

USFSA Sponsorship Information and Suggestions for Athletes

The sport of figure skating becomes more expensive as an individual advances to the novice level of testing and competing.

Many talent skaters need to acquire additional financial aid in order to make the progress necessary to compete at the high level to be considered as a prospect for selection to skate in international figure skating events.

The following information is provided by the USFS and can be used to raise funds by skaters entered in single, pair, dance, synchronized skating, Showcase, and Theatre on Ice events.

Individuals and Teams

There are two types of sponsorship athletes can obtain to help subsidize training and competition expenses:

1. Private
2. Corporate/Business

Private Sponsorship

This sponsorship is financial support from private individuals (friends, relatives, neighbors, teachers, acquaintances, etc.) or a business entity who simply want to help pay for your training and competition expenses and who do not expect anything in return for their contribution.

Private sponsorship can be viewed as “philanthropic” giving, generally meaning that the sponsor or “donor” believes in you, your sport, or in helping people.

Money they provide to you is considered a “gift” and as such, there is no financial benefit to a private sponsor.

They are not eligible for a tax deduction.

Depending upon the amount of the gifts you receive as a skater, ***your parents may need to declare it as income on your annual taxes. Check with your tax advisor.***

If you obtain a private sponsor, you do not need to execute a USFSA Eligible Skaters Compensation Agreement (ESCA). All arrangements of the sponsorship are between you and the sponsor.

Additionally, you do not need to declare income received from private sponsorship to the USFSA.

Getting Started

Compile a comprehensive name and address list of acquaintances and people you know. Think globally and include people who live in your community as well as in other cities or states. Ask your parents if you can include the names of their friends, co-workers, employers, etc.

Enter these names into a computerized mailing list. Create a three-part document that explains who you are and what you are seeking. The three parts include:

1. Cover letter
2. Resume
3. Expense sheet

Cover Letter:

The cover letter should explain your reasons for contacting them (see sample). Briefly explain your goals and objectives and how you plan to achieve them. Illustrate your level of skating so that you don't mislead them in to believing that as an intermediate skater, you are trying to make the 2010 Olympic Team. Many people you contact may not be knowledgeable about the sport.

If you have a specific goal, explain it. For example, if you are trying to raise money to go to Nationals, tell them about the qualification process and the number of events you have to attend in order to qualify at regional and/or sectional championships. Explain the length of time you will be at Nationals, and the expenses necessary to get you there (airfare, hotel, food, chaperone, entry fees, etc.).

Close by asking for their support.

Give specific instructions on how they can contribute, where to send the checks, and to whom the checks should be made payable. If you are working with a target date, don't forget to include that date. *Do not give them the impression that their contribution is tax deductible.*

Resume:

The resume should detail your achievements, honors, etc., both inside and outside of skating (see sample).

Expense Sheet:

The expense sheet should outline your annual training and competition expenses (see sample,).

Once your information is compiled and typed, have someone proofread it to make sure that it is clear, concise and error free. Print the number of copies you need and personally sign each cover letter. Mail to the potential sponsors.

Acknowledgments of contributions

Once you receive support from a sponsor, immediately send a personal thank you note to that person. Do not delay in this step! Try to be personal, expressing gratitude for their support.

Creating a relationship with your private sponsors

The people who sponsor you will be interested in hearing from you. Instead of being someone who just contacts them when you want something, contact them when you want to share information about

yourself and your endeavors.

By doing so, you can turn a one-time contributor into a returning contributor throughout your skating career. The following are ideas that can help you get started on the road to building and maintaining good relationships with your private sponsors:

- Create your own web page. Update it often so that it reflects the most current information about you and your progress.
- Create a newsletter to send to your sponsors. You don't have to spend a great deal of money on this, but it should look good. Solicit help from friends, family members or a teacher who knows how to use newsletter software.

