



SECURING SPONSORS

for Department Health and Wellness Programs



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hearthealthy
FIREFIGHTER

KEEP
IT STRONG

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Table of Contents

SECTION 1. Getting Started	5
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NVFC Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program: Resources for Your Department	5
Steps to Securing Sponsorship	7
Sponsorship Tip Sheet	9
Use Cost Savings Calculators to Gain Support for Your Department	11
Template: Seeking Support Press Release	12
Sample: Seeking Support Press Release	13
Template: New Sponsor Press Release	14
Sample: New Sponsor Press Release	15
SECTION 2. Reaching Out	16
<hr/>	
Template: Ask Letter	17
Sample: In-Kind Donation Ask Letter – Hospital	18
Sample: In-Kind Donation Ask Letter – Fitness Club	19
Sample: Monetary Donation Ask Letter	20
Meeting Talking Points	21
Making the Pitch	22
SECTION 3. Following Up	23
<hr/>	
Template: Follow-up Letter	24
Sample: Follow-up Letter	25
Template: Thank You Letter	26
Sample: Thank You Letter	27
IRS Guidelines for Charitable Donations and Tax Deductions	28
Template: In-Kind Donation Receipt	29
Template: Monetary Donation Receipt	30

SECURING SPONSORS

for Department Health and Wellness Programs

Each year, heart attack is the leading cause of line-of-duty deaths for firefighters. A comprehensive health and wellness program can decrease each department member's risk of cardiovascular disease as well as injuries like strain and sprain. Health and wellness programs benefit individual firefighters, their departments, and the fire and emergency services as a whole. Such programs can result in safer and more effective action by first responders to emergencies.

Starting a health and wellness program in your department can seem like a challenge – especially securing the funding and sponsors to make it work. But with creativity and the support of local organizations, you can make it a reality. The National Volunteer Fire Council's Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program created this toolkit to help you secure the community support you need to get your program started.

This toolkit walks you through the steps of soliciting sponsors and community support for your program: "Getting Started," "Reaching Out," and "Following Up." "Getting Started" includes resources available from the Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program, tips and ideas for how to find sponsors, and tools for making your case. "Reaching Out" provides a modifiable "ask" letter template, sample letters, and talking points for meetings with potential sponsors. "Following Up" provides template and sample follow-up and thank you letters, IRS tax deduction information, and donation receipt templates.

If you need more information about the Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program, visit www.healthy-firefighter.org or contact the NVFC at 888-ASK-NVFC (275-6832) or nvffoffice@nvfc.org.

It takes a person with heart to do your job.

**KEEP
IT STRONG**

SECTION 1: Getting Started

Starting your health and wellness program and securing sponsors to support the program can be easier than it seems. Many resources are available to assist you in both of these tasks. This section will walk you through some of the resources available as you plan and launch your health and wellness program, and then take you through the steps of identifying and reaching out to potential sponsors and community supporters there are both templates and samples in this section. You can fill in the indicated customizable parts of the templates with your department's information and have a ready-to-use document, or use the template as a starting point to develop your own materials.

NVFC Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program: Resources for Your Department

The stresses put on firefighters are enormous – their bodies must withstand higher temperatures and increased strenuous physical activity, exposure to smoke and other hazardous materials, and long



periods of down time followed by sudden periods of high-stress activity.

Every year, about half of all on-duty firefighter deaths are attributed to heart attacks, making heart disease the leading cause of line-of-duty firefighter fatalities. The NVFC launched the Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program in 2003 to promote fitness, nutrition, and health awareness within America's fire and emergency services. It is the nation's only heart attack prevention and awareness campaign targeted at all firefighters and EMS personnel, both volunteer and career.

The NVFC takes the Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program to the department level through the Adopt the Program initiative, which provides a foundation you can use to implement a health and wellness program within your department. By adopting the program, departments can register with the Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program, take the pledge to become heart-healthy, and receive specific tools and information that department members can use

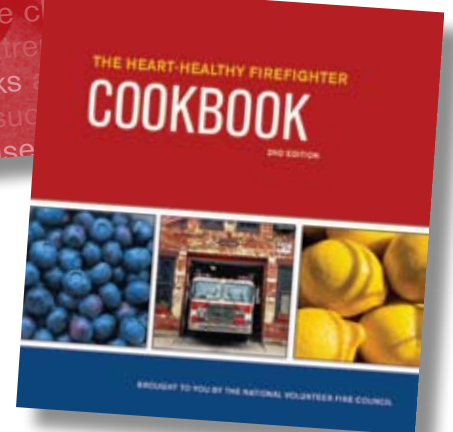
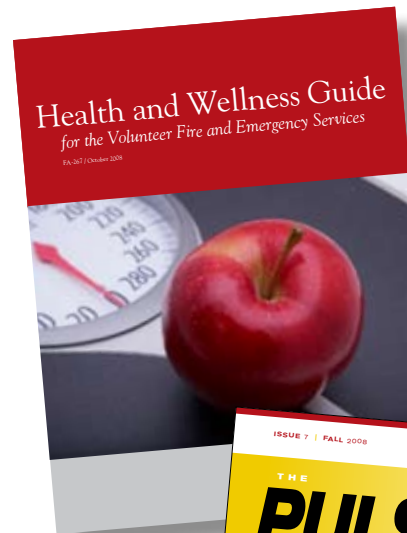
SECTION 1: Getting Started

to maintain a heart-healthy lifestyle, including the motivational Fired Up For Fitness Challenge.

