Getting Started with Team Fundraising and Sponsorship

1. **Cornell has lots of support!**
   a. **Paige Onstad**, Major Gifts Officer, COE Alumni Affairs & Development, po86@cornell.edu: focus on individual giving and individual donor outreach.
   b. **Vishal Patel**, Director of Corporate Relations, Office of Innovation & Entrepreneurship, vhp23@cornell.edu: focus on corporate giving and outreach to corporate sponsors.
   c. **Hyunjung Lee**, Engineering Research and Instruction Librarian, hl867@cornell.edu: focus on researching potential donor contacts and building outreach lists.

2. **Start with research**
   Maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of your efforts by compiling a comprehensive list of potential donors before you begin your outreach. Hyunjung has prepared an overview slideshow of library resources and is available for appointments to help guide you through this process.

3. **Persistence is key**
   It may take many, many emails before you lock in a donor. Don't be afraid to keep following up again and again until you get a no (or a yes!). This is how fundraising works at all levels. Not hearing back doesn't mean that your outreach isn't working; it's a sign that people are busy, and need follow up!

4. **Tell a story**
   The most effective requests for support will tell a story about the impact of your work and make a connection between the potential donor's interests and the goals of your team. This may happen in different arenas (research, innovation, job opportunities) so be creative and think outside the box!
   a. Email – even when sending standardized donor emails, try to personalize the first line or two to draw the reader into the rest of your message.
   b. Sponsorship package – decide what is most important to your team and tell a focused story. Don't just let potential donors know *what* their dollars will buy, tell them *how* their donation will impact your team, your project, or the world.
   c. Web content – make it a priority to continually collect photos and videos so that you have dynamic content for your webpage as well as online fundraising campaigns like Crowdfunding and Giving Day.

5. **Be direct**
   Once you know that someone is interested in supporting your team, make sure you offer concrete examples of giving levels and associated impact. Being direct about dollars can feel uncomfortable. We encourage you to live in that discomfort and know that potential donors find it more irritating when you beat around the bush than when you come right out and ask for what you need!

6. **Reach out to the right people**
   When you reach out to alumni or individuals at major corporations, make sure to use contacts that are below the VP level. Researchers, campus recruiters, and university relations staff are all good

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places to start. If you get connected to someone at a higher level, be sure to let Vishal know so that he can help coordinate your request with college-level efforts.

7. Follow the rules!

Donors are subject to IRS rules regarding non-taxable donations, which cannot be given in exchange for significant material goods. Small gifts such as stickers, mugs, t-shirts, etc. may be given in exchange for donations and will not affect the tax-deductibility of the donation provided that:
   a. the item does not exceed a value of $11.70 for gifts of $58.50 or higher **OR**
   b. the item does not exceed a value of $117 or 2% of total gift for larger gifts.
   c. Recognition through donor name on a vehicle, shirt, device, etc. *is allowable* if it doesn't include a call to action. For example, it can't direct the viewer to a website.

8. Sponsorship is different than a personal donation

Your corporate sponsorship packet is for a specific audience and the levels of giving outlined there are not applicable to individual donations. If an individual requests that they receive the same benefits as a corporate sponsor, you can let them know that Cornell's tax status does not allow for this kind of scenario.

9. Help donors get their money into your account

Corporate sponsors will likely ask for an invoice and/or instructions on how to donate. You can use the Project Teams Invoice Template, which includes detailed instructions on the various methods of payment.

Individual donors should always be directed to your team's online giving link (which can be found on our Active Teams webpage). If a donation is made into a team member's personal account, it cannot be transferred into the team account as a non-taxable donation.

10. Stewardship, stewardship, stewardship!
   a. Keep records!! Keep records in a shared location where they can be passed on year after year. This helps with regular communication and encourages one-time donors to become regular supporters of your team.
   b. Send thank you notes and/or gifts. Sending a small gift at the end of the year can be a nice way to thank donors. Make sure that you don't include a new "ask" with a thank you. Save that for a separate correspondence.
   c. Include impact when you thank your donors. Rather than simply sharing that a donor's supported helped your team buy a 3D printer, talk about how the 3D printer has allowed your team to produce customized parts which will help you reach a new and innovative competition goal. This helps your donor feel like they are truly part of your team's effort to accomplish great things!

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