Have someone edit/proof read your text to make sure that it reads properly. For production costs, consider the printing cost, determine the number of copies you will need and get price quotes from a few different copy stores (Kinkos, Quick Print, etc). Don't forget to consider your postage.

- Ideas for articles and information to include in your newsletter or on your web page are:
- Your recent achievements in the sport
- A diary of your recent travels to a competition
- Recent photos: you at a competition or on the medal podium, working out in the gym, socializing with other athletes, or in front of a national or international monument (did you get your picture taken in front of the Freedom Bell at the Philadelphia championships?)
- Training updates (have you landed a new jump you have been working on?)
- Updates of training camps you have attended, what you learned, what you are implementing in your training regimen

competition or training camp, send post cards to your sponsors explaining where you're at and what you're doing there.

Corporate or business sponsorship

Corporate or business sponsorship is support from a business entity that is interested in helping further your skating career but is also interested in receiving a benefit from the sponsorship.

List companies and people who could be potential sponsors. Consider any personal contacts in the business community, friends of the family, etc. Go to the library reference section and look for company names in books such as:

- Taft Corporate Giving Directory
- Sport Marketplaces- Corporate Sponsor Section
- The Foundation Grants Index
- Athletes Guide to Sponsorships
- The Foundation Directory
- The Yellow Pages of your local telephone directory

Look for companies that advertise in skating or sport related magazines. Watch sporting event programs to see which companies are patrons. These companies probably have a budget for sponsorship and may be more likely to sponsor an athlete.

Ask your friends and associates for companies they know of in your area that might be willing to sponsor an athlete. Other potential prospects for sponsorship include:

- Community, Civic or Service Organizations (Lions Club, Rotary Club, etc.)
- Professional Associations
- Clubs

Rank your list, putting the most promising potential sponsors first. Prepare a cover letter and resume to send to a potential sponsor (see sample).

- Explanation of your competitive programs (tell about your free skating program, how it was choreographed, or talk about the music you selected and why it was selected, discuss what your costumes look like)
- Did you get named to the U.S. Figure Skating Team or Synchronized Team? Tell what this means, how many are selected, receiving your team warm-ups, etc.
- Highlight a story about your coach, i.e., his/her history or expertise in skating, any recent accomplishments or honors awarded to the coach.
- Talk about any fun or interesting stories relating to your training or cross training
- Give schedules of your upcoming competition season, where you will be competing, how people can get tickets to watch, etc.
- Will you be competing in any upcoming events that will be televised? Give the times and dates of the telecast.
- Create a "thank you" section that acknowledges your sponsors. If any attended one of your competitions, make a special mention of your appreciation.
- At the end of the newsletter or web page, include information on how people can begin or continue to support your training. Give an address where they can mail checks, etc.
- Communicate via e-mail. Give sponsors your e-mail address and encourage them to keep in touch with you. Likewise, ask for their e-mail addresses and send periodic updates to them.
- News articles. If you have been featured in any recent news articles, copy those articles and send them to sponsors with a brief cover letter.
- Post cards. When on the road at a

If you don't have a personal contact at the company call the company to find out whom that person is and get the correct spelling of his or her name. Discuss goals, accomplishments, and why you have chosen this company.

Follow-up call

It is important to make follow-up calls for every cover letter that was sent out. Ask if the individual received the letter and arrange for a meeting. If possible, schedule the meeting at your practice rink.

This will give the potential sponsor a better feeling for the sport, and may excite them into a sponsorship agreement. If they prefer an office meeting, try to arrange to have a VCR in the meeting room so that they can watch your performances.

Prepare a Sponsorship Kit

Once a meeting date is set, prepare your sponsorship kit (see organization guidelines,).

The Meeting

When deciding what to wear, choose an outfit that is business casual. (Men: nice slacks, shirt and tie. Women: a nice pantsuit or a simple skirt and blouse). Remember to bring your sponsorship kit, including your proposal and a listing of your annual training expenses (see examples).