Other resources the NVFC offers that can help you establish and maintain a health and fitness program in your department include:

- ♥ *Health and Wellness Guide for the Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services*, developed in partnership with the United States Fire Administration, to help departments and personnel start a health and fitness program and provide examples of successful programs.
- ♥ Health and Wellness Advocate workshops, which trains first responders on how to create and maintain an effective health and wellness program within their department.
- ♥ *Heart-Healthy Firefighter Resource Guide*, which contains everything you need to begin a heart-healthy lifestyle.
- ♥ *The Pulse*, a quarterly printed newsletter offering tips, resources, and advice for getting and staying healthy.
- ♥ *Heart-Healthy Firefighter E-news*, a monthly electronic newsletter filled with Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program news as well as health and wellness tips and information.
- ♥ *Heart-Healthy Firefighter Cookbook*, featuring over 60 heart-healthy recipes to use at home and at the station.

Learn about these resources and the Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program at www.healthy-firefighter.org, or contact the NVFC national office at 888-ASK-NVFC (275-6832).





Steps to Securing Sponsorship

Once you have decided to start or expand a department health and wellness initiative, you may find you need additional resources and sponsors to support your program. Perhaps you want to offer health screenings to department members, or ensure each member has access to fitness equipment. Maybe you want to host health talks or team sporting events. Many departments don't have the budget for extra health and wellness expenses, but don't let this deter you from implementing your program. You will find that reaching out into the community can provide the sponsorship and support you need to keep your department healthy and strong.

The steps below provide a basic outline for securing sponsors. The following sections of this toolkit provide further details, samples, and tips to help you as you implement your sponsorship outreach plan.

Step One: Get Started

- 1 Designate a leader.** Choose someone to be in charge of the sponsorship outreach effort who can keep everyone motivated and will be diligent about following up and checking on progress.
- 2 Hold a brainstorming session with department members.** Discuss ideas for whom to approach for sponsorships. Find out who in your department has connections with local businesses or hospitals. Remember that donations don't have to be monetary – maybe a health club is willing to provide free or discounted membership to your personnel, or a local doctor might provide free health screenings. Be creative.

- 3 Do your research.** If you do not have a pre-existing contact at a particular business, find out who is in charge of community relations or corporate giving and address initial correspondence to that person. Also, see if you can find any information on the company's past community philanthropy or sponsorship, as this may help you in your current outreach.

- 4 Create a written plan.** Decide who will be contacting each person/company on your list. Determine your objective beforehand – what are you asking from each prospective donor?

- 5 Get ready to ask for donations.** Make sure each person who will be talking with prospective donors or sponsors is prepared to talk about your department, the health program, your goals, and what you are asking from each potential donor. Create hand-outs to give to prospective donors. Remind prospective donors of the importance of your department to the community. If you are a volunteer or combination department, use the NVFC Cost Savings Calculator (page 14) to show the financial impact that your department has on the community.

Utilize information from www.healthy-firefighter.org to demonstrate why a department health program is so important. Show your prospective donors that you are serious about getting healthy and how it benefits the community.

- 6 Inform the public.** Send a press release, using the *Seeking Support Press Release* template (page 12), to local television stations, newspapers, radio stations, and community group newsletters explaining your health initiative, why it is important, and that you are seeking



SECTION 1: Getting Started

community support. Follow up with each media outlet to see if you can provide more information. Media outreach is important because it means that by the time you call your prospect, they may have already heard about the department's health and wellness initiative and be more receptive to sponsorship.

Step Two: Reach Out

- 1 Start contacting your prospective donors.** Call or send a letter or email, whichever is more appropriate for that contact. Make sure that each company/person is only being contacted by one department member. If it is appropriate, visit your prospect in person.
- 2 Don't be shy!** Asking for a donation can be intimidating. But remember, these donations will help you and your department members become and stay heart-healthy, ensuring that all of you are ready and able to respond to emergency calls, which helps the whole community and saves lives.
- 3 Keep the door open for future requests.** If someone does not want to donate right now, ask if you can contact them in the future about other types of donations. Remember to thank them for their consideration.

Step Three: Follow Up

- 1 Keep a record of your efforts and the results.** You can refer back to this the next time you need to make donation requests.
- 2 Plan follow-up visits or phone calls.** If your prospect would like more information, schedule a meeting where you can talk face-to-face about the donation possibilities. If you haven't

gotten a response from sending a letter or email, follow-up with a phone call. If you haven't gotten a response from a gym or a store, try stopping by during business hours to speak with a manager. Businesses get many letters requesting donations, so make sure they have a chance to hear your request.

- 3 Send follow-up letters after a meeting or call.** Thank your prospect for their time and consideration, and remind them of any ideas or potential donations that you discussed during your conversation.
- 4 Send a thank-you letter to those that make a donation.** If you receive a donation, make sure and send a thank-you letter with a monetary or in-kind donation receipt, if applicable. Learn more in the IRS guidelines section on page --. If the gift is large or you worked with your contact on several occasions, have the Chief make a thank-you call.
- 5 Follow up with the press.** Send follow-up press releases to local media, using the *New Sponsor Press Release* template (page 14), as companies sign on to support your program. This gives recognition to your donor and brings more attention to your efforts. Call the contacts you spoke with initially to let them know about your success. Make sure and thank all of your donors and let everyone know that being healthy is an ongoing project, and your program will need ongoing support.
- 6 Report your success to the NVFC.** Contact the NVFC at nvffoffice@nvfc.org or 888-ASK-NVFC (275-6832) with your story. Your success can inspire other departments and help even more first responders adopt and maintain a heart-healthy lifestyle.



Sponsorship Tip Sheet

These tips will help you decide which companies to approach based on your needs, how to get press, and creative ideas to take advantage of existing programs.

