

SECURING APPROVAL FOR SPONSORSHIP OF CONFERENCES

- Sections: 1. [PURPOSE](#)
2. [EFFECTIVE DATE](#)
3. [BACKGROUND](#)
4. [POLICY ON SPONSORSHIP OF CONFERENCES](#)
5. [ACRONYMS](#)
6. [DEFINITIONS](#)
7. [REFERENCES](#)

- Appendix A. [GUIDANCE FOR COLLABORATION WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR](#)
B. [MODEL CO-SPONSORSHIP AGREEMENT](#)
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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to delineate policies and procedures on sponsorship by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)² of domestic or international conferences held by nonfederal (not-for-profit and for-profit) organizations. This Guide applies to:

- Sponsorship involving CDC financial support for conference organizer(s) through grants and cooperative agreements (including partial use of funds provided to CDC grantees for other purposes), interagency agreements, contracts, or purchase orders.
- Sponsorship not involving expenditure of CDC funds.

This policy does not apply to CDC co-sponsorship of conferences when only Federal agencies are involved. However, when other Federal agencies are cosponsoring a conference with nonfederal organizations, CDC should consult this policy in determining whether it wishes to be a cosponsor of the conference.

2. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy applies to all requests for CDC sponsorship received on or after October 1, 2008.

¹ Revised to reflect changes to the definitions of “sponsorship” and “co-sponsorship” and the rules CDC must adhere to in determining “sponsorship” and “co-sponsorship” of conferences.

² References to CDC also apply to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR).

3. BACKGROUND

The mission of CDC is to promote health and quality of life by preventing and controlling disease, injury, and disability. CDC is increasingly working with other Federal agencies and nonfederal organizations to fulfill this mission and to maximize public health resources. Evidence indicates that public health interventions and tools will not have the impact that is needed unless their breadth and pervasiveness are increased.

Partnerships with nonfederal organizations enable the agency to utilize expanded public health networks to improve the usefulness of research and the dissemination and effectiveness of health interventions. Sponsorship of relevant conferences can provide opportunities to actively further CDC's mission.

CDC's *Guidance for Collaboration with the Private Sector* (see General Administration No. CDC-GA-1997-01) discusses the need to assess the suitability of potential collaborations with not-for-profit and for-profit organizations. To ensure that CDC is achieving its primary mission, the Guidance governs the assessment of potential partnerships and collaboration through the following principles:

- Public health decisions must be based on sound science and the public good.
- The benefits to society must be a higher goal than benefits to either partner in the collaboration.
- The agency must be a diligent steward of public trust and funds.
- The agency and its employees should conduct business according to the ethical standards that govern the agency.

Many CDC-sponsored conferences are scientific meetings which provide a venue for the presentation of scientific results, as well as for discussion and evaluation of existing science in public health which might result in policy development or practice. When applicable to the conference format and purpose, the following guiding principles shall apply to ensure that scientific meetings will be conducted in a meritorious and unbiased manner:

Guiding Principles for the Conduct of Scientific Conferences

- Scientific meetings and conferences should be unbiased forums for exchange of scientific information and consider the implications for public health.
- In the interest of promoting robust science, scientific meetings and conferences should provide venues for open scientific discourse.
- Organizers of scientific meetings and conferences should provide a transparent process for selecting presentations based primarily on scientific merit.

For the purpose of this policy, a “collaboration” is an interaction between CDC and one or more private sector organizations in which both parties work together to carry out their mission, including working jointly on a particular conference. The interaction is voluntary and the basis for the interaction is not found in statutory authority or other law. The Guidance includes criteria to be used when assessing potential collaborations and gives recommendations for collaborations in general. A listing of the criteria and recommendations is provided in the Appendix.

Although the Guidance recommends that each coordinating center (CC), coordinating office (CO), national center (NC)³ establish a formal review and advisory process for examining potential collaborations and partnerships, this policy is meant to safeguard the integrity of the agency's mission regarding the association of CDC's name, through sponsorship, with specific conferences.

