

Guidance on Receiving Funds and Managing Promotion for Continuing Education

The following guidelines ensure that all continuing education (CE) activities, accredited and non-accredited, are held without commercial influence and in full compliance with the ACCME Standards for Integrity and Independence, [ACCME Standards for Integrity and Independence](#) and the UPMC/University of Pittsburgh industry relationship policies.



Key Definitions

Continuing education (CE) includes activities that serve to maintain, develop, or increase the knowledge, skills, and/or professional performance that a licensed health professional uses to provide services for patients, public or the profession.

Ineligible companies are whose primary business is producing, marketing, selling, re- selling, or distributing healthcare products used by or on patients. It is important to recognize that an “ineligible company” is commonly referred to as a “commercial interest.”

Commercial Support is an educational grant for monetary or in-kind support from ineligible companies without receiving a benefit in return.

Commercial Promotion is a marketing arrangement by ineligible companies that promotes products or services.

General Provisions

1. CE activities seeking commercial funding should be certified for continuing education credit. At the discretion of the CCEHS, certification may be required.
2. Learners must be able to engage in the education without being presented with product promotion or advertisement from ineligible companies. Educational materials that are part of a CE activity (e.g., slides, abstracts, handouts) must not contain any marketing produced by or for an ineligible company, including corporate or product logos, trade names, or product messages.
3. Food associated with any CE activity should be modest and the venue should be appropriate and conducive to educational presentations, without any entertainment or recreational events.
4. An ineligible company **cannot pay directly** for anything (e.g., speaker expenses, food, or materials, etc.).
5. Individuals in control of educational content must disclose relationships with ineligible companies and comply with the CCEHS Management of Conflict of Interest (COI) Guidelines, <https://cce.upmc.com/coi>.
6. The owners and employees of ineligible companies are considered to have unresolvable financial relationships and must be excluded from participating as planners or faculty and must not influence or control any aspect of the planning, delivery, or evaluation of accredited continuing education, except in limited circumstances. The company cannot select attendees.
7. Sharing the names or contact information of learners with an ineligible company or its agents without the explicit consent of the individual learner is NOT allowed. The CCEHS must approve the mechanism for obtaining permission.
8. A detailed course budget with number of units and unit costs is required for any activity soliciting funding from Commercial Support or Commercial Promotion. Final budgets will also be required following the activity.
9. Representatives of companies who are exhibitors at the CE activity may attend the educational portion of the activity for their own learning at the discretion of the activity's planning committee. Representatives who are not staffing an exhibit table must follow any learner registration requirements and pay any applicable registration fees.
10. If attendees are receiving any tangible benefits (e.g., meals), a registration fee should be charged to offset the cost. Waiving registration fees is discouraged.

Process

Commercial Support

- Commercial support requests (educational grants) must be submitted and negotiated by the CCEHS. Complete and submit an [Educational Grant Request Form](#), including a detailed course budget and activity agenda, **early in the planning stages and 6 months prior to the activity date**. Additional information may be requested by the CCEHS in order to fulfill commercial support requests. **Requests received after the activity is planned or within 4 months of the activity may not be accepted by CCEHS.**
- For accredited CE (i.e., credit is being requested of CCEHS), submit a New Course Application at <http://cce.upmc.com>. The CCEHS will not consider commercial support requests without an approved application.
- It is the responsibility of the course director and/or planning committee of the activity, not the CCEHS, to identify companies to solicit based on relevancy of the companies' areas of interest to the activity's subject matter. However, relevancy may still not align with the companies' current funding priorities. Additionally, prior funding does not guarantee support.
- The CCEHS will facilitate execution of commercial support agreements, along with any necessary legal review. A fully executed agreement is required prior to the start of the activity and before recognition of support can be made.
- Company applications, processes and guidelines vary and may change without notice. For example, some companies may not allow funding to be used towards the cost of food. The CCEHS will provide information, as applicable.
- All commercial support must be disclosed (i.e., recognized) to program attendees. Company logos are not allowed.

Commercial Promotion

- Commercial promotion (exhibits, sponsored education, advertisements) is managed by the department/division or external entity financially responsible for the program. However, solicitation request/ prospectus must be reviewed and approved by CCEHS prior to solicitation to ensure compliance with accreditation and institutional guidelines.
- An agreement is required to document the terms, conditions, and purpose. An agreement is required before recognition can be made. Some companies may have their own agreement, these agreements must be reviewed and approved by CCEHS.
- Funds received from promotional activities (e.g., exhibits) must be applied to the course budget.
- Recognition in educational materials must **not** include the corporate or product logos, trade names, or product group messages.

