

SRNT Policy on the Receipt of Funds from External Organizations

INTRODUCTION

The mission of the Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco is to stimulate the generation and dissemination of new knowledge concerning nicotine and tobacco. The SRNT Board may accept external funds such as grants, sponsorships, or gifts in support of activities designed to support the organizational mission and strategic plan. This policy provides guidelines for the negotiation and acceptance of such funds, as well as regular disclosure to the membership of the sources and amounts of external funding SRNT accepts. The policy provides guidance for all external funding relationships and is not limited to relationships with industry.

Final decisions on the interpretation and application of this policy are the responsibility of the SRNT Board of Directors. Individuals and groups who solicit funds on behalf of SRNT should be familiar with these guidelines. This policy updates the 2014 revision of the SRNT Policy on Receipt of Funds.

BACKGROUND

SRNT welcomes donations from appropriate public and private organizations and agencies that fund activities that are congruent with the goals of the society.

External funds may help SRNT pursue its mission in several ways. Examples include:

- Enhance educational efforts (reimburse speakers, provide honoraria, furnish amenities);
- Provide scholarships;
- Provide awards;
- Conduct research;
- Disseminate evidence-based research to groups outside the research community, such as clinicians and tobacco control advocates; and
- Help SRNT undertake initiatives to promote research in lower-income countries.

SRNT accepts the principle that sponsors have the potential to influence the scientific process and decision making; this policy is designed to minimize this risk. Two common sources of biased decision-making are situations of dependency and conflicts of interest. Excessive dependency on external sources of funding may influence an organization to deviate from its mission and values in order to obtain or sustain financial support. Conflicts of interest can arise for individual members who exercise decision-making authority within an organization, for committees or other groups charged with carrying out specific roles (such as the Program Committee), or for the organization as a whole. Concerns about dependency and conflict of interest are particularly acute in two situations: when external funding is from organizations with interests that differ substantially from those of the recipient (either for-profit or not-for-profit entities); and when the amount of external funding, particularly from a single source, is of such magnitude that it will be difficult to carry out a valued activity in the absence of that external funding.

GUIDELINES FOR THE ACCEPTANCE OF EXTERNAL FUNDS

Principles

1. The SRNT Board may accept external funds such as grants, sponsorships, or gifts in support of activities designed to support the organizational mission and strategic plan.
2. SRNT will minimize external funding contribution to the SRNT core operating budget.
3. Acceptance of a gift or grant by SRNT shall not imply endorsement of the products, policies or programs of the grantor and no grantor shall use the evidence of a grant to imply otherwise.
4. No restriction shall be placed on a grant or award except that which is necessary to satisfy the mission of the granting organization (e.g., regional focus, mandate for training, etc.).
5. SRNT will not afford external sponsors particular advantages.
6. Information about the sources and nature of external support for SRNT educational projects, research projects, and awards will be fully disclosed to the public.

Purpose of accepting funding for specific projects

SRNT should accept external funds only for high quality projects that are judged to be appropriate for SRNT to carry out as an organization, especially if SRNT is to be the primary recipient of external funds for the proposed project. The Board acknowledges that there will be subjectivity in decisions regarding which projects are particularly well suited to be carried out by SRNT. In general, projects for which SRNT is particularly well suited create the opportunity for participation of large numbers of members in ways that would be difficult or impossible to arrange through standard mechanisms of funding to members' organizations and institutions.

Support for the overall budget of a meeting (as opposed to support for specific sessions) can be solicited from for-profit companies once the primary program has been defined. Financial support from any single for-profit funder should not exceed the amount budgeted for food and beverage for the event.

SRNT should not accept external funds, either directly or indirectly as a subcontractor to another entity, from for-profit companies (or not-for-profit entities funded largely by for-profit companies) for research or any scientific content published in the journal or special issues of the journal; research or any scientific content presented in paper, poster, symposia, pre-conference workshops, or other sessions offered as part of the SRNT annual meeting; or research or any scientific content delivered remotely via the internet or smart-phone technology. Such funding is problematic, as the intent would appear to be primarily promotional; and of benefit to the sponsor.