4. POLICY ON SPONSORSHIP OF CONFERENCES

When CDC is asked to sponsor a conference, the following general conditions must be met:

- A.** The conference should support CDC's mission (see Guidance for Collaboration with the Private Sector as described in Section 3 of this policy) and further CDC's mission of promoting health and quality of life by preventing and controlling disease, injury, and disability.
- B.** Scientific meetings sponsored by CDC must meet the Guiding Principles for the Conduct of Scientific Conferences outlined in Section 3 of this policy (when applicable to the conference format and purpose).
- C.** Requests for CDC sponsorship of conferences that include funding must be approved by the director of the CC/CO/NC(s), or his/her designee, and processed through financial support procedures as described in Section 4H (1) or (2).
- D.** Requests for CDC sponsorship of conferences that do not include funding must be approved by the director of the CC/CO/NC(s), or his/her designee, as described in Section 4H (2).
- E.** Sponsorship must be consistent with CDC's policy on Guidance for Collaboration with the Private Sector and the HHS Office of the General Counsel (OGC), Ethics Division Co-Sponsorship Guidance (see Section 7, "References").
- F.** Any conference sponsored by CDC that is held in domestic facilities must be fully accessible to the public as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG). Accessibility as per ADAAG also addresses accommodations for persons with sensory impairments.
- G.** The conference organizer(s) may use CDC's name only in factual publicity for the conference, and should understand that CDC involvement in the conference does not necessarily indicate support for, or endorsement of, the organizer's general policies, activities, or products. Non-federal sponsors must agree to clear all promotional or publicity materials for the event with CDC to ensure compliance with this restriction.

Requests for technical assistance, participation in, or attending a conference by CDC staff members should be approved or disapproved according to procedures determined by the employee's CC/CO/NC.

³ For ease of reference within policy documents, "center" will refer collectively to CDC's national centers, institute, and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (an independent Health and Human Services agency that is led by the CDC director and for which CDC provides administrative services).

H. Procedures

Guidelines for the development and implementation of CDC sponsored conferences/meetings are as follows:

- CDC sponsored conferences will be guided by sound scientific and programmatic oversight.
- Organizers of scientific conferences will adhere to CDC Guiding Principles for the Conduct of Scientific Conferences when applicable (see Section 3 of this policy).
- The organizer is responsible for ensuring that CDC-sponsored conferences/meetings are managed in a transparent, objective, and unbiased manner.
- CCs/COs/NCs, or designees are encouraged to use existing conference grant or contract mechanisms, or develop written guidelines and processes that are in accordance with existing procurement and ethics laws, rules and policies, to be used when funding conferences and meetings.
- Certain processes may vary between different CCs/COs/NCs, scientific subject areas, and conference types, and will be tailored as necessary to the individual needs of each conference/meeting.

1) Sponsorship Involving CDC Funds

Prior to receiving funding, an external conference organizer must:

- provide CDC with documentation of a plan with a timeline for substantive involvement in, and development of, the content of the meeting, including standards that ensure scientific and public health merit to achieve those standards.
- provide a written process of how presentations or abstracts are to be reviewed and criteria that will be used for selecting presentations.
- agree to abide by CDC Guiding Principles for the Conduct of Scientific Conferences, when applicable.

CCs/COs/NCs or designees are encouraged to use the existing conference grant or contract mechanisms for funding meetings whenever feasible. For conferences/meetings funded directly by the CCs/COs/NCs, the CCs/COs/NCs must:

- establish a written process for approving conference funding which includes the following elements:
 - information on how proposals for conference funding will be solicited
 - elements required in a proposal
 - a process for review and approval of proposals by the CC/CO/NC
 - must include at minimum review by a Center or Division level appointed committee composed of 3 staff members or peers per meeting
 - final approval is made by the CC/CO/NC Director

- a process for documenting review and approval of conference funding by the CC/CO/NC including
 - a copy of the proposal
 - how the review was conducted
 - criteria for review
 - whether funding was approved

