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**ACPE Standards for Continuing Pharmacy Education (CPE)**

**Standard 5: Standards for Integrity and Independence**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

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| **5.4: Manage Commercial Support Appropriately** |

**What is commercial support?**  
*Commercial Support* is financial, or in-kind, contributions given by an ineligible company*,* which is used to pay all or part of the costs of a CPE activity.

**Whose expenses can be paid for with commercial support?**

Commercial support is used to underwrite the provider's expenses for developing and presenting an activity. Commercial support can be used to pay for the expenses of teachers and authors as well others who are engaged in the development of the activity for the provider.

**Can providers pay some of the expenses of people who are both faculty and learners?**

Yes. CE providers need to be sure that these people have bona fide teaching roles. It is unacceptable for anyone other than the provider, or its agents, to receive direct financial benefit from commercial support.

**Can the commercial support be spent directly by the commercial supporter on costs (i.e., honorariums, meals, etc.) related to the CPE activity?**   
No. The commercial support must go first to the provider or a provider’s joint provider or educational partner.

**Can providers use commercial support to pay for its services in the production and distribution of a CE activity, e.g., certificates, mailings?**

Yes.

**Can a provider offer ineligible companies different levels of designation for different amounts of commercial support?**

Yes.

**What elements must be included in the written agreement?**   
When there is commercial support there must be a written agreement that:

* Itemizes how the provider will use the commercial support in the development and presentation of the CPE activity;
* Itemizes the organizations involved in the activity (e.g., joint providers, education partners, managers);
* Specifies the organizational name of the ineligible company(ies) that supplied the funds;
* Specifies what funds or in-kind services will be given by the commercial supporter to support the provider’s activity; and
* Be executed (e.g., signed and dated) by the ineligible company and the accredited provider **prior** to the activity taking place.

**Can a written agreement for commercial support be executed electronically, or does it need to be physically signed?**

Yes, a written agreement that has been accepted electronically by an accredited provider, which originates from the commercial supporter would meet ACPE's expectations as long as it is executed before the start or release of the accredited education.

**Can we use a letter of agreement written by a commercial supporter?**   
Yes. The agreement must describe the terms, conditions and purposes of the commercial support grant and be signed by the commercial supporter and the accredited provider.

**Can an ineligible company stipulate in the written agreement for commercial support that unspent funds be returned by the accredited provider to the ineligible company?**

Yes.

**Does an accredited provider have to give a list of its participants to its commercial supporters?**

No. If, however, an accredited provider chooses to do so, it must obtain the consent of each individual learner, per Standards for Independence and Integrity, Guideline 2.

**When an accredited provider is working in joint providership, who needs to be part of a written agreement for commercial support and when must it be executed?**

ACPE expects that written agreements for commercial support will:

* be between the accredited provider and commercial supporter.
* include the name of the joint provider or third party that would be receiving and disbursing the funds (when applicable).
* be executed and agreed to by both the accredited provider and the ineligible company providing the commercial support. Third parties and/or joint providers **may also**be included in the written agreement but may not execute or agree to it **instead**of the accredited provider.
* be executed **prior**to the activity taking place.

**How should an accredited provider manage and report funds received from ineligible companies to reserve space for a CE activity that is held in conjunction with another organization's meeting?**

All funds that originate from ineligible companies and are paid to reserve space to hold accredited CE activities (sometimes called satellite symposia) in conjunction with other organizations' meetings are considered commercial support. As with all commercial support, these funds must be paid directly to the accredited provider responsible for the activity or to a designated nonaccredited joint provider. The accredited provider responsible for the activity that is held in the reserved space must manage and report the funds as commercial support, in accordance with ACPE commercial support requirements.

Example: National Specialty Society announces that it is selling slots to hold satellite activities at its upcoming annual meeting for $10,000. USA Pharmacy School, an ACPE-accredited provider, plans to reserve one of the slots and submits a request for the funds to pay the fee from Pharma Inc. There is a signed written agreement for the funds and Pharma Inc., an ineligible company, pays the funds directly to USA Pharmacy School. USA Pharmacy School uses the funds to pay National Specialty Society to reserve the space. Prior to the beginning of its CE activity, USA Pharmacy School informs the learners about the commercial support from Pharma Inc.

**Can commercial supporters distribute promotional materials for CE activities, like save-the-date announcements and brochures?**

Yes. Distributing promotional materials for accredited education such as save the date announcements and brochures, is not prohibited by the [Standards for Integrity and Independence](https://accme.org/standards). Of note, Guideline 5 prohibits ineligible companies from providing access to (such as a link), or distributing, the accredited education itself to learners.

**Where (e.g., program book, slides presented prior to the start of a CE activity, etc.) can commercial support be acknowledged using the ineligible companies’ logos?**

Disclosure of commercial support must never include the use of a corporate logo, trade name or a product-group message of an ineligible company, regardless of where that disclosure is made. It is appropriate to acknowledge commercial support using companies’ names.

**If we receive financial or other support for an activity from an entity that is not an ineligible company as defined by ACPE, are we allowed to use its logo to acknowledge their support?**

Yes. If the organization is not an ineligible company per ACPE’s definition, the use of its corporate logo in the acknowledgement of support would be allowed. Guideline 4 specifically prohibits use of ineligible companies’ corporate or product logos, trade names, or product group messages in the disclosure of commercial support.