- ♥ **Contact your local newspapers.** Ask them to write an editorial about the department's efforts to become heart-healthy. Make sure that they mention that the department is accepting donations. Ask them to write a follow-up later so that you can mention your donors and your program's successes.
- ♥ **Keep it close to home.** Find out if anyone in your department has a spouse, friend, or family member who is a healthcare provider, a nutritionist, a chef, etc. Ask if they can come by to educate the department.
- ♥ **Take advantage of existing programs.** Universities and health organizations often organize health awareness screening days. See if the group can provide a special screening for first responders before or after their main program. Seek out companies that sponsor other health-related events for the community to make your ask. For example, many grocery stores, such as the Midwestern chain Hy-Vee, have dieticians on staff; ask them to help you shop for healthy food for the station or organize a healthy grocery store tour for department members.
- ♥ **Work together with other departments in your area.** They may have contacts at major area hospitals or with other potential donors, and you can motivate each other through a friendly competition.
- ♥ **Contact a local college.** See if you can create an unpaid internship for students studying to be nutritionists or fitness trainers. Ask them to come to the department on a regular basis and serve as the department's Health and Wellness Coordinator. Or ask students to donate just one day of their time and conduct a presentation for the department or go through the kitchen and give tips on which foods to keep and which should be replaced.
- ♥ **Contact your local hospital or clinic.** Ask if free blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose, and/or body composition screenings can be donated to the fire department. Offer to conduct a fire safety seminar in exchange for their time. (Note that donors might not receive a tax deduction if goods or services are exchanged in return for the donation.) You can also check with your local Medical Reserve Corps unit to see if they are willing to conduct free screenings (www.medicalreservecorps.gov).





SECTION 1: Getting Started

- ♥ **Call local gyms or fitness stores.** Ask them to donate exercise equipment or club memberships for the station. Gyms might have equipment that they are replacing with newer items, and fitness stores might be able to donate new items or gently used floor models.
- ♥ **Talk to local health food stores.** Ask them to donate discontinued items or other good but unused items to the fire department. It's much easier to get motivated to stock a healthy kitchen when it's free!
- ♥ **Plan a heart-healthy event.** Host a sports tournament or a heart-healthy cookout that the whole town can get involved in. Ask a local health food store or gym to sponsor the event through in-kind or cash donations. Are there any local health-related businesses that are new or relatively unknown? They can reach more customers by sponsoring the event. Plus, more

people will learn about your department's efforts to become healthy, which could result in more donations.

- ♥ **Create a sponsorship program based on reaching goals.** Ask a local company to sponsor the department through monetary or in-kind donations each time department staff reach a pre-determined health or fitness goal. For example, if every member meets their weight-loss goal for the year, the company will donate \$1,000 to the department.
- ♥ **Say thank you!** Remember to acknowledge your supporters publicly whenever you can, and always follow up on any service or donation with a thank-you letter. If you are registered as a 501(c)(3) organization, send a donation receipt for the service or item so that your donor can receive tax benefits (page 28).





Use Cost Savings Calculators to Gain Support for Your Department

One way to gain support for your department's health and wellness program is to drive home how important your department is to the community. Your members save lives and property on a regular basis, and supporting a health and wellness program is one way your community members can help give back to those who serve.

Volunteer and combination departments can utilize the NVFC Foundation's Cost Savings Calculators to further demonstrate the value of their department to the community. Nationally, it is estimated that volunteer first responders save taxpayers more than \$37.6 billion annually. Use the Volunteer Fire Department and EMS Cost Savings Calculators to figure out how much your department saves your community. The calculators are available to NVFC members and can be accessed online at www.nvfc.org/calculators.

In addition to the calculators, the NVFC provides a customizable PowerPoint presentation you can use when meeting with city officials, civic groups, or potential sponsors to educate them on the value of your department to the community. These cost-savings figures can help make the case for the need for local, state, and federal investment in the volunteer emergency services.



Template: Seeking Support Press Release

Use this customizable press release template to announce your goals to the community.

<FIRE DEPARTMENT LETTERHEAD>

Contact: <NAME>
<PHONE NUMBER, EMAIL ADDRESS>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

<DEPARTMENT LETTERHEAD> ADOPTS HEART-HEALTHY INITIATIVE, SEEKS COMMUNITY SUPPORT

<DATE, CITY> – Heart attacks cause nearly half of all line-of-duty firefighter deaths each year, making heart disease the number one threat to firefighter health. The <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> is accepting the National Volunteer Fire Council’s (NVFC) Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program’s challenge to adopt and maintain a heart-healthy lifestyle. To do this, <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> is implementing a health and wellness program to keep department members strong and fit – and ready to answer the call when emergencies arise.

<QUOTE FROM CHIEF ABOUT IMPORTANCE OF DEPARTMENT HEART-HEALTH>

The <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> is seeking the support of the community. Financial contributions as well as in-kind donations such as complimentary health screenings, fitness club access, new or gently used exercise equipment, and the services of nutritionists, chefs, and fitness trainers are needed.

As the first step in this health initiative, the department has adopted the Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program, the only national program dedicated to saving America’s firefighters and EMS personnel from heart disease. Through this program, every department member has taken a pledge to become and stay heart-healthy. Learn more at www.healthy-firefighter.org.

“The fire service has distinct issues related to health and safety that need to be specifically addressed,” said Philip C. Stittleburg, NVFC Chairman. “We lose too many firefighters in line-of-duty deaths. Community members need to support their local firefighters and EMS personnel in their efforts to get healthy so that their first responders don’t become another tragic statistic.”

The <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME>’s <NUMBER> members provide <NUMBER> hours of service and respond to <NUMBER> calls each year. The community can give back to those who serve them by contributing to the department’s health and wellness efforts. To support this program, contact <NAME AND TITLE> at <EMAIL AND PHONE NUMBER>.

###

Sample: Seeking Support Press Release

This is an example of what a customized press release might look like.



Contact: Chief John Doe
555-123-4567, johndoe@htfd.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HEALTHY TOWN FIRE DEPARTMENT ADOPTS HEART-HEALTHY INITIATIVE, SEEKS COMMUNITY SUPPORT

NOVEMBER 10, HEALTHY TOWN – Heart attacks cause nearly half of all line-of-duty firefighter deaths each year, making heart disease the number one threat to firefighter health. The Healthy Town Fire Department (HTFD) is accepting the National Volunteer Fire Council’s (NVFC) Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program’s challenge to adopt and maintain a heart-healthy lifestyle. To do this, HTFD is implementing a health and wellness program to keep department members strong and fit – and ready to answer the call when emergencies arise.

