

IHI Principles for Engaging with Commercial Organizations

2021–2025

Institute for Healthcare Improvement

For more than 30 years, the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) has used improvement science to advance and sustain better outcomes in health and health systems across the world. We bring awareness of safety and quality to millions, accelerate learning and the systematic improvement of care, develop solutions to previously intractable challenges, and mobilize health systems, communities, regions, and nations to reduce harm and deaths. We work in collaboration with the growing IHI community to spark bold, inventive ways to improve the health of individuals and populations. We generate optimism, harvest fresh ideas, and support anyone, anywhere who wants to profoundly change health and health care for the better. Learn more at [ihi.org](https://www.ihi.org).

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Introduction

Who We Are

The Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) is an independent not-for-profit organization based in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. For more than 30 years, IHI has used improvement science to advance and sustain better outcomes in health and health systems across the world. IHI brings awareness of safety and quality to millions, catalyzes learning and the systematic improvement of care, develops solutions to previously intractable challenges, and mobilizes health systems, communities, regions, and nations to reduce harm and deaths. IHI collaborates with a growing community to spark bold, inventive ways to improve the health of individuals and populations. IHI generates optimism, harvests fresh ideas, and supports anyone, anywhere who wants to profoundly change health and health care for the better.

How Commercial Organization Engagement Advances Our Mission to Improve Health and Health Care Worldwide

To help achieve our goals, IHI seeks and gratefully accepts external support in the form of grants, contracts, sponsorships, underwriting, and donations in support of our mission. IHI partners with an extraordinarily wide range of organizations, including commercial entities.¹ Support from commercial entities typically falls into the following general categories:

- Supporting the development of thought leadership and innovation to accelerate learnings and sustainable best practices, educational content, campaigns, reports and white papers, or programming
- Sponsoring events and other educational programs
- Helping IHI undertake initiatives that accelerate improvement in health and health care in areas where more typical nonprofit funding sources may be limited, including improvement activities in the developing world
- Providing unrestricted contributions to general IHI operations
- Supporting the delivery of IHI conferences or courses, including direct funding for programs and presenters, providing scholarships, and furnishing conference materials

¹ Commercial entities are organizations that offer products or services to a market with the intent of making a profit. In a commercial entity, shareholders, partners, investors, or employees may own (or have rights to own) the profits, residual income, or surpluses of the organization. This contrasts with not-for-profit entities (like IHI) where any surpluses or fund balances are held for public benefit and no individuals or entities have any ownership claim. A nonprofit foundation established by a for-profit entity would normally be considered a nonprofit by IHI in evaluating potential sponsorship or funding arrangements.

- Providing scholarships for organizations or groups of individuals to participate in select IHI programming and collaboratives
- Underwriting existing or new IHI fellowship programs
- Supporting IHI's website (ihi.org) and IHI's knowledge management system, which helps to build a worldwide community of improvers and continually harvests and disseminates new ideas, tools, resources, and other content
- Providing support for IHI's work with schools of medicine, nursing, pharmacy, and administrative health care to teach new health professionals methods to improve care
- Assisting IHI in reaching broader audiences
- Providing access to skills and resources that IHI does not have available internally

Guidelines for Commercial Support and Engagement

IHI's ability to advance health and health system improvement depends crucially on maintaining an independent position with respect to commercial products and services. "Independence" is a matter of both actual and perceived relationships with potential sponsors and partners. The fact or appearance of endorsement of a specific commercial product or service has the potential to damage IHI's reputation.

With both the benefits and risks of commercial support in mind, IHI has established the following principles and guidelines, which apply primarily to the acceptance of "Commercial Support" – that is, external funds from for-profit corporations, entities selling goods or services related to health and health care, or entities that otherwise stand to gain financially² from association with IHI.

Principles and Guidelines

IHI may accept support from or engagement with commercial entities when an opportunity meets the following criteria:

1. It is consistent with IHI strategy, [mission](#), [values](#), and improvement methods.
 - IHI engages with commercial organizations only: (a) for unrestricted support for IHI content or programming; or (b) for specific projects that are consistent with our mission and business strategy.

² This document does not fully reflect commercial support guidelines for normal sponsorship, exhibition, and advertising activities in connection with our public meetings or conferences. Separate documentation is available upon request. Visit ihi.org for more information on how to engage with IHI.

