your conversation that the group has had sponsorship experience in the past. (Note that this experience won't always be positive, and you may have to offer ways in which it will likely be different this time.) Keep record of your conversations, including personal notes shared. This will help you to continue the conversation over a long period of time. It will also help the the individual or group to feel valued.

Get in Front of the Group

Ultimately, your conversations will build toward an opportunity for you and/or the affiliate to present to the group in person or via Zoom/Skype. In getting in front of the group, you can make your pitch and address any questions that they might have. That presentation will also show your commitment to the individual or group's success.

Share Stories

If the individual or group hasn't sponsored before, you will need to help them visualize the work. This can be done through the sharing of personal anecdotes, bringing in another group that's sponsored, or sharing a video in which testimonials are shared.

Make it Simple

Individuals or groups will be more likely to commit to sponsorship if the process is straightforward, expectations are clear, and the activities proposed seem reasonable. Ideally, this information should be presented in writing so that they can share it with others. The most specific information about sponsorship in the geographic area can be provided by the affiliate; however, AIUSA can provide materials as well.

Thank Them, Thank Them, and Thank Them Again

Volunteer appreciation is critical and should be incorporated throughout the process. At every opportunity, thank the individual or group for their partnership in this life-saving work. It may also be deemed appropriate to share a more formal thank you, along with Longer Table swag, at a critical moment in the work such as when they commit to sponsorship and/or at the conclusion of their sponsorship commitment.