“Our fire department protects our community from emergencies of all kinds,” said Chief John Doe. “We have adopted this initiative to ensure we are maintaining our health so that we are always ready to answer the call.”

The HTFD is seeking the support of the community. Financial contributions as well as in-kind donations such as complimentary health screenings, fitness club access, new or gently used exercise equipment, and the services of nutritionists, chefs, and fitness trainers are needed.

As the first step to getting healthy, the department has adopted the Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program, the only national program dedicated to saving America’s firefighters and EMS personnel from heart disease. Through this initiative, every department member has taken a pledge to become and stay heart-healthy. Learn more at www.healthy-firefighter.org.

“The fire service has distinct issues related to health and safety that need to be specifically addressed,” said Philip C. Stittsburg, NVFC Chairman. “We lose too many firefighters in line-of-duty deaths. Community members need to support their local firefighters and EMS personnel in their efforts to get healthy so that their first responders don’t become another tragic statistic.”

The HTFD’s 42 members provide 12,102 hours of service and respond to 659 calls each year. The community can give back to those who serve them by contributing to the department’s health and wellness efforts. To support this program, contact Chief John Doe at johndoe@htfd.org or 555-123-4567.

###

Template: New Sponsor Press Release

Use this customizable press release template to announce a new sponsor.

<FIRE DEPARTMENT LETTERHEAD>

Contact: <NAME>
<PHONE NUMBER, EMAIL ADDRESS>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

<COMPANY NAME> SUPPORTS HEALTH AND WELLNESS AT <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME>

<DATE, CITY> –Heart attacks cause nearly half of all line-of-duty firefighter deaths each year, and the <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> is implementing a health and wellness program to keep department members strong, fit, and ready to answer the call when emergencies arise. <COMPANY NAME> is supporting the <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> as they adopt the National Volunteer Fire Council’s (NVFC) Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program. The support of <COMPANY NAME> will help them reach their health and wellness goals.

<QUOTE FROM CHIEF ABOUT IMPORTANCE OF DEPARTMENT HEART-HEALTH AND THE IMPACT OF COMPANY’S SUPPORT (i.e. – what the support will enable the department to do)>

The NVFC Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program (www.healthy-firefighter.org) is the only national program dedicated to saving America’s firefighters and EMS personnel from heart disease, the number one cause of firefighter deaths. Through this program, each member of <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> took the pledge to get heart-healthy and are utilizing the program’s many tools and resources to help them succeed in their health and wellness efforts. Yet community support, like that shown by <COMPANY NAME>, is critical to the success of the department’s initiatives.

<QUOTE FROM COMPANY ABOUT IMPORTANCE OF SUPPORTING LOCAL EMERGENCY SERVICES>

<COMPANY INFORMATION – WHAT THEY DO, CONTACT PHONE NUMBER OR WEB SITE>

<FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> is still seeking additional support to continue its health and wellness initiative. Give back to those who serve by contributing to the department’s efforts. To learn more about how you can help, contact <NAME AND TITLE> at <EMAIL AND PHONE NUMBER>.

###

Sample: New Sponsor Press Release

This is an example of what a customized press release might look like.



Contact: Chief John Doe
555-123-4567, johndoe@htfd.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COMMUNITY FITNESS CLUB SUPPORTS HEALTH AND WELLNESS AT HEALTHY TOWN FIRE DEPARTMENT

NOVEMBER 18, HEALTHY TOWN – Heart attacks cause nearly half of all line of-duty firefighter deaths each year, and the Healthy Town Fire Department (HTFD) is implementing a health and wellness program to keep department members strong, fit, and ready to answer the call when emergencies arise. Community Fitness Club is supporting the HTFD as they adopt the National Volunteer Fire Council’s (NVFC) Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program. The support of Community Fitness Club will help them reach their health and wellness goals.

“The HTFD is excited to announce that Community Fitness Club is supporting our health initiative by offering each of our first responders a half-price gym membership and a complimentary one-time consultation with a fitness trainer,” said Chief John Doe. “This will ensure all of our members have access to top-rate fitness equipment and expertise to help meet their health and fitness goals.”

The NVFC Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program (www.healthy-firefighter.org) is the only national program dedicated to saving America’s firefighters and EMS personnel from heart disease, the number one cause of firefighter deaths. Through this program, each member of HTFD took the pledge to get heart-healthy and is utilizing the program’s many tools and resources to help them succeed in their health and wellness efforts. Yet community support, like that shown by Community Fitness Club is critical to the success of the department’s initiatives.

“Community Fitness Club is dedicated to keeping our community healthy, and that is especially important for Healthy Town’s first responders,” said Mark Smith, the club’s Community Relations Director. “We are pleased to be able to help protect the health of those who are protecting us.”

Community Fitness Club is Healthy Town’s leading health center. Services include group classes, fitness trainer consultations, and state-of-the-art exercise equipment. Find out more at www.communityfitnesshealthytown.com or 555-987-6543.

HTFD is still seeking additional support to continue its health and wellness initiative. Give back to those who serve by contributing to the department’s efforts. To learn more about how you can help, contact Chief John Doe at johndoe@htfd.org or 555-123-4567.

###

SECTION 2: Reaching Out

The information provided in *Steps to Securing Sponsorship* (page 7) outlined the process for making “the ask” to potential donors and sponsors. This section provides a template “ask” letter, sample letters, meeting talking points, and tips for making the pitch in order to help make “the ask” easier. You can fill in the indicated customizable parts of the templates with your department’s information and have a ready-to-use document, or use the template as a starting point to develop your own materials. The samples provide an example of what a finished product might look like.



