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Guiding Principles for Relationships with Entities at Interest

Key Terms

Activities/programs: Include, but are not limited to, educational activities and information sharing (i.e., conferences, webinars), scientific statements, publications, scholarships, and awards.

Entities at interest: External individuals or groups (including but not limited to: individuals, foundations, public/private partnerships, academic institutions, commodity organizations, industry, trade associations, government agencies, and other scientific, medical, or not-for-profit organizations) with a stake (financial, commercial, or otherwise) in the outcomes of a planned co-sponsored or managed activity/ program/ partnership with ASN or the ASN Foundation.

Relationship: A state of affairs existing between two or more parties having dealings.

Partnership: A relationship usually involving close cooperation between parties having specified and joint rights and responsibilities. Partnerships can be financial or non-financial.

Overview

The American Society for Nutrition (ASN) works with various stakeholders to further the Society's mission "to advance the science, education and practice of nutrition." ASN recognizes that our vision, "A Healthier World through Evidence-Based Nutrition," can only be accomplished by effectively working with diverse food and nutrition stakeholders.

ASN will only engage in collaborative, purposeful, transparent relationships with entities at interest as a means to advance nutrition science and to provide balanced, science-based information and education to members and other stakeholders to assist with their research and work. By doing so, this further advances ASN as the respected, credible body for nutrition science, research, and practice. As an authoritative, independent, and trusted voice in nutrition science, ASN has developed Guiding Principles for Relationships with Entities at Interest to minimize bias, enhance transparency, and manage any potential conflicts of interest when working with others. ASN engages with entities at interest only when such a relationship does not diminish or impair the Society's objectivity, autonomy, credibility, priorities, and actions.

In this document, the Guiding Principles to which ASN staff and leadership will adhere in every effort to transparently form ASN's relationships and partnerships with entities at interest are presented. Then, the organizational management process that ASN staff and leadership will follow is described, along with the independent external review steps taken to monitor the management process and ASN's adherence to the process.

ASN Guiding Principles for Relationships with Entities at Interest

All relationships must:

- Be aligned with ASN's vision, mission, Strategic Plan and imperatives, policies, and values

(Diversity and Inclusion; Integrity; Respect; Innovation; Drive). The mission of ASN drives all proposed activities/programs – to advance the science, education, and practice of nutrition.

- Address the professional needs of ASN members and the nutrition science, research, and practice communities.
- Protect and maintain trust in ASN, and ASN’s integrity, ethical standards, credibility, and identity as an authoritative, credible, balanced voice of nutrition science and practice.
- Maintain the objectivity of ASN, its employees, leaders and members, and activities/programs. Relationships must not bias ASN’s scientific and professional objectivity and must provide benefit to ASN’s members and other nutrition stakeholders.
 - As such, ASN maintains final approval and control of all ASN-affiliated activities/programs.
- Comply with the rules and standards of continuing education credit granting entities for relevant activities/programs.
- Be consistent with the ASN-endorsed principles set forth in “Funding food science and nutrition research: financial conflicts and scientific integrity”ⁱ and in “Scientific Integrity Principles and Best Practices”ⁱⁱ.

ASN Involvement in Partnerships

- Financial support from entities at interest in no way influences ASN’s governance, programmatic decisions, or advocacy activities/programs.
- ASN’s comments or testimony related to scientific and regulatory policy are based on objective interpretation of available science and prepared using a balance of member perspectives to inform ASN decision-making.
- ASN will not endorse any company, brand, or product, and partnerships or relationships should not be misconstrued as such. Support of ASN activities/programs by entities at interest does not permit control over content nor does it mean or imply ASN approval or endorsement of an entity at interest’s policies or products.
- All proposed ASN-affiliated activities/programs are internally reviewed by ASN staff and relevant ASN member groups, to ensure scientific accuracy that is of high quality and does not directly promote or endorse financial and commercial interests of the entity or present other potential conflicts of interest. ASN reserves the right to maintain involvement in the development, distribution, and implementation, of all affiliated content, messaging, activities/programs, and products.
 - ASN’s logo and name may only appear in partnership materials with final editorial control and approval by relevant ASN staff.
- ASN will publicly disclose all entities at interest on co-developed, managed or financially supported activities/programs. ASN will maintain agreements with all entities at interest

that specify clear objectives and goals of such activities/programs, the roles of ASN and other partners, what support is provided, what the support is for, the amount given (if financial support), how the funds may be used.

