

December, 2015

Dear Potential Race Director,

The Frederick Steeplechasers Running Club provides race support assistance for about 40 local running events each year. We offer course marking, official timing and promotion of races at below-market rates. By keeping our fees far lower than for-profit race management companies, we are able to help small events get started and grow. Our race support business thus supports many charitable causes in the Frederick community, and fulfills our mission of promoting running to individuals of all ages and abilities.

Our fees are posted on our website at: <http://steeplechasers.org/race-support-services/>, and are based on the number of finishers in the previous year. All new races are charged the lowest rate.

We also want to be honest with those considering putting on a race as a fundraiser. It is more work than many people think and it can be difficult to turn a profit. We've put together a few ideas and considerations to help you in your planning and to help you decide whether a race is the right fundraising opportunity for your organization.

**Date/Venue:** The Frederick area has running events pretty much every weekend in the spring and fall, so finding an open slot during a good weather season can be a challenge. If you want to hold the event in Frederick city, you need to check with the city Parks & Recreation Department to see what dates and locations they have available. They currently offer a choice of three USATF-certified 5k courses in the city, and only approve one race per day on weekend/holidays. Securing a date and venue should be your very first step and should be done almost a year in advance.

**Budget:** Presumably you want your event to turn a profit. Sketch out a planning budget to determine how you will manage your event from a financial perspective. You'll need to consider the following categories:

**Income:**

- Registration Fees
- Sponsorships
- Donations

**Expenses:**

- Awards (trophies, medals, etc)
- Registration (bibs, pins, labels)
- Premiums (shirts, hats, bags)
- Fees (city permit, traffic control)
- Insurance (the city requires this, and so do we)
- Timing
- Course Marking
- Promotion (website, email marketing, flyers/brochures/posters, advertising)
- Food/Water supplies

Other things to consider in managing your event finances:

- Solicit both cash and in-kind sponsorships and donations from local businesses and individuals. Without these sources of income, you will have trouble making your event profitable.
- If you decide to provide race premiums to your participants, be very cautious about your quantities. Many an event has been financially derailed by over-ordering t-shirts. You might want to set a registration deadline for guaranteed provision of the premium so that you are able to order only the quantity you need plus a few extras.
- Don't price yourself out of the market in setting your registration fees, especially your first year. Look around at other races in the area and try to stay within the same range.

## **Other Planning Considerations:**

**Event Details:** Will your race be a 5K or some other distance? Will you offer a shorter "fun run/walk" as an alternative option to the main event to try to draw children and other participants who may not be interested in the longer competitive race?

**Awards:** Will you give awards for the main event, and if so, what would they be and how many would you give? Most races give awards to male/female overall winners and runners who place in their age group. Small races generally have larger (10-year) age groups and may only go one or two deep (first/second). You might also consider a master's (40+) overall award, and fun awards such as oldest and youngest finishers or best costume. A little creativity here can make your event fun and memorable.

**Random Prizes:** Will you hold a random prize drawing so that everyone has a chance at winning something? Donations from local restaurants or businesses are great to keep your participants engaged at the end of the race.

**Promotion:** There is no magic formula for this. Some events simply do a better job of packaging and marketing an event than others. It's all about creativity and lots of effort.

- If you don't have access to your organization's website, consider creation of a free website using Wix or some other easy website builder.
- Create a facebook page (not group) for your event and get all your supporters to "like" it. Make frequent posts.
- Get your event onto as many online race/event calendars as you can, including the Frederick News Post community calendar.
- Put flyers/brochures/posters at local gyms, running stores, and other public places, but especially where your own supporters will see them.
- We will put your event on the Frederick Steeplechasers event calendar for free, but if you book our "Premium Promotion" service, we'll send three email marketing messages promoting your event to our database of over 9000 local runners.
- Do NOT count on the local community of avid runners to fill your race. There are 5k races around town almost every weekend, and the competition is fierce. Your best bet is to draw from supporters of your own organization, and try to be as creative as possible in drawing the general running population.

**Sound System:** Will you have music and an announcer? Can someone in your organization lend a sound system?

**Volunteers:** Make sure that you have sufficient help. You'll need help with promotion, sponsor/donor recruitment, registration and bib preparation, shirt design and ordering, water stop, food distribution, course marshals etc. Our volunteers will only be working the finish line, and we may ask for help with that from your pool of helpers.

**Bibs:** Race organizers often ask us what we recommend. You can get free moderate-quality bibs, but the bibs from [www.rainbowracing.com](http://www.rainbowracing.com) are more durable. Make sure that you get the style with pull-off bib tags. Keep in mind that your event may take place in the rain. Don't use non-waterproof felt-tip markers on your bibs or bib labels. Ballpoint pen, ink-jet or laser printing are all OK. Also consider upgrading to waterproof labels if you plan to use labels to mark name, age and age group on the bib pull-tag. We have had races that were nearly impossible to score because the bib tag labels dissolved or were illegible due to rain.

**Results:** Runners expect prompt reporting of results. While we will provide the list of award winners at your race according to the awards structure you've set up, we do not compile the final comprehensive list of results. Instead, we turn the bib tags over to you at the end of the event, in finish-order, and annotated with finish times. It is your responsibility to put together the final results. We suggest that you use the template on the race support page of our website for this. If

you send the file to [results@steeplechasers.org](mailto:results@steeplechasers.org), we'll post the list to the results page of our website.

In closing, if you decide to move forward with your plans, we can help you look at possible dates and can offer guidance on scheduling in addition to consultation on how a race is conducted and what options you have in that regard. If a mutually agreeable date is agreed, we will provide you with a contract to reserve your date and more fully spell out expectations on both sides.

We welcome the opportunity to work with you to make your event successful.

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