



Chevron Houston Marathon Run for a Reason Program

How does the Run for a Reason Program work?

Run for a Reason is a program designed to help local charities receive financial support through the Chevron Houston Marathon weekend of events. Over this weekend, three road races are held in downtown Houston; a 3.1 mile 5K, a 13.1 mile half marathon, and a 26.2 mile marathon. Everyone who registers for a race is encouraged to raised money for one of our official charities.

Participants in any event can collect pledges and donations from their family, friends and coworkers on behalf of a charity. The Run for a Reason Program strengthens ties between the running community and local charities, and also provides much needed financial support for the underprivileged in the Houston area.

Funds are never given directly to a charity from the Marathon, as the Chevron Houston Marathon is itself a not-for-profit 501(c)4 organization. Runner registration fees are used solely to cover event costs and are never redistributed to our official charities. Each charity is responsible for overseeing its own fundraising campaign, and the total amount of money raised relates directly to the efforts of the charity.

What are the requirements for getting involved?

Organizations must apply to become an official charity. Applications are sent out via e-mail each spring and must be returned electronically within the specified deadline. Information about how to request an application is included at the end of this document. In addition to the application, the Marathon requires a list of the charity's current Board of Directors, a copy of its 501(c)3 status letter, Better Business Bureau status report, most current 990 and related audit.

A crucial part of the application process involves the charity's current status with the Better Business Bureau. A charity must be a group who meets the BBB's "Guidelines for Giving". We use the BBB's findings to help us evaluate the validity of a charitable organization. For more information on the requirements and application process of the BBB, contact their philanthropy department directly. Applications must be updated with the BBB every two years.

After each race season, the marathon staff evaluates the performance of that year's official charities. Groups that do not raise enough money through the program will not be accepted into the following year's event and must wait at least one year before reapplying. Up to ten new charities are accepted each year, depending on the number of qualified applicants and the number of spots available within the program.

If you contact the Marathon office after we have chosen our official charities for the year, your organization can be placed on a list to receive an application for the following year. The Chevron Houston Marathon does not accept charities mid-season and will not consider applicants after the deadline; to become an official

charity, you must apply within the time frame specified. If your contact information changes after you have signed up to receive an application, notify the Marathon office immediately or risk not receiving one. Applications are only sent via e-mail.

One of the most important components of the application involves your charity's Run for a Reason Program plan. Because we select a limited number of charities out of many applicants, every official group should fully utilize the opportunity presented. We will evaluate the program you intend to employ to ensure that **all** charities will perform at an acceptable level in the coming race year. Your program plan should include information about what human resources you intend to use as well as how you will market your program to your constituents and the running community.

Who generally participates in the Run for a Reason program?

Many runners are already involved with a charity and decide to use the Chevron Houston Marathon weekend of events as an additional avenue to support their favorite cause. Most official charities promote the program through their newsletter, website or word of mouth within their constituency. Even those who have never participated in a road race before can get involved in the excitement of the Chevron Houston Marathon while raising money for those in need. Anyone can become a fundraiser for a charity-they do not need to be a runner. The Run for a Reason fundraising season begins mid July and ends mid February.

Official charities are encouraged to contact local running clubs, marathon training groups, or area road races to promote their cause. Some even recruit runners to the program by sending volunteers to running "hot spots." Visibility in the local running community is an important aspect of any charity's Run for a Reason Program.

How are donations collected?

In the Run for a Reason program, each official charity has a donation page on the Chevron Houston Marathon website. Fundraisers easily build a personal donation page, which is linked to the charity page. This set-up process is simple, and allows each fundraiser to see in real time exactly how much money they have raised. In addition, charities can create a pledge form that is distributed to participants who have signed up on the charity's behalf. Participants take these forms to their families, friends, and coworkers to solicit and collect donations. It is helpful to provide participants with informative brochures about your cause, as many potential donors may wish to know more about the group before donating.

We also have online tools to help your fundraisers. Anyone can sign up for a Run for a Reason campaign page at the Houston Marathon website, which can easily be customized with a picture and personal message. Participants may e-mail potential donors with both the link to their personal page and a request for a donation, which can be made in minutes. Donors simply pull out their credit card and contribute without having to write a check, find a stamp, and get to a mailbox. Giving online is easy!