Template: Ask Letter

Use this customizable template to ask potential sponsors for their support. Customize your letter to for your department's needs.

<FIRE DEPARTMENT LETTERHEAD>

<DATE>

<CONTACT>

<TITLE>

<COMPANY>

<ADDRESS>

<SALUTATION>:

Nearly half of all line-of-duty firefighter deaths each year are caused by heart attacks, making heart disease the number one threat to firefighter health. That's why the <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> is taking a pledge to stay healthy and not become a statistic. We are adopting the National Volunteer Fire Council's Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program and ask that <COMPANY NAME> help us stay strong so that we can continue to serve our community.

The Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program is the nation's only heart attack prevention and awareness campaign targeted at all firefighters and EMS personnel. The <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> is using this program to challenge ourselves to adopt and maintain a heart-healthy lifestyle as we launch a department-wide health and wellness initiative. We're focusing on being educated about our health, eating well, and staying active. Your support will help make this possible.

We would like <COMPANY> to donate <DESCRIPTION>. This will allow us to <DESCRIPTION OF BENEFIT TO DEPARTMENT>. Your company will be supporting those who serve the community.

<DESCRIPTION OF HOW DEPARTMENT SERVES/BENEFITS THE COMMUNITY. VOLUNTEER OR COMBINATION DEPARTMENTS MAY WANT TO INSERT INFORMATION DERIVED FROM COST SAVINGS CALCULATOR.>
You can see that it is important that every one of our members is strong, healthy, and ready to respond to the community's needs.

Please support <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> by donating <DESCRIPTION>. I will follow up with you in the coming weeks to discuss this opportunity further. In the meantime, if you have any questions or are ready to pledge your support, please feel free to contact me at <PHONE> or <EMAIL>. We look forward to working with you to ensure the safety and health of our community's first responders.

<CLOSING>,

<NAME>

<TITLE>

Sample: In-Kind Donation Ask Letter – Hospital

This is an example of what an in-kind donation ask letter to a hospital might look like.



September 1, 2008

Mr. Tom Smith
Community Relations Director
Community Hospital
1234 Wellness Lane
Healthy Town, USA 54321

Dear Mr. Smith:

Nearly half of all line-of-duty firefighter deaths each year are caused by heart attacks, making heart disease the number one threat to firefighter health. That's why the Healthy Town Fire Department is taking the pledge to get healthy and not become a statistic. We are adopting the National Volunteer Fire Council's Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program and ask that Community Hospital help us stay strong so that we can continue to serve our community.

The Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program is the nation's only heart attack prevention and awareness campaign targeted at all firefighters and EMS personnel. The Healthy Town Fire Department is using the resources from this program to challenge ourselves to adopt and maintain a heart-healthy lifestyle and develop our own department health and wellness initiative. We're focusing on being educated about our health, eating well, and staying active. Your support will help make this possible.

Our department members need to have basic health screenings in order to know where we stand and how we can focus our efforts on our individual health. However, the cost of blood pressure, glucose, cholesterol, and body composition screenings for all of our members is far beyond our reach as a volunteer department. We would like Community Hospital to help us maintain and monitor our health by donating these annual screenings to each of our 42 department personnel. This will allow our members to make the necessary changes to improve their health and address any heart attack risk factors the screenings may find. The initial screenings will also provide a baseline to measure our progress as we maintain our heart-health in the coming months and years.

As you may know, Healthy Town Fire Department has 42 volunteer members and serves Healthy Town's population of 17,000. Our firefighters respond to 759 calls each year, protecting lives and property and keeping our community safe. Studies show that it would cost American taxpayers more than \$37.6 billion annually if all volunteer first responders nationwide were replaced with career staffing. According to the NVFC's Fire Department Cost Savings Calculator, our local volunteers save our community over \$500,000 each year. You can see that it is important that every one of our members is strong, healthy, and ready to respond to the community's needs.

Please support the Healthy Town Fire Department by donating complimentary health screenings for our personnel. I will follow up with you in the coming weeks to discuss this opportunity further. In the meantime, if you have any questions or are ready to pledge your support, please feel free to contact me at 555-123-4567 or johndoe@htfd.org. We look forward to working with you to ensure the safety and health of our community's first responders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Doe".

John Doe
Chief

Sample: In-Kind Donation Ask Letter – Fitness Club

This is an example of what an in-kind donation letter to a fitness club might look like.



June 6, 2008

Mr. Mark Smith
Community Relations Director
Community Fitness Club
567 Healthy Boulevard
Healthy Town, USA 54321

Dear Mr. Smith:

Nearly half of all line-of-duty firefighter deaths each year are caused by heart attacks, making heart disease the number one threat to firefighter health. That's why the Healthy Town Fire Department is taking the pledge to get healthy and not become a statistic. We are adopting the National Volunteer Fire Council's Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program and ask that Community Fitness Club help us stay strong so that we can continue to serve our community.

The Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program is the nation's only heart attack prevention and awareness campaign targeted at all firefighters and EMS personnel. The Healthy Town Fire Department is using the resources from this program to challenge ourselves to adopt and maintain a heart-healthy lifestyle and develop our own department health and wellness initiative. We're focusing on being educated about our health, eating well, and staying active. Your support will help make this possible.

In order to ensure our first responders have the resources they need to lead a fit and healthy lifestyle, we need your help. Please consider supporting us by providing one or more of the following:

- Complimentary club membership for our department personnel
- Complimentary consultations with personal trainers
- Donation of gently used exercise equipment to the department
- Sponsorship of a Healthy Town Fire Department-organized sports tournament

As you may know, Healthy Town Fire Department has 42 members and serves Healthy Town's population of 17,000. Our firefighters respond to 759 calls each year, protecting lives and property and keeping our community safe. Just last month we responded to a call from a business near your facility and were able to extinguish the fire before it caused major damage to the business or spread to the surrounding buildings. You can see that it is important that every one of our members is strong, healthy, and ready to respond to the community's needs.

