



Corporate Partnership Framework

How-to Guide for Engaging Corporate Partners

About This Guide

You are one of Dogs for Better Lives' (DBL) most valuable assets. As a board member or DBL advocate, you sit inside companies that could become powerful, long-term partners and this guide gives you what you need to make that happen.

The Corporate Partnership Framework was designed to support DBL's growth by a network-driven approach where insiders like you confidently lead the outreach. You don't need to be a professional fundraiser. You just need to believe in the mission and know where to knock.

This guide walks you through who to approach, how to start the conversation, what events to propose, and how to convert initial interest into a formal corporate partnership.

Know Your Story: DBL At a Glance

Before reaching out, make sure you can describe DBL clearly and confidently. Use these materials as your foundation and always adapt them into your own voice.

The Mission

"To professionally train dogs to help people and enhance lives while maintaining a lifelong commitment to all dogs we rescue or breed and the people we serve."

— Dogs for Better Lives, Founded 1977

The Programs

The following programs are the foundation of your corporate partnership conversations. Use them as your primary talking points when engaging potential partners.

Program	What They Do
Hearing Assistance Dogs (link)	Alert deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals to essential household sounds (doorbells, smoke alarms, baby cries) for safety and independence.
Autism Assistance Dogs (link)	Enhance the well-being of children and families living with Autism, providing trained tasks both in public and at home to assist with keeping children grounded and focused while presenting a social bridge for relationships and friendships. (Available on west/east coasts. See website for state listings.)
Facility Dogs (link)	Partner with licensed professionals such as teachers, counselors, child advocates to support vulnerable communities.
Puppy Raiser Program (link)	Volunteers raise a DBL puppy from 8 weeks to 14-16 months, providing a loving home, basic training, and socialization before formal service training begins.
From Shelter to Service Dog Program (link)	Volunteers foster a shelter dog in training to become a Service Dog for up to 6 months. (Atlanta and Dallas metro only)
Paws for PTSD (coming soon) (link)	An upcoming program in partnership with Atlanta Humane Society that will assist veterans living with service-related PTSD by providing them with a trained Service Dog that supports them at home and in public.

Why DBL Stands Out

- **Placed Free of Charge:** All dogs are provided to recipients at zero cost, eliminating every financial barrier to access.
- **100% Donation Model:** Every dollar donated directly funds program services. Administrative and fundraising costs are fully covered by an endowment.
- **Top-Rated Nonprofit:** 4-star Charity Navigator rating for eleven consecutive years and a 100% score, marks of fiscal responsibility and transparency.
- **Shelter & Purpose-Bred Dogs:** One of the few national organizations training shelter dogs alongside purpose-bred puppies to become Service Dogs.
- **Personalized Placement Model:** Offering in-home 1:1 placements for our programs, limiting client travel and setting clients and dogs up for greater success.
- **Lifelong Commitment:** DBL supports every dog-client team for the entire lifetime of their partnership.
- **Cost per Dog:** Approximately \$54,000 to fully train and place a single Service Dog.
- **501(c)(3) EIN:** 93-0681311 - verified and searchable on Charity Navigator and the IRS database.

Your Elevator Pitch (60–90 Seconds)

Use this as a starting point and make it your own:

For nearly 50 years, Dogs for Better Lives has been transforming lives nationwide by training and placing Assistance Dogs completely free of charge with people who are deaf, children with autism, and professionals who serve vulnerable communities.

The average value of a Dogs for Better Lives Service Dog is \$54,000. Because our administrative costs are fully covered by an endowment, 100% of every donation goes directly to that work. We've earned a 4-star Charity Navigator rating eleven years in a row because of that commitment and transparency.

I'm on the board, and I'm passionate about growing DBL's reach. I'd love to explore what a partnership between DBL and [Company/Group/Organization Name] might look like."

The Strategic Approach

The Corporate Partnership Framework is built on a simple but powerful idea: warm outreach through trusted insiders converts far better than cold outreach from staff. You are the bridge between DBL's mission and your company's resources.

1

Identify Mission-Aligned Groups

Scan your company for employee groups whose interests connect to DBL's work: parents & children, disability advocates, veterans, animal lovers, or employees engaged in corporate social and political impact groups.

2

Execute Warm Outreach

Start with a personal conversation or tailored email. Your credibility as an insider dramatically increases trust and the likelihood of a yes.