Exhibits (most common)

An exhibit is a display booth purchased by a vendor. Exhibitor/vendor are commonly used interchangeably.

- To comply with the UPMC and University of Pittsburgh Industry Relationship Policies, exhibits are not permitted in University of Pittsburgh SOHS or UPMC facilities in which clinical care is delivered or in which research is conducted. Please inquire with CCEHS on the acceptability of a location for exhibits.
- Exhibit fees must be separate and distinct from educational grants.
- Exhibit fees should be set by the planning committee and should be standard for that activity; different levels of exhibitor fees can be established and distinguished by such factors as size of table, # of days, etc.
- Potential exhibitors must have equal access to purchasing exhibit space (first come-first serve). There should be no bias in the solicitation of potential exhibitors. Multiple vendors should be solicited.
- In addition to the venue being appropriate and conducive to educational presentations, exhibitors must be in a room or area separate from the education and must not compete with the learning experience. Learners must not be required to engage with exhibitors in the path to educational activity. For example, a restaurant venue should have a separate room that is not the same as the educational space. **If the space cannot create a clear separation between the exhibit and the educational activity, there must be a minimum of 30 minutes between the educational activity and the exhibit.**
- The agenda must include specific times for learners to visit exhibits that do not overlap with the educational content.

Additional Guidance for Virtual Exhibits

- A virtual exhibit hall is a digital platform for exhibitors and attendees to engage virtually.
- The learner must receive clear notification when they leave the education to participate in the exhibits.
- Virtual exhibits must be in a separate space outside of the education and must not be visible on the screen at the same time as the education or mixed between the education as a “commercial break”.

Sponsored Education

Sponsored education is non-accredited content that is developed by or with influence from an ineligible company. The course may charge a fee for this arrangement (may be referred to as satellite symposia).

- Sponsored education cannot influence planning, compete, or overlap with the educational content of the CE activity.
- Learners must be able distinguish between accredited and non-accredited content. Activities that are part of a live event or a print, online, or digital activity but are not accredited must be labeled and communicated as such.
- For live activities, there must be 30-minute intervals between accredited activities and sponsored education. Preferably, sponsored education occurs after the CE activity adjourns.

Advertisements

Promotional materials cannot be displayed or distributed in the educational space immediately before, during, or after an activity. In addition, educational materials that are part of an activity, such as slides and handouts cannot contain any advertising, corporate logos, trade name or a product-group messages of an ineligible company.

Examples of promotional activities that the CCEHS does not permit:

- WIFI sponsorship, conference bags, water bottles, lanyards, or nametag folders with company name/logo (if course materials are inside the bag), corporate logos, trade names or a product-group messages in course materials (e.g., handouts, slides).
- Breakfast, break, and lunch sponsorship by ineligible companies are only allowed if there is 30 minutes between the education and the sponsored event AND there is an alternative option that is not supported by an ineligible company.

Helpful Tips

- Levels (e.g., Gold - \$50,000; Silver - \$25,000; Bronze - \$10,000, etc.) may be established to receive certain benefits in return. Sponsorship and Promotional Activities can be combined to reach/included under a certain level. The following benefits are among those acceptable: recognition in program materials, slide during break, onsite signage (except in educational space), complimentary registration(s). However, the ineligible company can only be recognized by listing their name. Logos, website links and/or other advertisements are not allowed in the educational space.
- Note on funds from a **non-commercial interest** (e.g., foundations, non-profit organizations) – Funding from companies outside of the definition of an ineligible company (i.e., foundations, NIH grants) that do not influence or control any content, are not regulated by the ACCME Standards for Integrity and Independence, thus, the CCEHS does not need to be involved. The financially responsible department/division needs to consider their own internal guidelines for accepting funds as well as institutional requirements.
- Ineligible companies are required to comply with the Physician Payment Sunshine Act. As a result, companies may restrict what types of expenses funds can go towards (e.g., food), as well as require the collection of detailed physician information (e.g., NPI numbers) for any direct or indirect payments or transfers of value (e.g., travel, lodging, honorarium) to physicians with the grant funds. That information may then be reported to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). The guidelines are convoluted and interpreted differently by every company; therefore, it is difficult to provide guidance until an agreement is received.