I will follow up with you in the coming weeks to discuss ways Community Fitness Club can support Healthy Town Fire Department. In the meantime, if you have questions or are ready to pledge your support, please feel free to contact me at 555-123-4567 or johndoe@htfd.org. We look forward to working with you to ensure the safety and health of our community's first responders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Doe".

John Doe
Chief

Sample: Monetary Donation Ask Letter

This is an example of what a monetary donation ask letter might look like.



August 21, 2008

Ms. Susan Lee
Community Relations Director
Healthy Corporation
2121 Fitness Place
Healthy Town, USA 54321

Dear Ms. Lee:

Nearly half of all line-of-duty firefighter deaths each year are caused by heart attacks, making heart disease the number one threat to firefighter health. That's why the Healthy Town Fire Department is taking the pledge to get healthy and not become a statistic. We are adopting the National Volunteer Fire Council's Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program and ask that Healthy Corporation help us stay strong so that we can continue to serve our community.

The Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program is the nation's only heart attack prevention and awareness campaign targeted at all firefighters and EMS personnel. The Healthy Town Fire Department is using the resources from this program to challenge ourselves to adopt and maintain a heart-healthy lifestyle and develop our own department health and wellness initiative. We're focusing on being educated about our health, eating well, and staying active. Your support will help make this possible.

Please consider sponsoring the Healthy Town Fire Department's Health and Wellness Program. As a sponsor, you could support our program in a variety of ways, such as providing membership for our personnel at a local fitness club, assisting in covering the costs of health screenings for department personnel, or helping to provide fitness equipment at our stations.

As you may know, Healthy Town Fire Department has 42 members and serves Healthy Town's population of 17,000. Our firefighters respond to 759 calls each year, protecting lives and property and keeping our community safe. Last year one of our firefighters suffered from severe heart palpitations and dizziness after responding to a call. After visiting his doctor, we found out he had dangerously high blood pressure. Thankfully we caught this in time and he has taken steps to lower his blood pressure, but the incident could have had a tragic ending. You can see that it is important that every one of our members is strong, healthy, and ready to respond to the community's needs.

I will follow up with you in the coming weeks to discuss this opportunity further. In the meantime, if you have questions or are ready to pledge your support, please feel free to contact me at 555-123-4567 or johndoe@htfd.org. We look forward to working with you to ensure the safety and health of our community's first responders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Doe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Doe
Chief



Meeting Talking Points

When talking to a potential donor or sponsor, you should emphasize the importance of health in the fire service, what your department is doing to get healthy, how the company or potential sponsor can help, the impact your department has on the community, and why it is important for the company to support this initiative. Talking points may include the following:

- ♥ Heart disease is the number one cause of line-of-duty death among firefighters.
- ♥ On average, over 100 firefighters die in the line of duty each year. Nearly half of these deaths are due to heart attack.
- ♥ The stress put upon firefighters is enormous – their bodies must withstand higher temperatures, increased strenuous physical activity, and exposure to life-threatening environmental factors. Long periods of down time followed by sudden periods of high-stress activity also place increased demands on firefighter’s hearts.
- ♥ The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) launched the Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program in 2003 to promote fitness, nutrition, and health awareness within America’s fire and emergency services. Departments are asked to adopt the program and take the pledge to become heart-healthy. They can then utilize special tools and resources to make healthy lifestyle changes.
- ♥ The <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME>’s health program will include <DESCRIBE ELEMENTS OF OR PLANS FOR PROGRAM>.



- ♥ **For volunteer and combination departments:** Studies show that it would cost American tax-payers more than \$37.6 billion annually if all volunteer first responders nationwide were replaced with career staffing. According to the NVFC’s Fire and EMS Cost Savings Calculators, our local volunteers save our community over <AMOUNT> each year. You can see that it is important that every one of our members is strong, healthy, and ready to respond to the community’s needs.
- ♥ <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> answers <NUMBER> calls each year, covering a population of <NUMBER>. These calls are answered by <NUMBER> firefighters and emergency services personnel.
- ♥ <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> has been acknowledged for their service by <LIST AWARDS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS>.
- ♥ By supporting the <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME>, your company will benefit from increased community exposure, including <DESCRIBE ANY PRESS OR OTHER PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THE COMPANY WILL RECEIVE>.

Making the Pitch

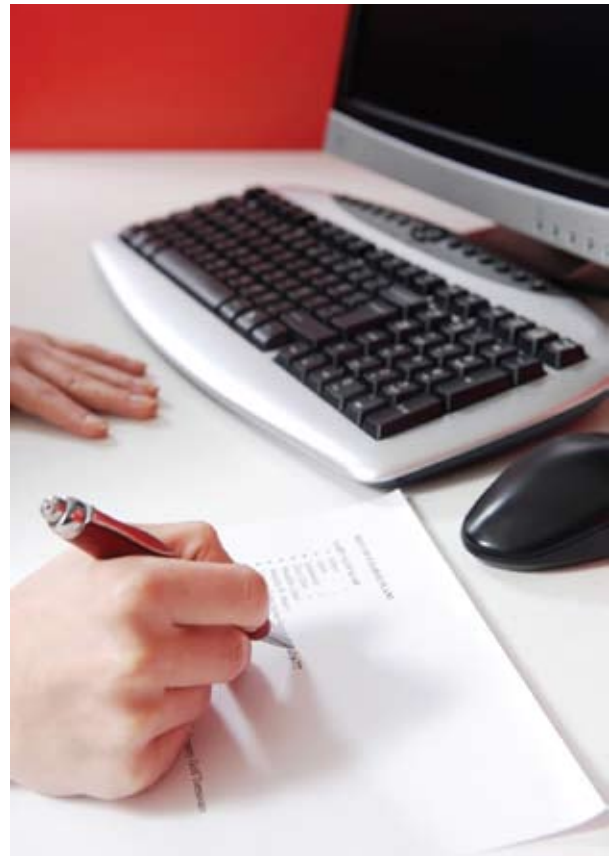
You have landed a meeting with a local company and you have your opportunity to make your pitch. But how do you actually ask for the support that your department needs? These tips will help you make the pitch to local companies to secure sponsorships.