- Multiple funding sources will be sought for all activities/programs financially supported by entities at interest to achieve a balanced portfolio of funders, organizers, and a balanced program whenever possible.
- These Guiding Principles will be shared with all current and prospective partners. These Guiding Principles provide the basis for internal review of potential ASN partnerships and relationships with all entities at interest. ASN reserves the right to withdraw from any agreement and terminate partnerships if any terms or conditions within these Guiding Principles are violated or not met to the full extent.

Organizational Management Process

The ASN Chief Executive Officer and appropriate ASN program staff have responsibility for reviewing all initiative and/or partnership proposals for relationships with entities at interest to ensure they abide by the Guiding Principles. Regular programmatic updates will be provided to the ASN Board of Directors and/or the ASN Foundation Board, and Board approval will be sought for all major initiatives and partnerships with entities at interest. If further review is requested by the Board, ASN will consult with the ASN Relationships Advisory Group¹ (see below) to evaluate whether a proposed initiative or partnership aligns with the criteria defined in this document. If consensus cannot be reached, the ASN Board of Directors, ASN Foundation Board, and ASN Chief Executive Officer have responsibility to resolve matters.

External Review of Management Process

ASN will share all agreements with entities at interest that it maintains with the independent ASN Relationships Advisory Group and with the independent third party that will conduct annual audits to determine ASN's adherence to these Guiding Principles.

The ASN Relationships Advisory Group will annually review the management process ASN uses to minimize bias and enhance transparency regarding activities supported by entities at interest, review ASN's Guiding Principles for Relationships with Entities at Interest, and review ASN's annual audit to ensure compliance with the guidelines and management process. The ASN Relationships Advisory Group will advise the ASN Board of Directors and/or the ASN Foundation Board of any concerns as well as provide the Boards with periodic recommendations for changes and modifications to the guidelines and management process as the environment evolves.

An email address accessed solely by the chair of the ASN Relationships Advisory Group will be provided to ASN members. Any concerns by ASN members related to initiatives or partnerships

¹ The ASN Relationships Advisory Group is an independent external advisory group put in place to review ASN activities co-sponsored or supported by "entities and/or individuals at interest". The Advisory Group's membership and charge will be approved by the ASN Board of Directors. The Advisory Group will consist of up to five non-ASN members, including not-for-profit professionals who have successful experience in transparently managing not-for-profit activities, including those financially supported by "entities and/or individuals at interest".

with entities at interest should be communicated via this email address for response by the ASN Relationships Advisory Group.

The ASN Relationships Advisory Group will maintain regular communication with ASN's Chief Executive Officer to resolve any concerns. ASN's Chief Executive Officer will serve as a point of contact and ASN liaison for the ASN Relationships Advisory Group. All concerns raised will also be shared on a regular basis with the ASN Board of Directors and/or the ASN Foundation Board.

i Garza C, Stover P, Ohlhorst SD, Field MS, et al. Best practices in nutrition science to earn and keep the public's trust. *Am J Clin Nutr* 2019. 109;1: 225–243

ii Rowe S, Alexander N, Clydesdale FM, et al. Funding food science and nutrition research: financial conflicts and scientific integrity. *Am J Clin Nutr* 2009. 89: s1285-1291

iii Kretser A, Murphy D, Bertuzzi S, et al. Scientific integrity principles and best practices: recommendations from a scientific integrity consortium. *Sci Eng Ethics* 2019. 25: 327–355

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