3

Host an Engagement Event

In regions where DBL has a physical presence, propose in-person events. Elsewhere, use virtual programming such as lunch-and-learns, speaker series, online giving campaigns to maximize national reach. Staff/board members are available to travel for high-impact engagements where there is strong interest and partnership potential.

4

Sustain & Convert to Partnership

After initial events, maintain relationships through regular touchpoints and impact updates. Escalate toward formal partnership options: matching gifts, cause marketing, event sponsorship, or a named program sponsorship.

Who to Approach at Your Company

You don't need to start at the top. The most powerful partnerships often begin with people already passionate about community, employees, or causes. Here are your four primary targets.

Target Group	Why They're a Great Fit
Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) for Veterans, Parents, Disability & Pet/Animal Lovers	ERGs are the highest-leverage entry point. They have established networks, internal channels, and leadership actively seeking meaningful programming for their members. These groups seek inclusive, feel-good employee engagements. A DBL dog meet-and-greet, lunch-and-learn, or corporate volunteer day are all welcoming and easy ways to get started.
Social Responsibility & Political Impact Teams	These teams manage charity partnerships and giving campaigns. DBL's 4-star Charity Navigator rating, 501(c)(3) status, and clear mission make for a compelling case.
Individual Coworkers	Never underestimate a good hallway conversation. Individual champions can become internal advocates who carry the message upward and sideways through the organization.

Interest Groups to Actively Seek Out

- **Parents & Children:** The Autism Assistance Dog and Facility Dog programs directly serves families. Parent ERGs connect personally with DBL's mission. Great event ideas are the "My Perfect Dog" drawing contest and "Meet the Dogs" family events.
- **Disability & Accessibility Groups:** Hearing Dogs and Facility Dogs directly serve the disability community. First-person speaker presentations from DBL beneficiaries are highly effective.
- **Dog & Animal Lover Communities:** A broad, enthusiastic audience for dog photo contests, volunteer days, and puppy raiser program recruitment.
- **Veteran Groups:** DBL's upcoming Paws for PTSD program creates powerful partnerships between military veterans and shelter dogs. The Hearing Dog program is also of interest to this group. Veteran ERGs are a natural entry point. Propose speaker events featuring DBL beneficiary success stories.

Step-by-Step: From First Hello to Corporate Partner

Step 1 – Research Your Company

Before reaching out, take time to explore your company's internal resources. Check your employee directory, internal intranet, or company network to identify the following groups and individuals whose interests align with DBL's mission. The more targeted your outreach, the more effective it will be.

1. Parent and children communities
2. Disability and accessibility advocates
3. Animal lovers
4. Veteran groups
5. Social responsibility and political impact group
 - This group may not be immediately visible, try searching terms like "corporate gift match" or "employee giving" on your company's intranet or HR portal. Many companies offer matching gift programs as an employee benefit, where the company matches donations made by employees to eligible nonprofits like DBL.

Step 2 – Start the Conversation

The best first touch is casual and personal. You're not pitching a sponsorship; you're sharing something you believe in. Lead with your personal connection to DBL and invite curiosity

Conversation Starters by Audience

With a Parent & Children Community:

"Dogs for Better Lives trains Autism Assistance Dogs for kids completely free to the family. I'm on their board and I think this group would love to know about their work. Can I set up some time to explore how we might collaborate?"

With a Disability and Accessibility Advocate Group:

"Dogs for Better Lives trains Hearing Dogs and Autism Assistance Dogs for people with disabilities, completely free of charge. I'm on their board and I think this group would really connect with their work. Can I set up some time to explore how we might collaborate?"

With an Animal Lover Group:

Have you heard of Dogs for Better Lives? They've been training and placing Service Dogs since 1977 and they train shelter dogs and turn them into life-changing Service Dogs. I'm on their board and I think this group would have a lot of fun getting involved. Can I set up some time to explore how we might collaborate?

With a Veteran Group:

"Have you heard of Dogs for Better Lives? I'm on their board. We are developing a program called Paws for PTSD that pairs veterans managing PTSD with shelter dogs. I think there could be a real connection here. Would you be open to hearing more?"

With a Social Responsibility & Political Impact Team:

"I'm on the board of Dogs for Better Lives, a nationally recognized 501(c)(3) with a 4-star Charity Navigator rating for ten consecutive years. They have a strong, scalable corporate partnership model and a genuine win-win value proposition. Would you have 20 minutes to connect? I'd love to explore adding them to our [corporate matching program name]."

Step 3 — Follow Up with a Tailored Email

After a warm conversation, follow up the same day or within 24 hours. Here are three templates tailored for different audiences.

