
FUNDING YOUR COMMUNITY THE REALISTIC WAY

ONE EVENT AT A TIME

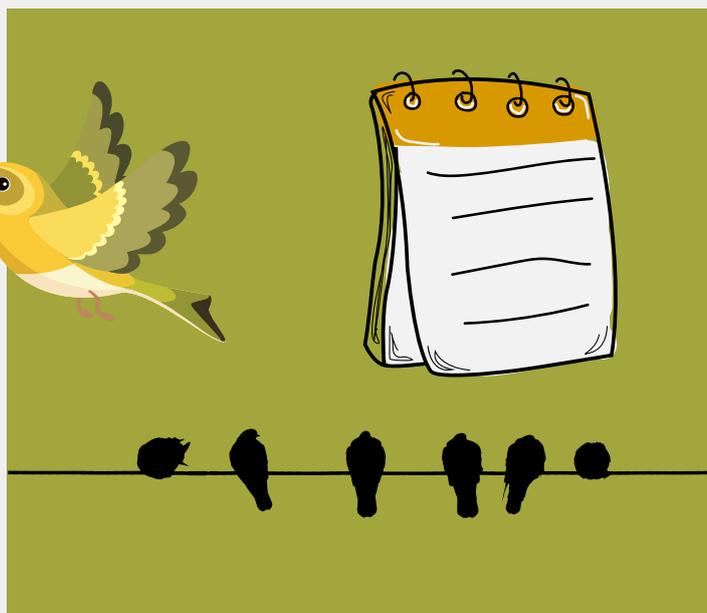


SPONSORSHIP

Many of you aren't professional event organizers. So I thought I could share what I've learned from decades of running events. Here's a playbook outline from my perspective. There are many ways to run a great event, and this isn't an official PSF guidance. I'm just one organizer sharing what's worked.

So hopefully this helps.

Do adapt as needed of course. Every country, culture, and community is different. Use what fits and adjust what doesn't.



START EARLY

Fundraising takes time. Start months in advance.

Companies have budgets for sponsorship, but they need time to plan and prepare. Last-minute sponsors do appear, but treat them as bonuses. You want sponsors who plan in advance. Early sponsors give you peace of mind. It helps you make decisions with confidence and they also tend to be more engaged throughout.

Companies also budget according to their financial calendar. This could mean fitting into a quarterly budget cycle. Some finalize event plans in Q4 for the following year. If your event happens in the first half of the year, start outreach the year before. Missing that window could mean waiting another 12 months.

Sometimes companies have remaining budgets by the end of Q4 and they could be sourcing for events to sponsor. Sponsoring events can also bring tax benefits for companies in some countries, either as a deductible business expense or, in certain cases, as a charitable contribution.

Planning early is always better. Starting early also gives you flexibility: So, how early? I would suggest somewhere between 4-7 months before the event date will be great.

DEFINE YOUR EVENT'S MVP

You know your event best. You don't need to oversell. Or undersell.

Define what makes your event matter. Know the core value of your event and stand behind it. If you believe in it, others will too. Sponsors like talk slots, but you do not need to give all sponsors your prime speaking spots. Save your keynotes for your community's most important speakers.

Offer top-tier sponsors a talk or panel slot if it fits. Talk slots have value. Talks create footprints for their brand presence but be clear about what they get. Otherwise, they will keep asking for more.

Sponsors want confidence. If you cannot clearly explain why your event matters, sponsors will move on.

Define what your MVP actually looks like. For example:

- 1 or 2 tracks, 150 - 300 attendees, affordable community venue, livestream optional.

Avoid promising what you can't control. For instance, never guarantee a "full room" for a sponsor talk. Instead, offer promotion, a good time slot in the schedule, and a recording of the talk to share later.

CREATE MINIMUM AND EXPANDED BUDGETS

Don't guess. Make your event budget clear and tangible.

