

Term 1 Research + Report Assignment

York University is looking for a charity to sponsor/partner with, and has asked you to research and report on a possible candidate.

The type of corporate sponsorship/partnership that York is looking for must be mutually beneficial. The charity will receive funding, support, and increased visibility. Benefits to York will take the form of brand building, good public relations, and the chance to “make a difference.”

The sponsorship might take the form of anything from funding a one-time event to forming a long-term partnership. Part of your job will be to make recommendations about the type of support that will best suit the relationship.

To complete the assignment, you will need to research a charity, consider its suitability, and make recommendations regarding the type of support that York should offer – if any. The results of your research will take the form of a formal report, written in clear, accessible language.

**** Avoid the Top 10 Canadian Charities, like the Canadian Cancer Society, World Vision, The United Way, Heart and Stroke, Salvation Army, Sick Kids Hospital, Canadian Red Cross, Plan International Canada, UNICEF, and Canadian Diabetes. Try to find mid-sized organizations, as very small charities might be difficult to research.

Stage One – Research:

A. Business Research Orientation

- Meet in the Bronfman Business Library, Schulich School of Business, to learn how to use the business library resources and databases to find information on both York University and Canadian charities.

B. Select a number of possible candidates, review their values, performance, relationships, etc. and consider their suitability for a York University sponsorship/partnership.

- Decide on the candidate you would like to research more deeply.
- Uncover its core values and mission statement

C. Research its performance, activities, stories, finances, etc. **for the past three years (its stories, its finances):**

- a. Examine, but **go beyond** the organization’s web site and press releases
- b. Read the organization’s annual report – Is it inspiring? Does it seem to have a sense of mission, bravery, boldness — or is it cautious and formulaic?
- c. Find articles in the public press, trade journals, association newsletters, popular magazines, government website or publications, etc., that discuss the organization’s activities
- d. Examine the industry sector the charity operates in or the cause it pursues in

a broader context. For example, if the cause is health-related, you may need to learn something about that context.

- e. Examine the results the charity has achieved: What kind of impact does the organization have on its community? Are there measurable results? If not, what evidence of efficacy exists?
- f. Are the organization's activities relevant to the York University community and its goals?

Here are a couple of links to help you become familiar with business research:

Finding Business Articles: <http://researchguides.library.yorku.ca/businessarticles>

Nonprofit Research: <http://researchguides.library.yorku.ca/NonprofitResearch>

- D. Analyze its suitability as a potential recipient of a sponsorship/partnership with York University asking the following questions:
 - a) Does the charity share the same values as York University?
 - b) In what ways would the sponsorship/partnership be consistent with/based on York University's core values?
 - c) Does the charity address issues that York faculty, staff and/or students care about?
 - d) How can the York community actively engage with the charity and its work?
 - e) What types of creative projects might contribute to engagement?
 - f) In what ways could the sponsorship/partnership enhance the authority, credibility and authenticity of both York University and the charity?
 - g) Is there potential for sustainable, long-term impact?

Stage Two - Report

- Produce a report that introduces the charity and indicates briefly why it would or would not be a good fit for a York University sponsorship/partnership
- Introduce the charity and its work
- Provide the rationale for offering it as a candidate for sponsorship/partnership
- Review its past three years of activities, partnerships, results, etc.
- Discuss its suitability as a charity for York to sponsor/partner with in terms of values, relevance, activities, potential community engagement, potential for long-term relationship, etc.
- Indicate possible activities York could participate in
- Make recommendations regarding the suitability of the organization and the type of partnership/sponsorship you think York should pursue/not pursue with this charity.

Format the report for easy readability and use a semi-formal style that is direct, clear, and engaging. Make the report attractive and interesting.

Length: 3 – 4 pages, double spaced.

CHARITY ANALYSIS: THE BOUNDLESS SCHOOL

Executive Summary

The Boundless School is a good charitable partner candidate for York University and I recommend that York partners with Boundless in the long-term. Boundless' work is a good investment for York, because they are a high-impact charity within the Toronto community; it is expected that for every charitable dollar that is donated to Boundless, it will generate nine-dollars in revenue (Canadian Charity Impact Fund). This partnership would connect York with local medical institutions, which is important for our plan to establish a Medical School by 2020. Also, there are potential internship opportunities at the Boundless School for York students in the Faculties of Education and Health.

Boundless' mission is relevant to York's, because we are concerned with diversification, inclusiveness and providing access to education for all qualified learners (York University, 2014) and Boundless aims to improve the lives of high-risk youth by inspiring them to complete their high school diplomas through an interactive outdoor learning program. They also offer a variety of specialized programs for Aboriginal youth groups, acquired brain injury students and adults with learning disabilities (The Boundless School).

Boundless is an accomplished and credible local charity. They were awarded "Top Pick Charity" in Education by Charity Intelligence Canada for the past five years, and Kiwanis Club of Toronto also awarded Boundless its first-annual Community Achievement Award in 2011. Their financial statements for the past three years have been consistently in the black. Their highest priority is providing full subsidy to their students. Also, they are saving revenue each year to purchase the land they are currently renting once their contract expires in 2020.

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Introduction

This report evaluates The Boundless School as a potential charitable partner for York University. It will introduce the charity and critically analyze the mutual compatibility of Boundless and York in terms of mission, work and values. It will focus on Boundless' community impact, accomplishments and annual reports from the last three years to determine whether a partnership would be beneficial for both organizations. Also, I will briefly recommend whether York should pursue this partnership or not.