Personal donation pages are not just for participants. Anyone from volunteers to runners to spectators can sign up for a free page at the Houston Marathon website. Raising money through a personal donation page is simple, speedy, and available to all.

Important information about donation pages

The online donation system is maintained by a technology vendor. This company provides fundraising management solutions for hundreds of races and other sporting events across the country. There are fees involved with using this software, which will be discussed at the Charity Orientation.

There are no fees incurred by collecting cash or check donations through traditional means. All such contributions go directly to the charity and will not be processed in any way by the Marathon. Checks written to a charity should always be sent directly to that charity's headquarters.

The Chevron Houston Marathon staff hosts a mandatory, hands-on training each summer. Someone from your organization must attend this session to learn about the online system. There are no exceptions.

When do I receive the money from online donations?

Approximately every two weeks checks are cut to the charities that have received online donations. Donations may continue to come in even after the event concludes, so we typically close down the online donation tool in mid-February.

How do I know how much money we've raised?

With a unique username and password, each charity receives access to online "administrative tools," which allow charities to view donations in real time. This system displays not only the donation amounts but also information about the donors and the runners they choose to sponsor. These tools are available exclusively for participating charities; the general public cannot gain access.

Additionally, the online system allows charities to record offline donations. When you receive a check in conjunction with the marathon program, simply go to the administrative tools and enter the contribution information. This serves two purposes. First, the donation will appear on the runner's page on whose behalf it was given, allowing the page to accurately reflect the total amount of money raised by that runner. Second, it consolidates all of your marathon-related donations in a single place for easy tracking.

The Chevron Houston Marathon requires every charity to report the total amount of money raised each year. Reports are formatted as a list of participants and how much each raised, both on and offline. The Marathon also requests an estimate of the total amount raised that will remain in the Houston area and of the administrative costs associated with hosting the marathon program. These estimates will not be released to the general public except as an inclusion in the *total* estimate for all of the year's official charities. Your charity's estimates are never individually released.

What costs are involved with being an official charity?

The Chevron Houston Marathon charges all official charities an annual fee. This fee covers the hard costs that the Marathon incurs on behalf of the charities, including tent and table rentals at the Run for a Reason Kickoff Party, hands-on computer training and standard donation set-up fees charged by our technology vendor. The yearly charge is \$100. This one time fee is the only flat cost associated with being an official charity.

Your group may choose to offer special incentives or awards to fundraisers, and these costs should be considered while financially planning for the program.

What special opportunities are there for official charities?

Run for a Reason Kickoff Party

The Run for a Reason Kickoff Party is held at Memorial Park each September. Approximately two thousand people attend the party each year to enjoy free food, beer, and music. We draw runners out to the party by offering a free in training t-shirt to anyone who has signed up for the race, and is in attendance. Sponsors, running clubs, and, of course, official charities are all represented. Charities are assigned a space and given a table and chairs. Many organizations choose to hang banners within their assigned section. Charities can garner much support for the program by simply talking with runners about their organization and their cause. The Kickoff Party is a wonderful opportunity for your charity to meet the local running community and recruit them to run for your organization.

Runner Appreciation Day

Runner Appreciation Day is held each race season at a local sports retailer. All official charities are invited to attend and promote their organization. Many runners, and non-runners attend this event as dramatic discounts are given off merchandise.

Hoopla Station

Each official charity is encouraged to have a Hoopla station on race day. This is a group of cheering fans posted along the race course. We try to spread "Hoopla" all along the race route to encourage runners on their long journey. This is an excellent way not only to support and recognize participants who are fundraising for your cause, but also to see the race and get involved in the excitement of race day. Hoopla stations are available to any group, not just official charities. If you are considering applying for next year, we encourage you to participate as a Hoopla station and taste the excitement!

Post Race Party Zone

The Post Race Party Zone is across the street from the Convention Center and is where the runners, their families and friends can celebrate. Official charities are encouraged to have representation at the Post Race Party. This is the perfect opportunity to thank your runners that ran for your charity, as well as collect last minute donations. A table and chairs are provided.