A grant, cooperative agreement, interagency agreement, contract, or purchase order is required when CDC is asked to sponsor a conference with a nonfederal organization and funds are provided. Additionally, a co-sponsorship agreement is necessary whenever CDC is asked to sponsor a conference with a non-federal organization, regardless of whether funds are provided by the agency. Financial support procedures, as specified by the funding CC/CO/NC, Procurement and Grants Office (PGO), and the Financial Management Office (FMO), must be followed for such requests. Each grant, cooperative agreement, interagency agreement, contract, or purchase order awarded for conference support must have approval by the Director, or his/her designee, of the CC/CO/NC(s) providing the funds. CDC grantees that use portions of general program funds to support conferences must also have CDC approval if CDC is to be identified as a sponsor of the event.

For purposes of determining the appropriate funding instrument, the following applies:

- If CDC is providing funds for a federal conference that is for the direct benefit or use of the federal government, an acquisition award should be used. If CDC is providing funds for a non-federal conference that supports a public purpose, an assistance award should be used.
- Conferences may be supported by assistance awards other than Conference Grants only if the conference is within the authorized programmatic scope and is integral to successful completion of the specific project. In such cases, every effort should be made to identify the conference prior to the award. When a conference is proposed post-award, prior approval by the Grants Management Officer is required.

The following language (see Reference 7D) must be included in all program announcements, including conference support announcements, for CDC sponsorship of nonfederal conferences when funds are to be awarded:

The purpose of conference support funding is to provide PARTIAL support for specific nonfederal conferences in the areas of health promotion and disease prevention information/education programs. Because conference support by CDC creates the appearance of CDC cosponsorship, there will be active participation by CDC in the development and approval of those portions of the agenda supported by CDC funds. CDC funds will not be expended for nonapproved portions of meetings. In addition, CDC will reserve the right to approve or reject the content of the full agenda, press events, promotional materials (including press releases), speaker selection, and site selection. Contingency awards will be made allowing usage of only 10% of the total amount to be awarded until a final full agenda is approved by CDC. This will provide funds to support costs associated with preparation of the agenda. The remainder of funds will be released only upon approval of the final full agenda. CDC reserves the right to terminate cosponsorship if it does not concur with the final agenda. All scientific conferences

receiving CDC funds must meet CDC's Guiding Principles for the Conduct of Scientific Conferences and follow relevant policies and procedures indicated under "Securing Approval for Sponsorship of Conferences."

2) Sponsorship Not Involving CDC Funds

When sponsorship of a conference is requested and does not involve expenditure of CDC funds, the requesting organization must submit a formal request in writing to the CCs/COs/NCs having related programmatic responsibility and/or the Office of the Director (OD), CDC. The following information must be provided:

- The organization's mission
- Purpose of the conference
- The organizer's demonstrated capacity to plan and conduct such a meeting
- Proposed content and format
- Intended audience
- Other cosponsors, their mission, and their role in the conference

The CC/CO/NC Director, or his/her designee, is responsible for reviewing and approving or disapproving all requests submitted to the CC/CO/NC. Requests made to the OD, CDC, should be coordinated promptly with the director(s) of the CCs/COs/NC(s) having programmatic responsibility.

(a) Disapproval of Sponsorship

When the CC/CO/NC or the OD, CDC, does not wish to sponsor the conference, a written response must be provided to the conference organizer(s) indicating disapproval of the request.

No verbal disapproval of sponsorship may be provided.

(b) Approval of Sponsorship

If the CC/CO/NC is interested in sponsoring the conference, a written response must be provided to the conference organizer(s) indicating **tentative** approval. This response must contain the following language:

Because use of CDC's name or design element indicates sponsorship, there must be active participation by CDC in the development and approval of all or any specific portions of the conference for which CDC's name is used. CDC reserves the right to have a staff member serve on the conference planning committee and to review the content of the full agenda, press events, promotional materials (including press releases), speaker selection, site selection, and reports or proceedings resulting from the conference. CDC reserves the right to terminate sponsorship of any portion of the conference with which it does not concur.