Be very enthusiastic, as the negotiation process may be difficult. If you are under age 14, you may wish to bring a parent to the meeting for support. Have a general idea of what to ask for (in your proposal), however, before stating a specific dollar figure, try to find out what they can give.

Instead of throwing out the first number, ask, "How much funding is available?" and "Does the company have a budgeted amount for this type of

sponsorship?"

When explaining your reasons for needing a sponsorship, try to focus the attention on your goals, what they require (costs associated with coaching, ice time, equipment, ballet lessons, etc.) and how you plan to reach them. Refer to your proposal when it comes time to discuss the details of the sponsorship.

Be prepared to leave your sponsorship kit with the potential sponsor. Make sure to find out when they will be getting back to you or when to contact them again. If the company agrees to enter into a sponsorship agreement for promotional purposes, then be sure to follow up with a written and signed contract specifically stating what will transpire throughout the sponsorship.

Thank you Letters

Always send a letter thanking every potential sponsor you met with for their time, even if they have declined a sponsorship. They may reconsider.

Services that you provide for your sponsor. Once an agreement is entered into with a sponsor, the easy part is over. The hard part is keeping your sponsor happy. Services for your sponsor include the following points:

- Live up to your end of the contract and more (promoting your sponsor whenever there is an opportunity).
- Provide competition results, photographs, copies of all your media coverage, etc.
- Invite the sponsor to USFSA events, competitions and functions.
- Make your sponsor feels like "part of the team."

Reaching a sponsorship contract is not the end of a deal, but the beginning of a relationship.

Other Suggestions

Go to the bookstore or the library and check out books that deal with interviewing and negotiation techniques. The more you know about these areas, the more effective you will be in getting what you ask for from the sponsor.

How much should I ask for?

One main issue to be addressed is how much you are worth to a potential sponsor. Many factors should be considered, such as:

- The overall exposure (TV and print coverage, number of spectators, etc.)
- The amount of exposure received throughout your career.
- Your competitive record.
- The events you will be competing in this season.
- The media interest that those events can expect to generate.
- The size of the company being approached for sponsorship.
- The kind of business that the sponsor is in and how successful the business is.
- The sponsor's knowledge of skating, and if they have previously sponsored a skater/athlete.

After all these factors have been taken into consideration, you can begin to develop your plan of action. Generally, there are two ways to go about asking for support from a sponsor:

- Ask for a monetary donation/gift. You will be paid directly to help defray your training expenses. The sponsor must consider this type of support a gift, and they may not use you in any way for promotional purposes.
- Submit a proposal to the potential sponsor. This proposal will outline the services that will be provided in return for financial support from the sponsor (see sample).

Organization Guidelines

The following is a prioritized checklist of things that you should include in your sponsorship kit:

- Resume (athletic, education, employment and personal information.)
- Photos
- Press clippings: include any newspaper or magazine articles concerning your achievements (a photocopy rather than the original).
- Proposal
- Budget information: annual training expenses.
- Videotapes: have tapes of past performances available in case the potential sponsor requests to view your performance.

USFSA Eligible Skaters Compensation Agreement (ESCA)

- Once you have agreed to a corporate/business sponsorship arrangement, you must complete a USFSA Eligible Skaters Compensation Agreement. These agreements are available from the USFSA, Athlete Funding Department by calling (719) 635-5200 or on the USFSA web site at www.usfsa.org.

Sample Cover Letter For Private Sponsorship

Individual or Team Name

Address

Phone

Date

Potential sponsor's name

Address

Dear (Mr. or Mrs.):

Opening:

Explain your reasons for needing their support and what your plans are one you receive a contribution.

Body:

Briefly explain your goals and

objectives and how you plan to achieve them. Describe how their support will enable you to focus on these goals and objectives. Attach resume for additional information.

