

Guidelines for Co-sponsorship of Agriculture Programs

ANRE Program Area

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Shrinking budgets on both the county and state level have increased the interest in co-sponsorship of educational programs. The term “co-sponsorship” is used somewhat loosely to describe the process of Extension and a firm, organization, or agency outside of Extension working together in some fashion to produce an educational program or product. This affiliation generally occurs on one of three levels:

- I. A private firm or organization is solely responsible for planning, organizing, conducting, or producing the event or product. Extension may provide assistance in the form of speakers, facilities, equipment, publications, or publicity in return for acknowledgment on the program or product.

This type of partnering where Extension assists a private firm or organization with the delivery of an educational program is fairly common and while the practice doesn't usually present the appearance of impropriety, the potential for this to occur is fairly high, primarily because the educator does not have complete control of the way the program or printed materials are presented. Situations that may invoke the appearance of impropriety include:

- a. The educator partners with one firm or organization to the apparent exclusion of other similar groups.
- b. The educator's partnership, especially with a private firm, takes on the appearance of endorsement because of the amount of time or assistance provided.
- c. The use of the Extension logo on programs, papers or publications may create the appearance of control and/or endorsement of the material or event when in fact that is not the case.

- II. Extension is solely responsible for planning, organizing, conducting, or producing the event or product. Extension has complete control over the educational content of the event or product. A firm or organization may provide speakers, facilities, equipment, or financial support in return for acknowledgment on the program or product.

Co-sponsorship on this level is the most common and presents the lowest level of risk to Extension in terms of avoiding accusations of impropriety or unfair preferential treatment. Examples of this level of co-sponsorship are:

- a. Outside entity provides speakers from their organization
- b. Outside entity provides funding for speakers not connected to their organization
- c. Outside entity pays for facility or meal costs
- d. Outside entity pays for production or mailing costs for a newsletter

Questions to be addressed before entering into this level of co-sponsorship include:

- a. Does Extension clearly control 100 percent of the educational content? The use of terms such as “support provided by” rather than “co-sponsored” help to make this relationship clearer.
- b. Do promotional materials imply any sort of endorsement of the outside entity or its products? Use of a disclaimer may be appropriate.
- c. Does this co-sponsorship prevent other entities from also serving as a co-sponsor in a similar way? Are you prepared to accommodate other entities as co-sponsors?

III. Both Extension and the private entity both actively contribute to the planning, organizing, conducting, or producing the event or product. Both Extension and the private entity have input and control over the educational content of the event or product.

Of the three levels of co-sponsorship, this level presents the most risks to the unbiased stance of Extension. Co-sponsorship with producer-based groups can usually be managed with little risk of the appearance of impropriety and these kinds of educational partnerships are actually encouraged. Educators, however, should be careful to determine that the goals of the co-sponsoring organization and Extension are compatible. Furthermore, all jointly prepared materials must contain the UWEX equal opportunity statement.

Co-sponsorship of an event with a private firm on this level can easily present a risk of the appearance of impropriety and should be approached with a great deal of caution. The chances of this occurring can be minimized by:

- a. Both Extension and the private entity understanding that the APPEARANCE of impropriety is as much a problem as its actual occurrence.
- b. Extension being very “up front” about the concerns of impropriety and the ground rules that will prevent it from occurring.
- c. Avoiding the use of company logos on printed material and/or in conjunction with the Extension logo.
- d. Clearly denoting when authors or speakers are presenting from their personal or company prospective.

Co-sponsorship of educational products and programs clearly presents risks to Extension and often involve intense oversight to avoid the appearance of impropriety. If managed carefully, however, the benefits of co-sponsorship can far outweigh the potential risks associated with this practice.

For addition information concerning co-sponsorship of educational programs refer to UWEX publication “Guidelines for Commercial Sponsorship” at http://www.uwex.edu/ces/admin/policies/Commercial_Sponsorship.pdf.

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