- ♥ **Personalize your ask.** Know who you are meeting with and their role within the company. Are they related to someone in your department? Have they supported the department before? Find ways to connect with them.
- ♥ **Know the company.** Treat a meeting with a potential donor just like a job interview – do your research. Know what the company does and what organizations and initiatives they support. Make sure that what you're asking for is something that the company would be able to do.
- ♥ **Reach their bottom line.** Would supporting the department provide an opportunity for free publicity through press releases and other media? Would they get complimentary fire safety training in exchange for their support? Would their donation be tax deductible? While you are researching the company, think about how supporting the local emergency services could help their business. For example, if you have an annual event such as a cook-out, you could display company signage and let them have a booth to display their merchandise.
- ♥ **Have a plan.** Make sure that you have a clear plan of what you are asking for and what the company will receive in return for their support. Provide printed hand-outs if possible that list the benefits of supporting your department. Include a description of what the department will be able to accomplish with the donated items, money, or support.
- ♥ **Know your program.** Make sure your health and wellness program is clearly defined and you are able to talk about it knowledgeably. Be able to explain how the program will benefit the department and, in turn, benefit the community. Demonstrate that the department members are committed to the program and will follow through on what is proposed.
- ♥ **Show what you are doing in the community.** Provide information about your work and the value of your department. Use specific examples of the inspiring things your department has done. If you are in a volunteer or combination department, use the NVFC Fire Department and EMS Cost Savings Calculators (www.nvfc.org/calculators) to show the monetary value of the department to your community.
- ♥ **Say thank you!** Remember to acknowledge your supporters whenever you can, and always follow up on any service or donation with a thank-you letter. If you are registered as a 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4) organization, send a donation receipt so that your donor can receive tax benefits if applicable. Refer to *IRS Guidelines for Charitable Donations and Tax Deductions* (page 28).

SECTION 3:

Following Up

Following up is one of the most critical components of securing sponsorship. You want to make sure you retain a good relationship with your donors and sponsors so that they continue to support your organization and initiatives. Once you have made the pitch, remember to follow up with the potential sponsor. Send a thank you letter after a meeting to express appreciation for their time and consideration. Once you receive a donation from a company, make sure you send a thank you letter and include a donation receipt if applicable, following all donation guidelines set forth by the IRS. Be sure to fulfill any obligation you committed to in exchange for the donation, such as acknowledgement of the company in department newsletters and materials, free fire safety training for the company's employees, or whatever was agreed upon. In any follow-up press releases or health program-sponsored events, be sure to acknowledge the company's support. This section contains thank you letter customizable templates and samples, IRS tax deduction and donation guidelines, and donation receipt customizable templates you can use when following up with your supporters.



Template: Follow-up Letter

Use this customizable template to follow up after a meeting with a potential sponsor.

<DEPARTMENT LETTERHEAD>

<DATE>

<CONTACT>

<TITLE>

<COMPANY>

<ADDRESS>

<SALUTATION>:

It was a pleasure meeting with you on <DATE>. I enjoyed learning more about <COMPANY>'s work in our community and discussing with you the many ways in which we can work together to protect and maintain the health of our community's first responders.

As you know, the <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> responds to over <NUMBER> calls per year, and each one places our first responders in harms way. While we can provide personal protective equipment, training, and procedures to ensure their physical safety while on-scene, these measures do nothing to ensure they are safe from the health risks that cause nearly half of all line-of-duty firefighter deaths each year. It is critical that our firefighters stay healthy and strong in order to protect the community, and your assistance and support will help accomplish this.

Again, I enjoyed speaking with you about <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME>'s health initiative and hope we can count on your support. Please contact me at <PHONE> or <EMAIL> with any additional questions you might have. I look forward to working with you on this initiative and will be in touch to discuss moving forward.

<CLOSING>,

<NAME>

<TITLE>

Sample: Follow-up Letter

This is an example of what a follow-up letter might look like.



October 12, 2008

Mr. Tom Smith
Community Relations Director
Community Hospital
1234 Wellness Lane
Healthy Town, USA 54321

Dear Mr. Smith:

It was a pleasure meeting with you last Thursday. I enjoyed learning more about Community Hospital's work in our community and discussing with you the many ways in which we can work together to protect and maintain the health of our community's first responders.

As you know, the Healthy Town Fire Department responds to over 750 calls per year, and each one places our first responders in harms way. While we can provide personal protective equipment, training, and procedures to ensure their physical safety while on-scene, these measures do nothing to ensure they are safe from the health risks that cause nearly half of all line-of-duty firefighter deaths each year. It is critical that our firefighters stay healthy and strong in order to continue to protect the community, and your assistance and support will help accomplish this. Your donation of complimentary annual blood pressure and cholesterol screenings for every department member can make all the difference.

Again, I enjoyed speaking with you about Health Town Fire Department's health initiative and hope we can count on your support. Please contact me at 555-123-4567 or johndoe@htfd.org with any additional questions you might have. I look forward to working with you on this initiative and will be in touch to discuss moving forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Doe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, decorative initial "J".

John Doe
Chief

Template: Thank You Letter

Use this customizable template to write a thank you letter to a sponsor or donor.

<DEPARTMENT LETTERHEAD>

<DATE>

<CONTACT>

<TITLE>

<COMPANY>

<ADDRESS>

<SALUTATION>:

Thank you for <COMPANY>'s generous contribution to the <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME>'s health and wellness program. It was a pleasure to work with you and everyone on the <COMPANY> team to <STATE ACTIVITY>.