Closing:

Give specific instructions on how they can contribute. Thank them for their time and list where and when they can reach you or when you will call, to discuss further details.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Type your name or team name

Sample Cover Letter For Corporate Sponsorship

Individual or Team Name

Address

Phone

Date

Potential Sponsor's Name

Job Title

Company Name

Address

Dear (Sponsor):

Opening:

State your reasons for writing to them, identify the sponsorship for which you would like to receive consideration, and indicate how the contact was made.

Body:

Describe why you should be considered for sponsorship and how the company can benefit from serving as your sponsor. Give concrete examples of results, experiences, accomplishments and goals that will make the company want to sponsor you. Refer the potential sponsor to your attached resume for additional information.

Closing:

Thank the individual for his or her time. List where and when they can reach you, and when you will call to discuss further details.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Type your name or team name

Sample Resume

Joseph Skater or Team name

Permanent Address

Phone

Present Address

Phone

E-mail Address

Long-term Athletic Objective:

Include a short statement describing your athletic career goals, i.e., "It is my goal to compete in nationals, make the World Team and Olympic Team."

Short-term Athletic Objective:

Include a short statement describing your goals for the upcoming skating season,, i.e., "My short-term goal is to win the Pacific Coast Sectional and to place in the top five at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships in Boston."

Career Highlights:

List, in reverse chronological order, your best performances in sectional, national and international (if applicable) competitions. Use your bio as a guide for this section.

Education:

List, in reverse chronological order, schools and universities attended, graduation dates, degrees earned, and major fields of study. If currently enrolled in school, list an expected graduation date. List any school honors you have received.

Employment:

List, in reverse chronological order, any employment experiences that would be an asset in the eyes of the potential sponsor.

Personal Information:

List any information that will enhance your resume and suggest your personality,

determination and commitment. Discuss how much time is spent in training, why you have chosen to dedicate yourself to figure skating, the aspects of skating you like the most and special awards or honors (athletic or non-athletic). Include any interests and goals outside figure skating.

Volunteer Activities:

Provide information about volunteer work that you perform on a regular basis.

Sample Proposal

A Proposal to Smith and Company
Official Sponsor of Joseph Skater
Offerings of Individual or Team:

The first section should focus primarily on how the company can benefit from serving as your sponsor. List all of the things offered to the company being approached, for example:

1. Smith and Company will be granted the right to use Joseph Skater's picture and/or competition results for advertising and promotional purposes (to be outlined in the contract).
2. I, Joseph Skater, will be available for two skating exhibitions for Smith and Company entertainment purposes. Smith and Company will cover travel, food and housing expenses.
3. I, Joseph Skater, will be available for one appearance at a sales meeting, and employee seminar, etc. Smith and Company will cover travel, food and housing expenses.

Your list can have as many items as you want. However, do not forget you are committing yourself and your time. Do not promise things that cannot be done, or that might endanger your eligibility or interfere with your training and competition schedules.

If the sponsor reduces the level of sponsorship from your proposal, you may

want to reduce or delete items from their benefit. This should be a negotiation process.

Sponsorship Requirements:

List all of the benefits received from the company in return for what is offered, for example:

1. Smith and Company will pay me, Joseph Skater, (total amount) in the year 2000.
2. Smith and Company will supply me, Joseph Skater, with a warm-up suit with Smith and Company's logo on it (logo subject to size and restrictions).
3. Smith and Company will pay me, Joseph Skater, an incentive payment of (total amount) each time there is a commercial in which I appear.

This list can have as many items as you want. However, keep in mind that what is received should be in balance with what is offered. Also note that the USFSA must approve anything you offer a sponsor to ensure that it does not conflict with any USFSA sponsorship contracts or eligibility rules.

Sample of Annual Skating and Training Expenses

(Name) _____
Expenses Totals _____
Coaching fees _____
Choreography _____
Ice time _____
Equipment _____
Costumes _____
Competition travel _____
Off-ice training _____
Dance classes _____
Sports medicine _____
Sports psychology _____
Rehab/therapy _____
Club dues _____
Other (specify) _____

Grand Total _____

