

# Tobacco Industry Corporate Sponsorship/Giving

## Questions and Answers

### **Q: What is corporate sponsorship?**

*A: Corporate sponsorship, also called corporate giving or corporate philanthropy, means receiving money, services or in-kind donations in order to hold an event, implement programming, expand services and/ or purchase supplies.*

### **Q: Why do tobacco companies fund non-profit groups?**

*A: There are many reasons to sponsor a non-profit group. An industry responsible for over 430,000 American deaths every year has a serious public relations challenge. The company would rather be known for their generosity than for their deadly product.*

*Tobacco companies use sponsorship to promote and heighten the visibility of their products and their corporate image, as well as to gain access to target audiences. This in turn promotes loyalty to the corporation and buys influence and silence among patrons in the community. By sponsoring influential groups, companies gain a foothold in community politics, and have an opportunity to advertise their product.*

*Tobacco companies sponsor non-profit organizations because they need to advertise, build their reputation as a good neighbor, and use their influence to discourage health initiatives that threaten their business.*

### **Q: Our agency is a social services agency, not a health-related one. Why take a position against tobacco companies and reject funding?**

*A: Just because an agency is not in a health-related business does not mean it will not be touched in some way by the overall health of the community in which it operates. Nicotine addiction insidiously and inexorably affects the physical, social and economic of a community. The use of tobacco products has created a health crisis with significant social repercussions on many levels. In fact, deaths from smoking - about 1,200 each day in the United States, outnumber those caused by AIDS, tuberculosis, traffic accidents, murder and suicide combined. The financial impact of tobacco-related death and disease results in a loss of productive workforce, a loss in tax revenue, a loss in community buying power, and creates a need for expensive emergency room and hospital visits and social services totaling \$150 billion in the united States.*

*Tobacco companies have been lying to the public for years about the "safety" of their products. Recently, tobacco companies have been forced to disclose that they lied regarding knowing about the addictiveness of nicotine in their products. Internal tobacco industry papers have also disclosed that the tobacco industry consciously set out to addict children to their products. As a result, the public*

*perception of tobacco companies is negative. Tobacco companies are trying to counter this negative perception. By accepting funding from tobacco companies an organization is giving legitimacy to the tobacco industry and possibly compromising their own mission. For example, accepting money from a tobacco company is at odds with missions of healthy communities, social justice, corporate responsibility, drug free school and a drug free society to name a few. Social justice.*

**Q: We need donations to stay afloat. How can we justify refusing anyone willing to give us money?**

*A: Consider the following questions:*

- 1) Does taking this money compromise the organizational mission?*
- 2) Will the agency's good community reputation be compromised by taking money from a company that makes its profit by producing and marketing a product which addicts and kills its users.*
- 3) Would my agency or staff be open to manipulation from the tobacco company if I take this money?*
- 4) Would there be potential conflicts of interest that may arise when the agency wants to educate or speak out about tobacco?*
- 5) Will other potential funders view the relationship with the tobacco industry as unacceptable? More and more prominent organizations such as the American Cancer Society and the American Lung Association and the New York State Department of Health are publicly stating their opposition to tobacco industry funding. They have adopted policies of their own stating that they will no longer give grants or provide other forms of support to those who also accept support from tobacco companies or their subsidiaries.*

*If you answered yes to one or more of the above questions, accepting tobacco money will be more of a cost to your organization than a benefit. The benefit of accepting the money is a short-term benefit and in the long run could end up compromising and jeopardizing your agency's future.*

**Q: Isn't it okay to accept funding from tobacco companies if we are using it for the overall good of the community?**

*A: While there is no doubt that an organization and even a community can benefit from additional funding, it is important to balance this against how the tobacco company obtained the money and the cost to your organization for accepting tobacco money. If tobacco companies are legitimized in communities with sponsorship monies it gives them a fresh opportunity to slowly eat away at the health and prosperity of local communities and agencies. The cancer they spread is not just with their tobacco products but also with their sponsorships.*

**Q: There is no "clean" money. Why should we single out tobacco companies as opposed to other corporations that have practices we do not support?**

*A: Certainly, tobacco funding may not be the only objectionable funding an agency will be tempted to take. The decision to not accept monies from corporate funders is unique to an organization and its values and mission. However, given the overt nature of the tobacco industry's exploitation of our communities, especially the most vulnerable members, such as children and the undereducated, it is clear that tobacco sponsorship benefits the tobacco companies more than it benefits any organization.*

**Q: Is it okay to accept tobacco money on the condition that we not print the company logo or otherwise publicize their name in our materials?**

*A: It is unlikely that a tobacco company would give an organization or agency money without that relationship advertised in some manner. After all, the purpose of sponsorship monies is to get the name of the tobacco company associated with the good name of community groups and organizations.*

**Q: If we don't accept tobacco sponsorship now, why should we pass a policy?**

*A: Tobacco companies will always be changing tactics to stay in business. For decades, they have donated products and money to fund groups that serve the company's target markets: including women, minorities, and children. By preempting their offer, you are helping to build a community closed to tobacco industry influences, and reducing their options for expansion. Adopting a policy reaffirms and strengthens the mission of your agency while establishing a strong legacy for those who will be future leaders of your organization and the community.*

**Q: Our agency already has a verbal policy to refuse any tobacco company sponsorship and funding. Why do we need a written policy?**

*A: It is very important to have a written policy against tobacco funding. The fact that an agency's board of directors united and enacted this policy has a greater impact than a verbal policy that cannot be seen or modeled. In addition, a written policy will withstand the test of time along with changes in the board and staff turnovers. A written policy ensures that the organization and its members and staff will uphold their stand against corporate gifts, financial contributions, advertising and event sponsorship by tobacco companies.*