Build two versions:

- Minimum viable budget: The leanest version of your event. The version you can still be proud of. No fluff. Just the essentials. Think like the community, not yourself..
- Expanded budget: The dream version. Better venue. Swag. Full catering. Perks that make the experience shine, but aren't required to make it work.

Attach numbers to each line item.

Break it all down:

- Venue
- Catering
- AV and livestream
- Printing
- Volunteer support

Then map which line items get upgraded if more sponsorship comes in. This helps you see where the money can stretch, and how it can improve the experience. It gives you better leeway to adjust without losing sight of what matters.

KNOW WHAT SPONSORS WANT

Sponsors don't hand out money for fun. They expect something back and they have choices. You want them to see value in yours, but here's the thing: you get to choose too. Not every sponsor fits and that's okay.

Ask yourself:

- Do they want developer recruitment? (Companies hiring engineers)
- Do they want product exposure? (APIs, tools, platforms)
- Do they want brand association with Python?

Identify the fit before you pitch. Make sure they read and agree to your Code of Conduct before anything is signed. Signing the contract is the easiest piece of the whole process. The alignment is what matters.

Not all sponsors want the same thing. If you treat them like they do, they will either walk away or ask for more than you can realistically provide.

You don't need to rewrite your event to please everyone. But you do need to understand their business goals and tailor your pitch accordingly.

Here are some common sponsor types you'll likely come across:

1. Recruitment-Driven Sponsors

These are companies looking for talent. Developers. DevRel staff. Tech leads.

What they want: exposure to talent.

- Visibility among job-seeking developers and usually mid-to-senior developers
- A chance to show off their team and culture
- Resume drops, hiring boards, or access to opt-in candidate lists
- Branded talk or panel slots that showcase their engineering work

What you can offer:

- Job board space at the event
- A "Who's Hiring" section on your website or slides
- A sponsor space for real conversations
- A spot on a "Careers in Tech" or "Getting into DevRel" panel if you host one

What to avoid:

Prevent promising "hiring outcomes" or private access to your attendee list unless attendees opt in. Always stay [GDPR-compliant](#) and transparent.

2. Product-Focused Sponsors

These are companies building tools, platforms, or cloud services for developers. They want engineers to try their stuff.

What they want: product adoption or trial sign-ups.

- Product demos and sign-ups
- Talk slots that let them educate, not just advertise
- Visibility among engineers who choose tools for teams
- Swag or booth visibility to attract interest

What to avoid:

Don't let them turn their talk into a sales pitch. Help them frame it as "here's how this tool solves a real dev problem." That keeps the content useful for attendees and protects your program quality. A good talk shows real use, not just a product slide deck.

3. Brand Awareness Sponsors

These sponsors believe in community. They want to be seen supporting open source, education, or diversity in tech. They may not be recruiting or selling directly but want to align with Python values.

What they want: to be seen as supporters of open source or community learning.

- Brand visibility
- Social media mentions
- Goodwill from supporting the community

What to avoid:

It not necessary to overload them with technical sponsor perks. If they aren't looking to recruit or demo, keep it lightweight and feel-good.

4. Local and Community Sponsors

These are your local heroes. The nearby coworking spaces, local startups, city councils, cafes, or small businesses. They care more about local exposure and supporting community work than big returns.

What they want: visibility in the local tech ecosystem

- Local visibility
- Association with something positive and educational
- A chance to support the local Python scene
- Positive PR in their neighborhood

What you can offer:

- Verbal shoutouts during the event
- Community sponsor tier with flexible pricing
- Logos on flyers and the event website
- Invite to pre-event or post-event socials
- An option to host a side event (e.g. breakfast, meetup, or social)
- Sponsor tables in shared spaces
- Free tickets or passes for their staff

What to avoid:

Don't ask them for the same money as your tech sponsors. Offer smaller community packages or barter deals. You might get coffee sponsorship or printing services instead of cash and that's just as valuable.

Tailor, but don't over-customize.