<DESCRIBE PARTNERSHIP, INCLUDING DEPARTMENT PARTICIPATION, LIFESTYLE CHANGES, OTHER DETAILS TO DEMONSTRATE SUCCESS>

Your generosity has contributed greatly to our department-wide focus on health and wellness and provided our first responders with <DESCRIBE>. Thank you again for your contribution, and I look forward to continuing this partnership with <COMPANY> in the future.

<CLOSING>,

<NAME>

<TITLE>

Sample: Thank You Letter

This is an example of what a thank you letter might look like.



November 16, 2008

Mr. Tom Smith
Community Relations Director
Community Hospital
1234 Wellness Lane
Healthy Town, USA 54321

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you for Community Hospital's generous contribution to the Healthy Town Fire Department's health and wellness program. It was a pleasure to work with you and everyone on the Community Hospital team to screen Healthy Town Fire Department members for health risks that contribute to nearly half of all line-of-duty firefighter deaths each year.

Over 80 percent of our members took advantage of the free screenings. The screenings provided vital information as our members set their goals to become healthier. One of our lieutenants, a physically active 38-year-old, found out through the screenings that his blood pressure was extremely high. With this knowledge, he is now working with his doctor to control his blood pressure levels before a serious complication occurs. On behalf of him and all of our personnel, we are extremely grateful for your donation.

Your generosity has contributed greatly to our department-wide focus on health and wellness and provided our first responders with potentially life-saving information that has helped to set their personal health and wellness goals. Thank you again for your contribution, and I look forward to continuing this partnership with Community Hospital in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Doe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, decorative initial "J".

John Doe
Chief

IRS Guidelines for Charitable Donations and Tax Deductions

Only certain categories of exempt organizations are eligible to receive tax-deductible charitable contributions. These include most charities described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and in some circumstances volunteer fire departments described in section 501(c)(4). Visit www.irs.gov for more information.

The IRS has specific rules and regulations for which donations are eligible for tax deduction and how a 501(c)(3) organization should keep records of contributions. Following are the basic guidelines for informational purposes; learn more at www.irs.gov or consult a tax advisor or tax attorney for specific information pertaining to your department.

Charitable Contributions - Substantiation and Disclosure

Organizations that are tax exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code must meet certain requirements for documenting charitable contributions. The federal tax law imposes two general disclosure rules:

- ♥ A donor must obtain a written acknowledgment from a charity for any single contribution of \$250 or more before the donor can claim a charitable contribution on his/her federal income tax return;
- ♥ A charitable organization must provide a written disclosure to a donor who makes a payment in excess of \$75 partly as a contribution and partly for goods and services provided by the organization.

In addition, donating organizations providing only goods and services should receive a written disclosure with a description of the items donated from the recipient charitable organization. The donating organization is responsible for estimating the value of the donated goods and services.

Any donating organization receiving goods and services in exchange for their donation must receive a good-faith estimate of the fair market value of the goods or services received from the charitable organization. The value of any goods or services received in exchange for any donation (monetary or in-kind) should be subtracted from the total donation value.

See Publication 1771, *Charitable Contributions – Substantiation and Disclosure Requirements*, for more information (www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p1771.pdf).

Recordkeeping Requirements

A donor cannot claim a tax deduction for any contribution of cash, a check, or other monetary gift made on or after January 1, 2007, unless the donor maintains a record of the contribution in the form of either a bank record (such as a cancelled check) or a written communication from the charity (such as a receipt or a letter) showing the name of the charity, the date of the contribution, and the amount of the contribution.

Template: In-Kind Donation Receipt

If your department or organization is eligible to receive tax-deductible charitable contributions, use this customizable template to provide in-kind donors with a record for their taxes. Note that this letter should be on official department letterhead.

<DEPARTMENT LETTERHEAD>

<DATE>

<RECIPIENT NAME>

<TITLE>

<ORGANIZATION>

<ADDRESS>

Dear <NAME>:

Thank you for your in-kind donation of <DESCRIPTION> to the <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME>. You are responsible for determining the value of your charitable contribution for tax reporting purposes.

Please keep this letter as a receipt for your gift. The <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> is classified by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as tax-exempt as defined in section 501(c)<(3) OR (4)> of the Internal Revenue Code and, as such, contributions to the <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> are tax-deductible. This letter confirms that no goods or services were provided in exchange for this charitable contribution.

Thank you again for partnering with us as we work to maintain a heart-healthy lifestyle so that we can continue to serve and protect the community.

Sincerely,

<NAME>

<TITLE>

Template: Monetary Donation Receipt

If your department or organization is eligible to receive tax-deductible charitable contributions, use this customizable template to provide monetary donors with a record for their taxes.

<DEPARTMENT LETTERHEAD>

<DATE>

<RECIPIENT NAME>

<TITLE>

<ORGANIZATION>

<ADDRESS>

Dear <NAME>:

Thank you for your donation of \$<AMOUNT> to the <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME>. We appreciate your support of our department. Thanks to supporters such as you we are able to <INSERT DESCRIPTION>.

Please keep this letter as a receipt for your donation. The <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> is classified by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as tax-exempt as defined in section 501(c)<(3) OR (4)>of the Internal Revenue Code and, as such, contributions to the <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> are tax-deductible. This letter confirms that no goods or services were provided in exchange for this charitable contribution.

Thank you again for supporting us as we work to maintain a heart-healthy lifestyle so that we can continue to serve and protect the community.

Sincerely,

<NAME>

<TITLE>



KEEP
IT STRONG



N · V · F · C
heart healthy
FIREFIGHTER

7852 Walker Drive
Suite 450
Greenbelt, MD 20770
1-888-ASK-NVFC (275-6832)
Fax: 202-887-5291
nvffoffice@nvfc.org
www.nvfc.org