✉ Email Template: Parent & Children, Disability Advocates, Animal Lover, Veteran Group or Coworker

Subject: *Connecting You with Dogs for Better Lives*

Hi [Name],

It was great chatting with you! As I mentioned, I'm on the board of Dogs for Better Lives (DBL), a national nonprofit that has been training Assistance Dogs for people who are Deaf, children with autism, and others with disabilities since 1977. All dogs are placed at zero cost to recipients.

I'd love to explore what a connection between DBL and [ERG / Group Name] might look like, whether that's a lunch-and-learn, a dog meet-and-greet, or simply raising awareness during [awareness month].

Would you be open to a 20-minute call this week or next? Happy to work around your schedule.

Warm regards,
[Your Name]

✉ Email Template: Social Responsibility & Political Impact Team

Subject: *Corporate Partnership Proposal: Dogs for Better Lives*

Hi [Name],

I'm reaching out because I believe Dogs for Better Lives (DBL) would be an exceptional fit for [Company Name]'s corporate giving or partnership program.

DBL is a nationally recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit (EIN: 93-0681311) with a 4-star Charity Navigator rating for ten consecutive years. They train and place Hearing Assistance Dogs, Autism Assistance Dogs, and Facility Dogs all free to recipients and their 100% donation model ensures every corporate dollar goes directly to mission delivery.

I'd love to set up a brief call to explore next steps.

Thank you,
[Your Name]

Step 4 — Propose a Specific Event or Activity

Events are where curiosity becomes commitment. They give employees a chance to experience DBL's mission firsthand — and that emotional connection is what drives lasting partnerships.

Event	Best For	How It Works
Lunch & Learn / Speaker Event	All groups: especially Veterans, Disability, Social & Political Impact	DBL staff or a board member presents over lunch, optionally with a demo dog or beneficiary speaker. Virtual option available nationally.
Dog Photo Contest	Dog Lover Community	Employees submit pet photos. Colleagues vote via donations (\$1 = 1 vote). Categories like "Best Costume" or "Derpiest Face" make it fun and accessible. Winner(s) get their dog's photo displayed prominently at work.
Dog Meet & Greet	All groups	Bring a DBL dog or puppy in training to the office for 1–2 hours. Employees meet the dog and learn the mission firsthand. Best near DBL campuses.
"My Perfect Dog" Drawing Contest	Parents & Children Group	Employees' children draw their vision of a perfect dog. Winning artwork is featured on company's intranet. Focused on education and mission connection.
Puppy Raiser Drive	Dog Lovers, Families, All Groups	Invite employees to volunteer as puppy raisers for DBL's program.
Charity Match Program	Social Responsibility & Political Impact Group	Work with these groups to add DBL to the company's employee donation matching program. DBL's EIN (93-0681311) is ready for any submission forms.
Corporate Volunteer Day	All Groups	Group outing to a DBL facility for kennel enrichment, socialization walks, or campus support.
Awareness / Giving Campaign	Company-wide	Share DBL content via Slack, newsletters, or intranet. Tie to

		Disability Awareness Month (Oct), Veterans Day (Nov), or create a custom campaign.
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Step 5 — Follow Up & Keep the Momentum

A great event is just the beginning. The key to converting a one-time activity into a lasting partnership is staying in touch and offering clear next steps.

After a Conversation or Meeting	After an Event
• Send a thank-you email within 24 hours • Include DBL’s website: dogsforbetterlives.org • Offer to connect them with DBL staff for deeper questions • Note any specific interests they mentioned for follow-up	• Share event photos or a recap through internal channels • Ask for informal feedback from attendees • Propose a follow-up activity or next step within 2 weeks • Loop in DBL’s development team for a formal intro • Share DBL impact metrics to reinforce the mission connection

Step 6 — Make the Official Ask for Partnership

When the timing is right, coordinate with the DBL development team and present these formal partnership options.

Corporate Partnership Options:

- **Sponsorship:** Financial support at various levels. Sponsoring one complete dog placement = \$54,000.
- **Employee Matching Gift Program:** Double employee donations to DBL. EIN (93-0681311) makes enrollment easy.
- **Cause Marketing Campaign:** Co-branded campaigns where a portion of sales or employee activity supports DBL’s mission.
- **In-Kind Donation:** Goods or services that directly support DBL’s operations or training programs.
- **Fundraising Events:** Underwrite or co-host a DBL fundraising event, raising both awareness and funds.

