RCGP Guidelines for Corporate Support (Voluntary Funding)

The Fundraising Department has developed a set of guidelines to be followed with reference to corporate financial support being sought and secured by the RCGP.

There are particular considerations with reference to the pharmaceutical industry and these are set out in a separate guideline document, to be read in conjunction with this guideline document.

The guidelines focus solely on considerations relating to voluntary funding by commercial companies, and not on partnerships in the wider contexts of purchasing, commercial ventures, investments or trading.

RCGP will not knowingly accept money or gifts, incl. gift-in-kind, from companies whose activities include the manufacture of arms, tobacco or alcohol. This may extend to any such company’s related charitable trust.

RCGP will not accept any advertisements relating to bottle feeding or non-prescription ‘formula’ milks or foods for babies under six months old.

Assessing the suitability of a prospective corporate funder will inevitably involve making a judgement, based on known information. The balancing of risks and returns will form a part of this judgement. The following points will be considered by the Fundraising Department, who will seek input from other stakeholders (e.g. staff, members, PPG reps) as appropriate:

- Whether the particular corporate funder is suitable, bearing in mind what the RCGP knows of the company’s products, activities, public image and financial position.
- Whether the company has a parent company or subsidiaries, who these may be, and whether either or both are suitable.
- Whether the publicly perceived values and ethics of the company complement those of the RCGP.
- Whether the association with the company will enhance or damage the RCGP brand.
- What the company’s motivations are for corporate giving.
- Whether there is a high level of confidence that the company will be able to discharge its financial and other obligations under the proposed funding agreement.
- What the RCGP will do to anticipate and answer any complaints or criticisms that could be made of its association with a particular company, product or service.
- Whether the company could use its agreed funding to influence either the planning process or other commercial decisions, for example the awarding of retail or catering contracts.
- Whether an employee or non-executive director is also an RCGP Officer, Trustee or Executive Director and whether there could be a conflict of interest inherent in the proposed relationship.
RCGP Guidelines for Pharmaceutical Industry Support
Complementary to Guidelines for Corporate Support (Voluntary Funding)

1. Any relationship between the RCGP and the pharmaceutical industry must comply with the Medicines (Advertising) Regulations 1994 and should be based on partnership working and follow the core principles of:
   - Integrity and openness
   - Maintenance of independence
   - Equality in partnership
   - Mutual benefit
   - Promoting excellence in family medicine worldwide

For the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) members partnership arrangements should comply with the ABPI Code of Practice.

2. Assessing the suitability of a prospective corporate sponsor will inevitably involve making a judgement, based on facts and research known at the time. The balancing of risks and returns will form a part of this judgement. In addition to the points stated in the Guidelines for Corporate Sponsorship, the following will be considered by the Fundraising Department, who will seek input from internal stakeholders as appropriate:

2.1 RCGP will not enter into a relationship designed to give one company obvious competitive advantage over another. Where appropriate the RCGP favours the use of funding consortia based on two or more companies working together.

2.2 RCGP will not endorse individual products, treatments and/or medical devices of any kind.

2.3 RCGP will consider working with PR, advertising and marketing agencies employed by pharmaceutical companies once a joint project is underway. During the initial planning stages, however, a representative from the company proper must also be present.

2.4 RCGP will consider financial support from pharmaceutical companies where:
   - RCGP believes it is of benefit to the RCGP, its members and patient outcomes;
   - RCGP is satisfied that accepting such support will not adversely affect its independent status and/or reputation;
   - RCGP believes that accepting such support falls within the guidelines of the Charity Commission;
   - There is no attempt on the part of the company or companies to influence RCGP policy or actions explicitly or implicitly;
   - RCGP retains full editorial control and copyright over all publications and printed materials funded [by the a pharmaceutical company or companies];
   - RCGP is consulted if use its name and/or logo is sought for either internal and external communications. The Director of Development will sign off use of RCGP brand in consultation with relevant departments;
   - No press release referring to the RCGP is issued without RCGP approval;
   - Written agreements or, where required by law, formal contracts are in place for each joint initiative.
3. Where a meeting/workshop is supported by one or more pharmaceuticals

- The chair/organiser must ensure that they have complete freedom to select or reject any suggested participant, particularly if there is any likelihood that names may have been selected because of their known partiality towards the company or product
- Speakers/presenters may not be chosen solely by the sponsoring company
- Funding support should be made clear at the outset e.g. included on meeting flyers or email notifications and in the introduction
- The funder must have no sway or undue influence over the content or delivery
- Funders and reps should ideally be located in a room or foyer separate from the educational meeting room.
  - Sometimes the rep or funder will need be placed in the same room where the meeting takes place so that they are accessible before the meeting begins and during refreshment breaks for example. In such instances, the rep, and their products, must withdraw from the meeting room before the educational programme begins. They may, however, leave a banner or stand with tablecloth at the back of the room.
- Hospitality must be secondary to the purpose of the meeting
- Any gifts must be inexpensive and relevant.

4. The definition of a partnership does not apply to receipt of promotional aids defined as non-monetary gifts made for promotional purposes.

The ABPI Code of Practice (18.3, 2012) permits the provision of a promotional aid such as notebooks, pens, pencils to health professionals and administrative staff attending meetings. The total cost to the donor company of such items provided to an individual persons must not exceed £6 plus VAT and the perceived value to the recipient must be similar.

Gifts should be declared if several small gifts worth a cumulative total of £100 are received from the same or closely related source in a 12 month period.