- IHI does not engage with commercial organizations that require an exclusive working relationship.
 - IHI does not accept external funds from companies that make tobacco products, including other companies owned by tobacco companies, or their parent companies.
2. It reflects IHI's commitment to the free, non-commercial flow of improvement knowledge and resources.
- IHI believes that the free flow of ideas provides the best opportunities for improvement, and we provide extensive free and public access to content through our website, publications, and other channels. IHI reserves rights to the intellectual properties resulting from the project, unless otherwise agreed upon in advance.
 - IHI does not engage with funders that would set limits on the broad and unfettered dissemination of work product or learning.
 - IHI retains the right to publish results or content.
 - Any permissions or licensing agreements with commercial entities must adhere to appropriate standards that prevent misuse, unintended use, and modification of licensed materials; prohibit modifications that change meaning; and prohibit use of IHI trademarks or logos to endorse company products/services.
 - IHI does not permit commercial partners to generate commercial activity related to IHI improvement knowledge and resources.
3. It avoids real or perceived conflicts that impair or give the appearance of impairing the ability of IHI program participants to make informed or objective decisions.
- IHI does not engage with commercial organizations on research or education programs that relate to specific pharmaceuticals, medical devices, diagnostics, information technology, or any other product purported to have direct health benefits to patients or to health system performance.
 - IHI does not engage in partnership with commercial organizations that directly advance that organization's commercial interests.
 - IHI programs must comply with the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) guidelines for commercial support. IHI designs all meetings and events to maximize the impact on improvement. IHI retains control over educational content, selection of speakers, and the review of educational materials.
4. IHI's strategic, methodological, and operational independence and control are preserved.
- IHI retains control of the selection of all project personnel.
 - IHI ensures that the design of project activities is consistent with our improvement methods and content expertise.

5. All relationships are transparently disclosed.
 - IHI discloses all sponsored activities that are partially or completely financed by external funds, including funds from commercial entities.
 - Speakers at IHI events are required to disclose whether any part of their presentation resulted from external funding and whether they have any personal financial interest in the subject matter of the presentation.
6. Commercial support or engagement is acknowledged, and the IHI brand is used appropriately.
 - Acknowledgment of commercial support or involvement may be included in IHI's publications, meeting materials, web pages, reports of project results, and all other similar materials, as appropriate. Guidance for how to make such acknowledgments is documented in the IHI Brand Standards guide.
 - IHI permits the commercial entity to acknowledge its support in communications, with advance review and approval of such communications by IHI.
 - Review and approval are required by the IHI Marketing and Communications Department for statements about IHI made by funders and for use of the IHI name and/or logo.
7. The engagement is subject to appropriate governance and oversight, including the following measures:
 - [IHI Executive Team](#) reviews and approves exceptions to this policy.
 - IHI Executive Team reports to the IHI Board of Directors on any commercial relationships that are new or unusual in scope or approach.
 - IHI provides regular updates of commercial funding arrangements to the Board of Directors for review.
 - IHI Board, faculty, and staff are required to disclose potential conflicts of interest annually, and documentation is maintained through an electronic system.
 - IHI maintains joint continuing education accreditation through [Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education \(ACCME\)](#); [American Nurses Credentialing Center \(ANCC\)](#); and [Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education \(ACPE\)](#).
 - Commercial entities providing support to IHI conferences or other programs are not permitted to influence or provide input to the content, design, objectives, methods, or selection of faculty for IHI programs. Post-event participant surveys ask attendees to identify potential biases so that IHI can rectify any situations where commercial influence might occur.
 - The IHI Ethics Policy and Guidelines for Citizenship are reviewed and updated annually. New staff are oriented upon hire and current staff are oriented to the policy annually.

8. The engagement meets IHI's standards for administration and accounting.
 - Written agreements are required when entering relationships with commercial entities.
 - Funds received from commercial entities will be fully accounted for in line with IHI's established high standards of financial management.

Operational Guidance

All IHI program, regional, functional, and administrative staff and leaders are responsible for acting in accordance with the policy outlined in this document. In addition, they must adhere to the following guidance:

- When IHI leaders or staff identify opportunities for IHI to receive commercial support, they will promptly bring the opportunity forward through the standard business development process.
- Each opportunity for commercial support will be vetted using the principles listed above in addition to IHI's established strategic criteria.
- In case of ambiguity, opportunities will be escalated to the IHI Executive Team for review and input.
- The Executive Team will determine whether consultation with the Board of Directors is warranted, particularly in cases that are new or unusual in scope or approach.
- For any commercially sourced support in excess of \$1,000,000, the team proposing support will seek review and input from the Executive Team.
- Any exceptions to this policy will be reviewed and approved by the Executive Team before IHI accepts support.
- This policy will be reviewed periodically and as necessary by the Executive Team.