After reviewing the full final conference agenda and other conference information, the CC/CO/NC will provide a written response to the conference organizer(s) indicating **final** approval or disapproval of sponsorship. Once final approval is provided, CDC must also complete a co-sponsorship agreement with the non-federal co-sponsor.

No verbal approval of sponsorship may be provided.

3) Accessibility Requirements

All conferences sponsored by CDC shall be held in facilities that are fully accessible to the public as required by American with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG). Accessibility under ADAAG addresses accommodations for persons with sensory impairments, as well as persons with physical disabilities or mobility limitations.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that the facilities, goods and services provided by "public entities" (all state and local governments, including those that receive no federal financial assistance), and businesses and non-profit service providers defined as "public accommodations," i.e. private entities who own, lease, lease to, or operate facilities such as convention centers, hotels, private schools, restaurants, theaters, and recreation facilities, are accessible for all people with disabilities.

The Director, or his/her designee, of the CC/CO/NC(s) providing funds or approving CDC sponsorship of a conference must assure that the proposed meeting facilities comply with ADAAG prior to approving any request or issuing any obligation documents. Assurance of compliance will be determined by the following actions: (1) written certification (e.g. e-mail, letter, or other correspondence) from management of the proposed meeting facility stating that facilities, goods and services are fully ADA compliant, or (2) ensuring that the CC/CO/NC completes the Accessible Meetings Checklist, and keeps it on file with other conference documentation.

At a minimum, the written certification or documentation of the review of ADA obligations should address the following disability access issues: adequate accessible parking; accessible entrance; doors at entrances; accessible door hardware; adequate wheelchair maneuvering space; accessible water and toilet facilities; accessible fixed seating and tables; accessible sales and service counters, and; auxiliary aids and services. **Note:** A public accommodation must provide auxiliary aids and services when they are necessary to ensure effective communication with individuals with hearing, vision, or speech impairments. "Auxiliary aids" include such services or devices as qualified interpreters, assistive listening headsets, television captioning and decoders, telecommunications devices for deaf persons (TDD's), videotext displays, readers, taped texts, materials in Braille, and large print materials.

Once ADA compliance for a meeting facility has been assured, as noted above, it will not be necessary to request written certification as long as the documentation is maintained by the CC/CO/NC and the meeting facility has not undergone any renovation that would change the accessibility of the facility.

4) Reporting Requirements

A copy of all written correspondence regarding conferences that CDC is asked to sponsor (including the incoming request and subsequent CC/CO/NC approvals or disapprovals) will be maintained on file in the Office of the Director of the CC/CO/NC having programmatic responsibility. Records should include documentation required as per Section 4H above. Also, agreements and records should account fully and accurately for each party's programmatic and financial responsibilities and activities. Agreements and records should describe separately any discrete portion of an event that will be exclusively sponsored by CDC or exclusively sponsored by a non-Federal entity. Agreements and records concerning the amounts, sources, and uses of funds should be made available to the public upon request. CDC shall not co-sponsor an event with an entity that will not make information concerning funding publicly available. A specific person should be assigned responsibility for maintaining these records, and for submitting a quarterly line listing of all conferences sponsored or disapproved to the OD, CDC (i.e., the Deputy Chief Operating Officer). The OD will maintain records of these listings and make them available to the CC/CO/NCs upon request.

5. ACRONYMS

- A. ADAAG** – Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines
- B. CC/CO** – coordinating center/coordinating office
- C. DCOO** – Deputy Chief Operating Officer
- D. FMO** – Financial Management Office
- E. NC** – national center
- F. NCEH** – National Center for Environmental Health
- G. OGC** – Office of the General Counsel
- H. PGO** – Procurement and Grants Office
- I. TDD** – telecommunications device for the deaf

6. DEFINITIONS

A. Conferences

A conference is a symposium, seminar, workshop, or any other organized and formal meeting lasting portions of 1 or more days, where persons assemble to exchange information and views or explore or clarify a defined subject, problem, or area of knowledge, whether or not a published report results from such meeting.

