

EDUCATIONAL GRANTS AND COMMERCIAL SUPPORT AGREEMENTS

Outside funding of an educational activity from a commercial source must be in the form of an unrestricted educational grant. Gifts “in kind” such as equipment for a course are also a type of educational grant. Both types of commercial support must be formalized. As required by the ACCME, “the terms, conditions, and purposes of such grants must be documented by a signed agreement between the commercial supporter and the accredited provider.”

Any company providing commercial support must sign the ACS agreement. The contract should be returned to you or to your committee representative prior to the meeting. The money from the grant can be sent directly to your committee or to your Chapter. The allocation of the grant money should be included in the post-CME program financial statement sent to ACS following the meeting. The commercial supporter also has the right to request information on the expenditure of the funds provided.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COMMERCIAL SUPPORT

Commercial support of both types must be acknowledged in printed announcements and brochures. The suggested statements include:

“The American College of Surgeons gratefully acknowledges the educational grant from Pfizer in the amount of \$10,000.” or

“The American College of Surgeons (fill in committee, chapter name) gratefully acknowledges....”

Acknowledgment for “gifts in kind” must also be made. However, the specific product should not be mentioned. For “mixed” commercial support, a list format can be used:

“The American College of Surgeons gratefully acknowledges the following companies for their educational grants and/or “gifts in kind”:

Aloka – equipment loan

Award – printing of program

Ethicon – equipment loan and \$10,000

While the logo can appear, the provider cannot acknowledge support only by showing the commercial supporter’s logo. The acknowledgement needs to specifically tell the learner that the commercial supporter gave support for the activity. The acknowledgment of commercial support cannot contain any product promotion.

There is some flexibility regarding the language of the acknowledgment. The acknowledgment may also include the mission and areas of clinical involvement of the company as well as the corporate logo if it is not product promotional in nature. No specific products may be referenced even if they are not related to the topic of the program.

Commercially Supported Social Events

Commercially supported social events should not compete with educational sessions. Printed acknowledgement of commercial support social events is limited to the program book/brochure and posters located adjacent to the events. Signs, table tents, and centerpieces regarding social events and commercial support are prohibited from being placed inside the education program room.

Commercial Exhibits vs Commercial Support

Commercial companies exhibiting at your activity are not considered commercial supporters. Exhibit fees are not educational grants. Therefore exhibitors are not required to complete a commercial support agreement.

Commercial Advertisements vs Commercial Support

The funds from corporate advertisements do not constitute commercial support and therefore it is not necessary for the advertiser to complete a commercial support agreement. However, such advertisements may only appear in publications of a non-educational nature, such as the general brochure. Advertisements are not allowed in materials of an educational nature, including course syllabi.

SATELLITE SYMPOSIUM

A satellite symposium is a course planned, executed, and sponsored by a commercial entity that is offered during an educational activity accredited by the College. There are several restrictions regarding such an activity:

1. The College does not provide CME credit for the symposium. The company must find another accredited provider in order to offer their attendees CME credit.
2. The symposium must begin and end outside of the regular meeting hours of the ACS educational activity. Satellite symposiums are usually offered prior to or following an education program. Other options within the meeting dates include “Sunrise” sessions and evening hours when there are no regular sessions.
3. Neither the College’s name or logo may appear in the symposium materials. A disclaimer should be included in the promotional materials indicating that there is no ACS involvement.
4. All promotional materials must be approved by an ACS representative prior to print.