



WHO Rules for interaction of WHO collaborating centres with industry and private sector in general

Activities of WHO collaborating centres (WHO CC) should not be funded by (and/or otherwise involve) commercial companies in a manner that could give rise to appreciable conflicts of interest.

To avoid any potential appreciable conflicts of interest, activities of WHO CCs should not be funded by and/or otherwise involve the following:

- a) commercial companies, or associations representing companies or certain business interests ("trade associations")
- b) foundations closely associated with their commercial sponsors

This includes, first of all, that institutions that are to be designated or re-designated as a WHO CC (or for that matter, the legal entities of which they form part) should not accept funding from companies whose business activities are incompatible with WHO's work (such as tobacco companies) for any activities that fall within the Centre's Terms of Reference.

Similarly, such institutions should not accept funding from companies that have, or may be perceived as having, a direct commercial interest in the outcome of the centre's activities. For instance, funds should not be accepted from a drug manufacturer for an activity relating to the treatment of a disease.

Caution should be exercised in accepting financing from companies that have even an indirect interest in the outcome of an activity (e.g. in the case of an activity relating to the epidemiology of a disease, caution should be exercised in accepting funds from a manufacturer of drugs for the disease). In such cases, other companies having a similar indirect interest should be invited to contribute, and it is preferable that funding from multiple competing sources be secured. The larger the proportion of the donation from any one source, the greater the care that should be taken to avoid the possibility of a conflict of interest or appearance of an inappropriate association with one contributor.

In addition, it is not acceptable for WHO CCs to conduct research commissioned by industry as part of their work as a WHO CC.

In the event of an unspecified donation from a company, or group of companies, for the activities of a WHO CC in general, the institution should agree to the following:

- a) The funds should not be used to finance activities in which the company, or group of companies, has a direct commercial interest. In the event of an indirect commercial interest, financing should be sought from various sources having a similar interest, and it is preferable that funding from multiple competing sources is secured. The larger the proportion of the donation from any one source, the greater the care that should be taken to avoid the possibility of a conflict of interest or appearance of an inappropriate association with one contributor.
- b) The overall amount of the funds provided by the company, or group of companies, should not be so large that the WHO CC would become dependent on support from a single company, or group of companies, for its continued operations.

As a general rule, a WHO CC should not accept any funds from companies (regardless of their business interests) for activities in support of the production of WHO guidelines or recommendations.

Further, a WHO CC should not accept funds from companies designated to support the salary of specific staff or posts at the WHO CC (including short-term consultants), if such financial support could give rise to a real or perceived conflict of interest in relation to the work of the WHO CC. Such a conflict of interest would, for example, arise if the responsibilities of the staff member or post are related to the business interests of the commercial contributor.

If there are any activities that give rise to a conflict of interest as described above or that have been commissioned by industry, these activities must be dropped from the workplan; otherwise the (re)designation cannot take place. In this connection, every effort should be made to discuss the issues at hand with the institution, with a view to trying to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution which is consistent with the guidance provided in this section.

If the institution, its director and/or staff designated to work on the activities of the WHO CC, have any other interactions, affiliations or relations with and/or financial or other interests in companies (or trade associations or foundations closely associated with their commercial sponsors) that could give rise to, or be seen as giving rise to, a conflict of interest, this should be immediately communicated to the responsible officer. When doing so, the institution should provide information about the nature of the interactions, affiliations, relations and/or financial or other interests.

For reasons of transparency, WHO CCs should always publicly acknowledge contributions from companies (or trade associations or foundations closely associated with their commercial sponsors). The basic and most common approach to such recognition is to insert an acknowledgement in the documentation relating to the activity concerned, including in any publication by the WHO CC of the outcome of this activity.

The acknowledgement should be worded along the following lines: "[Name of the institution], a WHO Collaborating Centre for, gratefully acknowledges the [financial contribution of][other interaction with] [contributor's name] towards [description of the outcome or activity]".

WHO may also require WHO CCs to publicly disclose affiliations with or financial or other interests in companies (or trade associations or foundations closely associated with their commercial sponsors).

Before accepting contributions, WHO CCs should seek written assurance from the contributors that they will not use the results of the work that they have supported for commercial purposes or seek promotion of the fact that they have made a donation.

However, they may make reference to donations in their corporate annual reports or similar documents.

WHO CCs should at all times maintain full control over the activity to which a contribution relates, including over any report of the activity, its contents, whether it is published or disseminated in any form (e.g. electronically), and the timing of such diffusion.

If these or other relevant conditions cannot be met, an institution must not be (re)designated as a WHO CC. If these or other relevant conditions cannot be met after designation, this should be immediately reported to the responsible officer.