Handling Common Objections

Hesitation is normal. These responses will help you stay warm, confident, and constructive when you hit a roadblock.

What They Say	How to Respond
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“We already have a charity partner.”	<i>“That’s wonderful, many companies support multiple causes. DBL events can complement existing programs rather than replace them. Our photo contests and volunteer days are easy to layer alongside other giving initiatives.”</i>
“We don’t have budget right now.”	<i>“Completely understand. Many of our most impactful activities are low- or no-cost, a lunch-and-learn or awareness campaign just takes coordination, not budget. We’re happy to start small.”</i>
“We’d need leadership sign-off.”	<i>“Absolutely! I’d be happy to put together a one-pager or join a call to help make the case. DBL’s team can also provide a formal partnership overview deck for leadership.”</i>
“Our social focus is elsewhere.”	<i>“DBL touches disability inclusion, veteran wellness, animal welfare, and community wellbeing - areas that resonate broadly and often complement an existing social focus rather than compete with it.”</i>
“This isn’t the right time.”	<i>“No worries at all, I’ll check back in a few months. And if the timing shifts before then, please don’t hesitate to reach out. Happy to start wherever makes sense.”</i>
“How do we know DBL is trustworthy?”	<i>“DBL has a 4-star Charity Navigator rating for ten consecutive years and a 100% donation model backed by an endowment. Their EIN (93-0681311) is publicly searchable. Happy to share their financials.”</i>

The Win-Win: What’s in It for Your Company

When speaking with employee groups, social responsibility & political impact groups or leadership, frame the partnership as a mutual benefit. Here is DBL’s core value proposition for corporate partners.

A Partnership with DBL Gives Your Company:

- **Boosted Employee Engagement:** Shared mission activities bring teams together around something meaningful beyond the day-to-day, driving morale and retention.
- **Strengthened Social Responsibility Profile:** A visible, credible, and emotionally resonant charity partner with a decade of 4-star nonprofit ratings and transparent financials.
- **Positive Brand Association:** DBL’s powerful stories of supporting veterans, children with autism, and people with disabilities generate compelling content for internal and external communications.

- **DEI Alignment:** Disability inclusion, veteran support, and accessible communities are central to what DBL does which directly complements corporate DEI commitments.

Do's and Don'ts

✓ Do	✗ Don't
Lead with your personal connection to DBL's mission	Launch straight into a formal ask without building rapport
Start small: a coffee chat or casual intro is perfect	Overload people with too much information at once
Tailor your approach to each group's specific interests	Use the same pitch for veterans, parents, and social impact teams
Follow up promptly and keep energy warm	Go silent after a promising first conversation
Use DBL's verified credentials (4-star Charity Navigator, 501(c)(3))	Make financial claims you're unsure about
Loop in DBL staff when conversations get serious	Try to finalize partnership terms on your own
Celebrate small wins, awareness is progress too	Only measure success by whether a formal deal is signed
Keep it light and joyful, dogs bring happiness!	Make it feel like an obligation or a sales call

Quick Reference Card

Keep this section handy for impromptu conversations. Everything you need at a glance.

DBL Fast Facts

- Full name: Dogs for Better Lives (DBL)
- Founded: 1977
- West Campus: Central Point, OR
- East Campus: Falmouth, MA
- From Shelter to Service Dog Programs in Atlanta, GA and Carrollton, TX (Dallas-area)
- 501(c)(3) EIN: 93-0681311
- Charity Navigator: 4-star, 11 years running
- Cost to train & place one dog: ~\$54,000
- Cost to recipient: \$0
- Donation model: 100% to program services
- Website: dogsforbetterlives.org

Programs At a Glance

- **Hearing Dogs:** Alert deaf/hard of hearing individuals to critical sounds
- **Autism Assistance Dogs:** Safety & wellbeing for children with autism
- **Facility Dogs:** Support professionals in therapeutic settings
- **Paws for PTSD (upcoming):** Veteran support through shelter dog partnerships
- **Puppy Raiser Program:** Volunteers raise puppies until 14 to 16 months
- **From Shelter to Service Dog:** Fosters care for shelter dogs in training for up to 6 months.

Corporate Engagement Options:

- Sponsorship • Matching Gifts • Cause Marketing
- In-Kind Donations • Events • Volunteer Days
- Long-Term National Partnership

Thank you for being a champion for DBL's mission.

Every conversation you start has the potential to change a life.

Questions or ready to move forward? Visit dogsforbetterlives.org or reach out to your DBL staff contact