



A PURPOSE-DRIVEN WORKFORCE.
A STRONGER COMMUNITY.

Navigating Corporate Nonprofit Power Dynamics

Power dynamics exist in every relationship, but are particularly pronounced in collaborations that include an exchange from one party to another—of resources, services, or ideas. Such dynamics often color corporate-nonprofit relationships, driving nonprofits to shapeshift in order to match the priorities of their funders or corporate partners. While it's important to acknowledge these dynamics, they don't have to dictate the norms of your SBV experience! Here are a few tips to help you to advocate for your needs and create mutually beneficial cross-sector partnerships.

Don't be afraid to say no

- Before you embark on an engagement, make sure the SBV resource aligns with your needs and goals. Don't be afraid to say no if a company comes to you with a project that is not the right fit.
- If this isn't the right time for SBV, that's okay! Provide your partners with clear reasons why this isn't the right project at this time. Proactively ask (and tell!) them how they can best support your organization.

Create a culture of trust and open communication

- While your volunteers may be subject matter experts, you're the expert on your organization. Be upfront about your operating environment, trust in the expertise of your volunteers, and approach the partnership with an open mind!

Direct the services to where you need them the most

- SBV is designed to address the core areas of a nonprofit's business that are traditionally under-resourced and under-funded. Be honest and directive about where volunteers can best plug in.
- Pro tip: don't forget to do your research to understand what unique talents, knowledge and experiences your partner can offer!

Feedback, feedback, feedback!

- Set the tone at the beginning of your project for how valuable feedback is. If you expect to receive it and intentionally create space for it as part of the process, then it will feel less personal and more reciprocal.
- It can help to think of yourself as a client receiving a service. Feedback is not only welcome, but necessary to move the project forward!

Encourage your partners to be committed beyond pro bono

- Consider pro bono as a potential gateway to a longer-term relationship. Actively brainstorm with your volunteers how to grow and develop the partnership over time.