B. Nonfederal Organizations

Nonfederal organizations may be a for-profit or not-for-profit entity. For-profit organizations include, but are not limited to, corporations, partnerships, proprietorships, and others intended to generate financial gain for their owners. Not-for-profit entities include, but are not limited to, State, local, and foreign governments; voluntary associations; foundations; civic groups; professional associations; and universities.

C. Sponsorship

The definition of sponsorship/co-sponsorship should be consistent with that provided in the HHS Co-Sponsorship Guidance.

“Co-sponsorship” refers to the joint development of a conference, seminar, symposium, educational program, public information campaign, or similar event related to the mission of the Department, by HHS, and one or more non-federal entities that share a mutual interest in the subject matter. This definition excludes prospective co-sponsors that would provide only funding for an event, as well as prospective co-sponsors that do not have a demonstrable substantive interest in the subject matter of the event.

CDC’s co-sponsorship involvement may take several forms. Sponsorship may involve (1) provision of funds, generally by PGO through a grant, cooperative agreement, interagency agreement, contract, or purchase order (for printing of materials, equipment or supplies, etc.), (2) the public expression of support without financial assistance, usually through allowing CDC's name or design element to be used by the sponsoring organization in conjunction with the conference, or (3) provision of personnel or other CDC resources to manage any or all scientific or administrative functions of a conference.

D. Technical Assistance, Participation, and Attendance

Technical assistance by CDC staff (e.g., review or provision of conference materials) or official participation by CDC staff as speakers or attendees does not, in and of itself, constitute sponsorship.

7. REFERENCES

- A.** CDC-GA-1997-01, Guidance for Collaboration with the Private Sector
- B.** HHS, Office of the General Counsel, Ethics Division Co-Sponsorship Guidance
- C.** Standards of Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch
- D.** Additional Requirement 20, “Conference Support”
- E.** CDC-GA-2007-04, CDC Smoke Free Conferences Policy
- F.** CDC-GA-2002-03, Identification of CDC on Print and Electronic Material
- G.** CDC-GA-2002-04, Use of Seals, Logos, and CDC Logo Design

APPENDIX A: Guidance for Collaboration with the Private Sector

I. Criteria for Assessing Potential Collaborations*

A. CDC should be clear how the potential collaboration fits within its overall mission and priorities and the private partner's mission and priorities.

B. CDC should address independence and objectivity of scientific judgment in the potential collaboration. Further, mechanisms should be identified that will ensure such objectivity and independence during the collaboration.

C. CDC should assess the effect of the private partner's products or services, if applicable, on health and whether they are compatible with CDC's mission.

D. CDC should assess the behavior of the private partner in conducting business and determine whether the partner's behavior is consistent with CDC's mission and the principles guiding private sector collaboration.

II. General Recommendations for Collaborations*

A. CDC should assess not only the specific area of mutual interest but the public impact of the partner's broad public mission and image. For highly controversial issues, multiple collaborators should be sought that represent a broad spectrum of opinions and interests.

B. CDC should avoid participating in indirect collaborations unless it would participate in a direct relationship with the partners.

C. Private partners should be informed that the existence of the collaborative relationship will be made a matter of public record. How this will occur should be worked out early, especially if implied endorsements are likely. No direct endorsement of a product or service is permitted by the agency.

D. CDC should maintain a process of openness and fairness in developing collaborations with partners on similar projects or projects with similar intent.

E. Within each coordinating center (CC), coordinating office (CO), or national center (NC), a formal review and advisory process should be established for examining potential collaborations according to the principles, criteria, and recommendations described in this document.

F. Employees who will be developing collaborations with the private sector should receive orientation and guidance from the CDC Ethics Officer concerning the agency's principles, criteria, and recommendations for collaborating with the private sector.

* Excerpt from **General Administration No. CDC-GA-1997-01, Guidance for Collaboration with the Private Sector**

APPENDIX B: Model Co-Sponsorship Agreement

Available upon request.