Funds from any organization that manufactures, distributes or markets tobacco products

Due to the longstanding misuse of science by tobacco companies, SRNT will not accept funds from any organization that manufactures, distributes or markets tobacco products, or their affiliated corporations.

SRNT also reserves the right to refuse or return any grant or gift if it determines that the receipt of the grant is inconsistent with the goals of the Society, or if the grantor has been determined to be operating inconsistently within the bounds of good science, or if the circumstances of the grantor change after the grant or gift has been made.

Limited external funding for SRNT core budget expenses

The SRNT operating budget best reflects expenses for core activities. "Internal" funds are considered revenues from dues, conference registrations, publications (including subscriptions and royalties from the journal), sales of products and services to members, and member donations. "External" funds are revenues from all other sources. A goal of minimizing external sponsors' contribution to the operating budget reduces concerns about dependence. External funds used specifically for SRNT's operations and included in the annual operating budget should not comprise more than 20% of the Society's annual operating budget.

In addition, the following limits apply to external funds from various sources: no more than 15% of the operating budget from any single not-for-profit entity; and no more than 10% of the operating budget from any single for-profit entity.

These limits will also apply to the operating budgets of individual SRNT chapters.

Notes:

As the percentage of the operating budget provided by any external funder or class of funders cannot be calculated until the end of a fiscal year, percentages may occasionally, but unintentionally exceed the specified limits by small amounts. In these circumstances, any excess funds accepted beyond the limits in this policy must be transferred to one of SRNT's restricted funds, such as awards or international activities.

To allow SRNT to conduct more ambitious projects, external funds for a specific project from external entities may also be placed in a restricted account for use only for project-specific expenses (overhead on the project funds would be considered part of the annual operating budget and, therefore, be subject to restrictions in this policy). Once placed in such a board-designated restricted fund, any funds cannot be brought back into the SRNT operating budget or be used for other purposes.

Soliciting External Funds

No SRNT member shall solicit grants or gifts from a private entity with which the member has a financial interest, if the member would receive benefit from SRNT's acceptance of the grant or gift.

Any group within SRNT that would like to solicit external funds for a project (i.e. Networks or SRNT University) must provide a written fundraising plan for Board review, including the intended purpose of the funds raised; the organization or audience that will be approached; and a draft of the solicitation, itself.

Issues Specific to Educational Projects/Annual Meeting

SRNT must retain ultimate control over educational content, selection of speakers, review of educational materials, peer review and selection of research for presentation, or other public activities with scientific content that are financed with external funds. Regardless of funding sources, SRNT will maintain the highest scientific standards, with no preferential consideration being given to external

fundors who submit abstracts for presentation. Pre-conference workshops, educational presentations at the annual or regional meeting, or web-based training, are considered educational projects. When external funding is solicited for national or regional meetings, the meeting program should be determined before funding is solicited, to ensure the independence of meeting program planning from the interests of external funders.

All grant support provided for the conference shall be considered unrestricted. To avoid implication that SRNT endorses the corporate entity or its products, for-profit entities may not use logos. Sponsors shall not use SRNT's name in promotional materials, e.g. "Sponsor of the SRNT Annual Meeting." Governmental and not for-profit entities, except where they are promoting a specific product or service, are not subject to the restrictions on logos or use of names.

Participation at the Annual Meeting as an exhibitor shall not imply SRNT endorsement of the products, policies or programs of the exhibitor. SRNT reserves the right to refuse any exhibitor to the annual meeting. The charge to exhibitors shall not comprise a significant proportion of the budget for SRNT, such that the rejection of any exhibitors or exhibitors would render a financial hardship upon the Society.

Research Projects

SRNT will retain control of the selection of project personnel, data collection, data analysis, and other activities for the conduct of research activities for which the Society accepts external funding.

Freedom to Publish Results

The proponents of any externally funded research or educational project involving SRNT shall have the right to publish their findings without interference from the external funder. Non-binding, expeditious review and comment on written results by the external funder is acceptable.

