

AbaF

Board's role in securing and managing business partnerships

In each of the steps towards building partnerships with the business sector there is a role the board can play, individually or collectively:

Partnership strategy	Role of the Board
Build the organisation's business case for a commercial partner	Familiarise yourself with AbaF's <i>Connect with business</i> guide. Contribute to and critique the draft Business Case
Identify projects and activities likely to be attractive to commercial sponsors	Inject objectivity into the evaluation of projects and aspects of the arts organisations' work – the key staff may be too close to the projects to see which might prove attractive to a business partner
Build a business case for individual projects and activities	Review draft material prepared by the staff, consultants (or other board members) or contribute directly to assembling the case, especially if you have relevant marketing, public relations, sponsorship or other experience
Research market by industry sectors to identify sectors likely to benefit from your company's assets; and then individual companies likely to be a 'good fit' for your organisation	Share your knowledge of specific industry sectors, and the reasons why they may or not provide a match for your arts organisation.
Identify and agree on a shortlist of potential partners likely to be interested in your organisation and its projects	Utilise any knowledge you have of the business sector, especially firms in the local area. Feed in news items and industry trends.
Allocate team champions to pursue the relationship	Ensure there are clear roles and responsibilities. Put your hand up for a role, if it is appropriate.
Build hypothetical business cases for prospective good fit partners	Contribute to and critique the drafts
Develop general marketing materials directed to business partners – both for the organisation and for each project	Contribute to and critique the drafts
Make the approaches and hold initial discussions with decision makers of prospective business partners	Effect introductions where possible. Where you have contacts, consider whether it is helpful for you to attend an initial meeting, alongside the staff
Formulate customised proposals	Critique
Make formal presentation to potential partners; 'Do the ask'	Attend the meeting, if it is appropriate – dependent upon your skills, your relationship with the potential partner, and the capabilities of your arts organisation's staff
Follow-up and confirm partnership commitment	Ensure follow up has occurred, either through establishment of procedures and routines, or through judicious questioning at board meetings

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Negotiate a contract including measurement agreements	Ensure an adequate contract is in place. If the stakes are high, the board may wish to review the detail of the contract
Monitor progress and report regularly on performance	Require periodic reports to the board on progress, and on the review of progress with partners
Nurture the relationship	At the staff's request, attend meetings, social occasions, previews, first nights, work-in-progress events – any activities where potential or actual partners are being cultivated and board members can help

The board's engagement with the preceding task list will vary according to the professional infrastructure of the arts organisation. If there is an experienced Development Officer, the board may restrict its review and critique-ing of material to the establishment and settling in of the post-holder. If there is no Development Officer, and relatively inexperienced staff, the board may choose to become far more closely involved.

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