You don't need to rewrite your sponsorship prospectus every time. Offer "add-on" options that sponsors can stack on top of base tiers:

- Swap a talk slot for a workshop
- Swap logo placement for a booth upgrade
- Workshop hosting
- Lanyard branding
- Sponsored coffee breaks
- Promo in post-event newsletter

Use these categories to group your sponsor list by type. That way, when it's time to reach out, your pitch can speak directly to their interests and not get lost in their inbox.

BUILD AN ATTENDEE PROFILE

Sponsors want to know who shows up. They don't need a novel. They want a clear picture.

Show them:

- Typical job roles of attendees
- Industries they work in
- Past attendance numbers (or projections if it is your first event)
- The type of audience you plan to attract

If you have past data, include diversity figures, attendee seniority (junior, mid, senior), and geographic reach. This isn't just nice to know. Sponsors feel more confident when they see who they're reaching.

MAKE IT EASY TO SAY YES

Sponsors won't read your whole pitch. They don't have time. The person you're emailing is usually not the one making the call. Their manager is. They don't have time to read through the entire prospectus. Your direct contact is the one doing the reading. That manager is busy and they want answers fast. If they can't find what they need in five minutes, they'll move on.

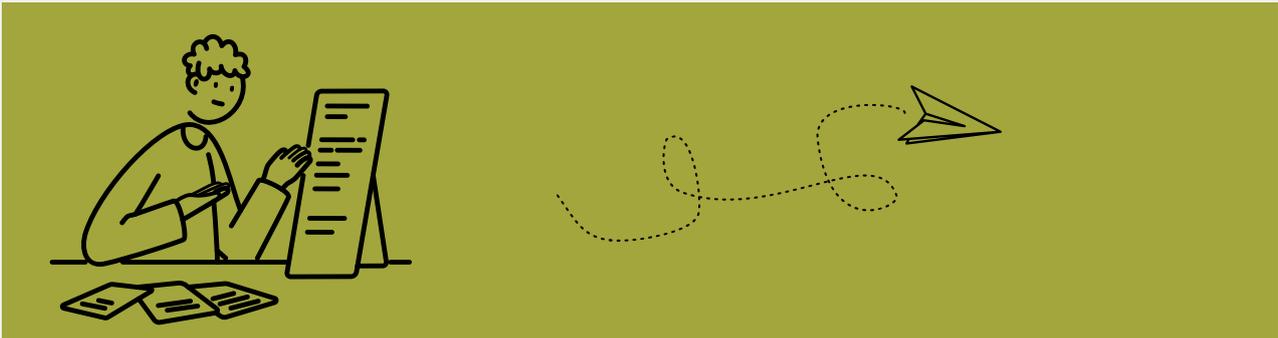
So make it easy. Provide:

- A page with the summary of the events.
- A comparison of all tiers to make decision making easier for them.
- A version in PDF for print, and one in HTML for mobile or email

Your pitch should answer three things:

- Who's attending? (roles, industries, numbers)
- How your event benefits them? (visibility, leads, hiring)
- What do they get? (no blocks of text, just benefits)

If it's hard to understand, it's hard to say yes. Put an "At a Glance" page up front. Include dates, venue, expected audience, and top perks. Add a bold "Contact to Sponsor" email or button. Many sponsors will read it on their phones. Include a mobile-friendly version for decision-makers reading on phones.



PROSPECTUS PREP

Your prospectus is your sales tool. It's your salesperson. If it also looks good in design, that's a bonus but you don't have to sweat over design too much. If it's clear, simple, and easy to digest. It's good to go.

Include the basics:

- Attendee numbers and profiles
- Sponsorship tiers with benefits (side-by-side chart)
- Logos of past sponsors (social proof)
- Clear contact details and next steps

Flexibility is key. Be willing to customize packages for high-value sponsors.

Write a clear summary of the event.

Include:

- Goal
- Date and venue
- About the event
- Benefits of sponsorship
- Conference format
- Attendee profile
- Create a tier chart.

Make a page for each tier. At the end, add a comparison chart so sponsors can see the differences at a glance. The key is to keep everything easy to understand.