Intellectual Property

When SRNT accepts external funds for a research or educational project, SRNT reserves the right to all intellectual properties resulting from the project. When SRNT collaborates with another entity that is the primary recipient of funds for the project, that entity, usually the project proponent's academic institution, will generally have the right to all intellectual properties resulting from the project. In the latter case, an agreement regarding intellectual property must be documented in writing between the concerned institutions and SRNT and approved by the Board.

Budgets

Research and education projects

When externally funded research or educational projects require using SRNT resources, a budget for those activities should be negotiated between the Executive Director and the SRNT members responsible for the project to cover the direct costs of SRNT's participation. In general, to cover SRNT's indirect costs, an additional percentage reflecting the Society's overhead costs (not to exceed 30%) will be added to the budgeted direct costs (but not to other funds that "pass through" SRNT to other parties for completion of the project). The final budget for each project, including any deviations from the usual overhead rate, must be approved by the SRNT President.

Travel Awards/Scholarships

External funds for awards, which reflect acknowledgment for completed work or funding for new

work or activities to be done independently of SRNT do not require a specific budget. An overhead rate of 10% will be added to the total amount of the award to account for the Society's costs for administering the award. External funds solicited for such awards will be kept in restricted accounts that cannot be used for other purposes (including operations). Only when funds are disbursed for an award will the Society's overhead be applied to the disbursed amount, and the amount of the overhead be included in the numerator of the calculation of the proportion of the operating budget derived from external funding in that year.

Projects with an Internal Selection Process

When SRNT accepts external funds for research or educational projects that involve a competitive selection process the external funder can have limited input to the selection criteria, however, an independent group designated by SRNT will be responsible for final funding decisions, independent from the external funder.

SRNT Named Awards

When SRNT accepts external funds for awards or scholarships that involve a competitive selection process the external funder can have limited input to the selection criteria, however, an independent group designated by SRNT will be responsible for final funding decisions, independent from the external funder.

Access to SRNT Members

Access to SRNT members or to recipients of external funds shall not be a condition of support from an external funder, including access through talks by representatives of the external funder at regional or national meetings.

Business Relationships

SRNT may establish a business relationship with an individual, group, or organization to endorse, develop, distribute, or sell products or services; for example, journals, books, software, or other educational products. However, acceptance of any funds that come to SRNT from these relationships will be governed by these guidelines for external funding of projects. For example, SRNT shall not receive funding to endorse, develop, distribute, or sell products such as pharmaceuticals, medical devices, diagnostics, or other products purported to have a direct impact on nicotine/tobacco reduction. SRNT shall not enter business relationships with companies that make or sell tobacco products, including other companies owned by tobacco companies, or their parent companies.

Acknowledgments

External funders should be acknowledged in the Society's publications, meeting materials, online, or reports of project results. These acknowledgments should not advertise any products or services of the funder.

Advertising

Nicotine & Tobacco Research does not accept advertisements for treatment-related products and services. Final judgment regarding the appropriateness and acceptability of advertisements rests with the Journal's editorial staff. Advertising (except for classified advertising of positions available and announcements) will not be accepted for the Society's website or any other publications.

Exceptions

Because the opportunities for external funding for valuable projects are varied and to some extent unpredictable, exceptions to these guidelines may be appropriate in some circumstances. Any exceptions, however, must be approved by the Board of Directors. As circumstances may also change over time, this policy should be reviewed at least every three years and amended if necessary.

PROCEDURES FOR DISCLOSURE OF EXTERNAL FUNDING

1. The sources and nature of all external support for SRNT educational projects, research projects, and awards will be posted on the SRNT website.
2. The sources and nature of external support for SRNT educational projects, research projects, and awards will be included on all meeting programs.
3. When external funding supports presentations or awards at regional or annual meetings, speakers should disclose all sources of external funding and potential conflicts of interest, and the disclosure should be included in the program.
4. The SRNT Treasurer will include in his or her annual report to the members the sources and amounts of external funding, along with a calculation of the proportion of the operating budget for the fiscal year derived from external funding. The report will also be posted in the members-only section of the SRNT website.
5. All contributions/gifts are subject to audit.
6. SRNT welcomes views from stakeholders or other interested parties about potential breeches of its conflict of interest policies or ways in which these policies can be improved.

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