How much money should we raise?

The Houston Marathon sets a minimum fundraising level for all charities. Demand for participation in the program is very high, with more than 75 new charities applying every year.

- First Year - \$3,000
- Second Year - \$6,000
- Third Year and every year thereafter - \$10,000

Charities that do not raise the minimum amount will not be accepted the following year, and must reapply for a spot in the program at a later time.

How much time is involved in being an official charity?

The amount of time that each charity dedicates to Run for a Reason varies greatly. However, the most successful fundraising results do not happen by chance. To bring in a significant amount of money through the program requires a significant amount of effort on behalf of your organization.

There are few “set” requirements for the program. Official charity representatives must attend an orientation meeting in the summer. In addition, charities need to prepare for, and be present at the Run for a Reason Kickoff Party, and participate in race day activities. A final fundraising report is due after the event. Charities that do not submit the report with all required information will not be accepted the following year and must reapply for a spot in the program at a later time.

Beyond these standard requirements, there are several other things to consider:

- How will you inform constituents of the program?
- How will you recruit runners to your cause?
- Once people have signed up for the race, how are you going to keep them motivated to raise money?
- Who will handle questions from runners regarding personal donation pages and race weekend procedures?
- After the event, how will you track down and collect offline donations?
- Who will handle the accounting and reporting of these funds?
- Who will send out receipts acknowledging donations made to your charity?
- How will you thank runners who raise funds for your cause?
- Will you host parties or socials for your runners?
- Will you offer prizes to runners who raise a set amount of money?
- Will you recognize your top fundraisers in your newsletter or at an event?
- Who will be in charge of your Hoopla station?
- Who will be in charge of your Post Race Party Zone table?

How can I motivate my charity’s runners?

Many official charities establish special incentives for program participants. Since the Marathon offers race merchandise at a discount to official charities, some use this merchandise as a reward for their runners; for example, a charity might offer a polo shirt to fundraisers who bring in \$200 and a jacket to those raising \$500. You can also host events for your runners, such as a happy hour after the race or a carbo-loading lunch during marathon weekend. Many of our charities host an “appreciation” event in the days or weeks after the race, but other avenues for recognition include the charity’s newsletter or website. The possibilities are endless!

What do race participants do on race weekend?

Runners in any of our three weekend events must pick up their packet at the Memorial Hermann Sports Medicine Institute EXPO, held the Friday and Saturday of race weekend at the George R. Brown Convention Center. The “packet” contains the runner’s participation T-shirt, timing device, bib, final instructions, goodies provided by our sponsors, etc. All participants are required to wear the bib and timing device during the race. No participants may register or pick up their packets on race day.

On race morning, participants are encouraged to arrive in the downtown area by 6:00 a.m. to park and make their way into the Convention Center. Parking is available in garages around the area and generally costs \$10 per vehicle.

The marathon and half marathon start simultaneously at 7:00 a.m., with a second wave starting for each race at approximately 7:10 a.m. and the 5K begins at 7:30 a.m. After crossing the finish line, participants enter the Convention Center to enjoy a hot meal, receive medical attention if necessary, and reunite with friends or

family. The food and medical areas are for runners only, and there is a separate area within the Convention Center where the public can meet up with their runner.

Across the street from the Convention Center is The Post Race Party Zone. This is the perfect spot for runners to enjoy a beer, meet up with running clubs, congratulate fellow runners, boast about a PR, and more!

I've missed the deadline to apply for this year and would like to apply for next year.

Send the following contact information to Kimberly Hall at:
kimberly@chevronhoustonmarathon.com

Your Full Name
Your Charity's Name
Address
City, State, Zip
Phone Number
E-mail Address
Your charity's mission statement

Your organization will be added to the list of charities receiving applications for the upcoming year. If your contact information changes, it is your responsibility to let the office know before applications are sent out. Applications are exclusively sent via e-mail. The marathon will NOT follow up on returned e-mails. If you have any questions, contact Kimberly at 713.957.3453.

Thank you for your interest in our Run for a Reason Charity Program!

We are happy to announce over \$1 million was raised during the 2008-2009 race season!