Another good point to consider is to add testimonials or quotes from past sponsors (with permission). Nothing sells a sponsorship package better like a company saying “this event was worth it for us.”

Sponsors that return year after year are gold. If you earn their trust once, they’ll often come back.

As for tools: Find tools that are easy to edit and share with team members. Canva for example makes it simple. Their slide templates are easy to embed into your site. Any updates you make go live immediately. No need to re-upload files each time.

I made [a Canva deck](#) for PyCon Thailand back in 2020. They still [use it](#). PyLadiesCon used a similar template this year, and the response from sponsors has been strong. Here’s [the link to that template](#) if you’d like to use it as a reference.

THE SEARCH FOR SPONSORS

Before you begin, build your list. Start with companies that have sponsored in the past or shown interest. Group them by type: tech, non-tech, local businesses, training providers to make it easier for you.

Look beyond Tech Giants.

Yes, it’s easy to aim at the big tech firms that use Python. But think deeper. Ask yourself: who else benefits from your attendees? Could they be the educational institutions, the training companies, the cloud and infrastructure providers? What about the local co-working spaces? Maybe it’s small businesses who want to reach tech-savvy customers? Or what about the food delivery and local cafés? Could they sponsor or offer discounts for meals?

Tap your community network.

Someone in your community may work at a company that could sponsor. A personal introduction often works better than a cold email.

Move to cold outreach with tailored offers.

Cold outreach is where many organizers fail. Avoid sending a generic sponsorship package attaching a PDF and a “sponsor us” message. Start with: Who you are Why you are contacting them (connect it to their business) How their support fits with your event audience

Example:

“We saw you’ve been hiring Python developers. PyCon X brings 300+ mid-level engineers across the region. We’d love to explore a sponsorship that highlights your company’s work.”

You should still keep it short. Keep it relevant.

Follow up.

People are busy. If they don’t respond, try again in two weeks. It is not spamming. But do know the limits. You can stop after the third try. With a long list of outreach, you need to track everything. Keep a sponsor spreadsheet all year. Include:

- Company name
- Contact person
- Last contact date
- Interest level
- Notes on what they care about

This will save you time next year make last-minute sponsorship gaps easier to fill.

Market Like You Mean It

A community event still competes with professional conferences for attention. There are many events out there. You cannot assume sponsors will find you. You must make your event visible.

The more eyes on your event, the more likely you’ll catch a sponsor’s interest.

Plan a simple marketing calendar. Include:

- Social media posts (countdown, speaker announcements, sponsor shoutouts)
- Email updates to your community
- Cross-promotion with local Python groups and tech hubs
- Posts inviting sponsors, with clear value shown

Track what matters to sponsors:

- Social media reach and engagement
- Newsletter subscribers
- Website traffic during the event lead-up

Sponsors want to know what kind of reach they’re buying into. If you tag sponsors in social posts, avoid sounding like an ad. Keep it human and helpful.

For example:

“Thank you to XYZ Corp for supporting PyCon Local. Their team is working on exciting Python tools. Check out their talk on Saturday at 2 PM.”

Make them feel like they’re part of the event, not just a wallet behind it. Because they are part of the event.



HOW TO SAVE WITHOUT LOSING THE PYTHON SPIRIT

Big budgets don't make great events but the community does. When money is tight, think of partnerships, not just sponsorships.

You don't always need cash. Many things can be traded. You can get a free venue in exchange for partnership, logo presence, talk slots etc. Or swag like stickers, t-shirts, after party venue, or captioning, video production. This type of sponsorship is often called "in-kind sponsorship". It saves your budget and still gives real value to both sides.

A few examples:

- **Video production:** Team up with a university media department or a local AV company.
- **Food:** Ask a nearby café or restaurant to cater with discounts in exchange for branding.
- **Printing:** A local print shop may be happy to cover your flyers in return for logo space.
- **Promotion:** Tech publications share your registration information in exchange for logo placement

Be careful about what you are providing though. Never share attendee data without consent. If it involves attendees' personal information, make sure it complies with GDPR or similar laws in your country. Use an opt-in option for attendees if you plan to share details with sponsors.