About Boundless

The Boundless School is a private high school and charity, based out of Toronto, which assists high-risk youth in obtaining their high school diplomas (The Boundless School). The school offers a variety of programs that inspire students to overcome their limitations through interactive outdoor adventures while they catch up on lost high school credits (Charity Intelligence Canada). High-risk youth learn skills at Boundless that enable them to be independent, responsible and successful when they are integrated back into the public school system (The Boundless School). To qualify for Boundless, students are either referred by a government agency, a high-priority Toronto public school or a social agency based in Toronto (The Boundless School). Typically, students are referred if their personal learning needs are not being met by the mainstream school system due to mental illness; however, Boundless is happy to accommodate Aboriginal students, acquired brain injury patients and other adult mental health communities (The Boundless School).

Why Boundless?

Mission Compatibility

Boundless' mission and values are compatible with York's. It is an inclusive, diverse and highly recognized local charity that aims to improve the lives of at-risk youth in Toronto through education, character development and teamwork (Community Knowledge Center of Toronto). Their mission is to inspire students to apply and pursue knowledge, surpass their limitations and return to public school feeling confident, capable and renewed (The Boundless School). This aligns with York's mission and values, because we are very concerned with diversification, inclusiveness and providing access to education for all qualified learners (York University, 2014).

Community Involvement, Impact and Reputation

York invests a lot of time and money into community involvement, and Boundless exists to serve the community of Toronto. They have established cross-sectorial partnerships with the Toronto Police Department; the Toronto Youth Justice System, and other social justice groups; Aboriginal organizations and communities within the GTA; and are actively involved with over 100 schools in both the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto-Community District School Board sectors (Community Knowledge Center of Toronto; the Boundless Annual Report, 2015). These partnerships are valuable in making high school education accessible to a diverse group of marginalized and disadvantaged people who would otherwise not succeed.

Boundless is also a high-impact charity; the Canadian Charity Impact Fund established Boundless as having one of the highest Social Return on Investment (SROI) percentages in Canada; therefore, it is expected that for every charitable dollar that is donated to Boundless, it

will generate nine-dollars in public revenue (Canadian Charity Impact Fund). This return is generated from benefits provided to Boundless students (i.e., increased income, higher graduation rates and improved health) and society in general (i.e., increased income tax revenue and future savings on welfare and criminal justice costs) (Canadian Charity Impact Fund; Community Knowledge Center of Toronto).

Boundless is a credible and accomplished charity within its local and national communities. For example, Charity Intelligence Canada has awarded Boundless “Top Pick Charity” in Canada’s Education sector for the past five years for cost-effectiveness, financial transparency and accountability (Charity Intelligence Canada; The Boundless School). Also, Kiwanis Club of Toronto awarded Boundless its first-annual Community Achievement Award, for \$75,000, in 2011, because their mission is important to the citizens and city of Toronto (O’Kane, 2011).

Focus on Health

York is developing its Faculty of Health and plans to establish a School of Medicine by 2020 (York University, 2014) and while Boundless is primarily an educational institution, it is also affiliated with many local health agencies (Boundless Adventure Association, 2015) due to its success in socializing and rehabilitating their students (Community Knowledge Center of Toronto). Many Boundless programs include counselling, and all of them are subsidized by nature; the school owns 600 acres of greenspace (The Boundless School) which provides an opportunity for their students to exercise and explore. Physical activity enhances mental wellness through biophysiological mechanisms (Lines, 2013) and inspires learning at Boundless. It has improved the lives of 20,000 high-risk students, like John (Ferenc, 2012) and Roger (O’Kane, 2011) who both claim that their experience at Boundless changed their outlook on life (Ferenc,

2012; O’Kane, 2011). Boundless helps troubled youth progress mentally, physically and socially towards a better future through education and health, which is significant to York because we need medicinal partnerships to subsidize our plans to establish a Medical School by 2020.

Financial Responsibility and Stability

Boundless manages its revenue efficiently and ethically; it prioritizes program subsidization for their students and has consistently finished with excess revenue for the past three years (Boundless Adventure Association 2012; 2013, 2014). Most of their money is spent on employee salaries and benefits, program expenses, developments and rent; however, the most important expense for Boundless is tuition subsidization, because 100% of their students come from low-income backgrounds (The Boundless School, 2015). Boundless manages to provide and fully subsidize high school credentials; diverse, interactive indoor and outdoor programs; youth counselling; and full accommodations for their students for ten months out of the regular calendar year (The Boundless School).

Boundless rents their land in Palmer Rapids, Ontario, and will continue to do so until their contract expires in 2020 (Boundless Adventure Association 2012; 2013; 2014). They save a good portion of revenue each year so they will be able to purchase the land in 2020 (Boundless Adventure Association 2012; 2013; 2014; The Boundless School). Some contributors are concerned that their donations are not directly and immediately benefiting Boundless students (Charity Intelligence Canada); however, Boundless plans to develop their lands to better benefit future students once they acquire control over it (The Boundless School).

Conclusion

Boundless is a good candidate for a partnership with York. It is a reputable and valuable charity within the Toronto community. It has financially sustained itself for the past three years and has been awarded “Top Pick Charity” by Charity Intelligence Canada for its financial transparency and efficiency every year since 2010 (The Boundless School). Boundless’ mission aligns with York’s in terms of community involvement, diversity and inclusiveness. It also has medical affiliations that are relevant to York’s plan for 2020.

Recommendations

I recommend that York partners with Boundless in the long-term, as it will be mutually beneficial for both institutions. It would be a good investment of York’s money, because Boundless has a very high SROI. As well, there are internship opportunities at The Boundless School for York students within the Faculties of Education and Health.

I recommend that York works towards establishing these connections right away, because Boundless would provide our students with a valuable and unique job experience. Also, a partnership would demonstrate that York is dedicated to improving the community of Toronto through the diversification and accessibility of education. In fact, many universities have already partnered with The Boundless School, such as Western, Nipissing, Brock and Queen’s (Boundless School, 2014). York should be next on this list.

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