

Course Project Information Form

SPARSH – Touch a Life

Section 1: Established in 2007, SPARSH is a Michigan nonprofit organization based in Ann Arbor whose mission is to provide support and resources to eliminate the barriers to health and wellness for disadvantaged women and children in India. Disadvantaged women and children are defined as those who live in households that earn less than \$2 a day and/or those who lack the skills, education or access to obtain their socioeconomic independence. In many cases, they also suffer from societal biases or prejudices which perpetuate their dismal circumstances.

SPARSH accomplishes its mission by working with reputable, established health or non-governmental organizations in India to fund specific projects that serve the critical needs of its target population. By working with established organization, we ensure accountability for our donors and minimize administrative costs so that more dollars reach those in need.

An example of a specific project is the Children's Heart Surgery project in Calcutta, India. This is SPARSH's first project and the one that inspired the founder to form SPARSH (See founder's story on our website at www.sparshlife.org.) We partnered with two renowned heart hospitals to fund life-saving heart surgeries for children with congenital heart defects (CHD). 80% of disadvantaged children diagnosed with CHD die simply because their families cannot afford their treatment. However, since these surgeries can be performed in India for 1/25 of the cost to perform them in the US, a child's life can be saved for every \$1,000 raised. In 2007, SPARSH raised over \$10,000 for the Children's Heart Project and funded 10 heart surgeries for children who now have a chance to live a full life. It is SPARSH's goal to fund 4 projects (existing and new) that have similar impact each year.

Section 2: Despite its first year success, SPARSH is uncertain whether it can sustain funding for the Children's Heart Project as well as raise more funds for other deserving projects in 2008 and beyond. This is because SPARSH relies heavily upon donations from local Ann Arbor and southeast Michigan residents. Presumably, there are countless other organizations which compete with SPARSH for contributions from the same donor base. SPARSH lacks the marketing research to understand which organizations it competes with in the market for philanthropic giving and what positioning would provide SPARSH a competitive advantage. Knowledge of the decision making process that donors go through in making their giving decision would also be valuable.

Additionally, SPARSH had not previously pursued corporate sponsorship and donations since it did not receive its federal tax exemption status until December 2007. Now that SPARSH is able to provide a tax deduction for large contributions, it needs research to design a marketing plan that would appeal to corporate donors.

Lastly, SPARSH's fundraising activities have thus far included: providing cultural experiences (such as a classical Indian dance performance), soliciting friends and family, and hosting donation drives with local Ann Arbor businesses (such as the donation of profits from a day's

receipts). Are these the types of fundraising activities that appeal to the local donor and volunteer communities? Which events would better build the SPARSH brand?

Section 3: Specific Research Questions

1. Which organizations does SPARSH compete with directly (e.g., Other India-focused nonprofits) and indirectly (e.g., The United Way) for individual and corporate donations?
2. What positioning would give SPARSH a competitive advantage with individual donors? With corporations? With volunteers?
3. What is the decision making process (e.g., criteria, timing) that individual and corporate donors typically follow in their giving decisions? Who are the decision makers in a corporation that SPARSH should contact?
4. What is a feasible marketing plan to build the SPARSH brand?
 - A: Product – what benefits should SPARSH provide?
 - B: Place – what channels are best to connect with donors and volunteers?
 - C: Promotion – what types of events and activities appeal to donors and volunteers? How frequently can SPARSH approach the same donors without alienating them?
 - D: Price – what donation or sponsorship levels increase gross receipts?

Section 4: Any other pertinent information

Please visit our website: www.sparshlife.org to learn more about SPARSH, the Children's Heart Surgery project including profiles of the children SPARSH has helped, and other important projects underway. We believe this project is a great opportunity to support a worthwhile cause and learn and apply your marketing skills. More importantly, your efforts will touch a life!

Section 5: Contact Information

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