You do not need to sell your soul or your community's trust for a free lunch. Use what you already have. Share what makes your event special. That's what real partners want to support.

Venue, venue, venue

Your biggest expense is often the venue. But it doesn't have to break your budget. There are spaces that do not rely on venue rental as their main income. These places often have different goals—education, outreach, innovation. And they may welcome a partnership if your event aligns with their mission. Promote the event in a way that benefits them.

You can solve venue costs through creative partnerships.

Consider:

- Universities and tech hubs (classrooms, auditoriums)
- Government agencies (innovation centers, public event spaces)
- Corporate offices (empty weekend space)

Schools are especially useful. They usually have enough rooms for multiple tracks, built-in AV, and reliable wifi. **PyCon Philippines** used university venues from 2012 to 2019. That kept costs low and made the event accessible. They only had to shift in 2023 and 2024 due to a post-pandemic venue crunch.

Remember: **The first PyCon US, led by Guido**, was held in a university, not a hotel ballroom.

Look beyond traditional venues:

- Community centers
- Universities
- Libraries
- Startup incubators
- Tech hubs
- Theatres

If your event has grown large enough that only professional venues can handle it:

- Negotiate a multi-year contract for better rates
- Ask for extras: signage space, AV gear, extended setup hours
- Avoid hidden costs: confirm if you can use your own AV or catering
- Check move-in and move-out windows—some venues charge heavily for overtime

Reusing the same venue helps. [The EuroPython team](#) ran three editions (2023–2025) in the same venue in Prague. Their logistics improved each year, by having organizers, sponsors, and participants more familiarized with the location.

In short: venue costs are flexible if you plan ahead, think creatively, and build local relationships.

Be Creative

A little creativity can go a long way. You don't need a fancy venue or catered lunch to create a great experience. You need a good plan and the courage to try something different.

Adapt without cutting quality:

- Can't afford catering? Let attendees buy their own lunch. Pick a venue near restaurants and give people time to explore.
- Not enough space? Spread your event over two or more days. Sell both single-day and multi-day tickets. Some people can't attend the full event, but they'll still show up if you give them options.
- Know another organizer planning a local event? Share space. Back-to-back events or split weekends can save on venue and setup costs—and bring both communities together.

The Python community values connection more. A creative plan that works is better than an expensive one that doesn't.

Ticketing Price

Many organizers hesitate to raise prices, worried it might hurt attendance. But fair pricing is not the enemy. If your event brings value, people will pay.

Price your tickets to match your audience and funding model.

Examples:

- Early bird tickets at lower cost to secure early cash flow
- Student tickets subsidized by higher-tier or supporter tickets
- Community supporter tickets with perks (swag, recognition)
- Consider creative ticket categories:
- Premium tickets that include merchandise or priority seating
- Donor tickets for attendees who wish to support the event beyond attendance

Be transparent

Show how ticket revenue helps cover venue, AV, catering, or volunteer support. When people understand what they're paying for, they're more willing to contribute.

KEEP PERSPECTIVE

Organizers who adapt with diverse sponsors, strong community partnerships, smart budgeting will not just survive. They will thrive.

We've built events from living rooms, borrowed classrooms, and public libraries. We've done it with no money and with five-figure budgets. And we'll keep doing it.

Not every event needs to feel corporate. We don't need to chase polish at the cost of authenticity. Community events are endearing because they reflect the people behind them.

A simple venue. A shared meal. A hallway chat. These things matter more than branding walls and stage lights. People come to connect, not to be dazzled.

You do not need to have it all figured out. Every challenge you face, someone has faced it before. You're not alone. There are people in this community ready to help you. You just need to start early, know your audience, and offer real value to the people supporting you. And thank you for everything you've already done.

Below is a checklist to help guide you through your sponsorship process: