



Slow Food USA[®]

Corporate Sponsorship Policy

Introduction

Slow Food USA (SFUSA) adheres to the following sponsorship principles to steer decisions about when and from whom to accept sponsorships – both in-kind and cash – from the private sector. Whereas philanthropic investments (via foundation grants) are governed with clear protocols and terms of engagement defined the IRS, corporate sponsorships are not. These differences bring both significant risks and opportunities.

The risks in corporate sponsorship include the public and membership perception that sponsorship equates SFUSA product endorsement; and that endorsements compromise one of the few assets SFUSA possesses: its integrity. This is no small matter. Indeed, purists within SFUSA's membership may even hold the position that SFUSA should not entertain any support beyond membership dues. As a result, it is extremely important that sponsorships are chosen wisely and reflect some method of evaluation to determine when and when not to pursue a sponsorship. After all, if companies are large enough to provide financial support to SFUSA then it is worth considering whether scale and wealth dilute a company's commitment to good, clean and fair practices (even if the company's mission states an alignment of values with Slow Food).

Opportunities include access to resources that exceed those available from philanthropic sources. They also help SFUSA to expand its influence upon civil society, policy makers, consumers and for-profit actors by bringing theoretical concepts (of good, clean and fair) to the ground by linking theory with action (be it SFUSA action or that in conjunction with a company).

These guiding principles are based on SFUSA's mission and values, and on Slow Food International's (SFI) Fundraising Guidelines. While all Slow Food association bodies are free to choose their own sponsors, SFI asks that they should use its principles as the model. Similarly, SFUSA asks similar alignment in actions from its local chapters.

These principles should be applied to all sponsor candidates. SFUSA reserves the right to reject monies from any entity or to terminate relationships at any time. SFUSA's acceptance of a sponsorship shall not constitute, whether explicitly or implicitly, that SFUSA endorses the sponsor's products, services, facilities or business.

Highlights from Slow Food International Fundraising Guidelines

There are two rules in Slow Food International's Fundraising Guidelines that are fundamental worldwide and that are directly applicable to SFUSA's efforts to attain sponsorships:

- *No sponsor of Slow Food may place constraints upon the choices of the Association, its activities, and its philosophy in general. Slow Food retains total autonomy with respect to its sponsors.*
- *No business or organization can sponsor Slow Food if it conducts activities that conflict with the philosophy and actions of Slow Food.*

General Principles: Consistency of Mission & Values

SFUSA is part of a global, grassroots organization with supporters in over 150 countries around the world who believe that food and farming should be sources of health and wellbeing for everyone and the planet. Through national advocacy, local projects that bring people together through the common language of food, SFUSA's 250,000 supporters, 12,000 members and 200 chapters are making it easier to access food that is good for us, good for the environment, and good for the people who grow, pick and prepare it.

Slow Food values center around **healthy and enjoyable food, preservation of food cultures and traditions, environmental sustainability, and social justice for all food chain parties**; such values are upheld with a local, national and global consciousness.

Key Considerations

1. SFUSA must protect its brand, logo, name and reputation as a membership organization with integrity. Thus, the organization will only seek sponsorships with reputable businesses and organizations that have high ethical standards consistent with SFUSA's goals of good, clean and fair food for all; and that demonstrate evidence of movement towards those goals.
2. SFUSA will prioritize relationships with sponsors that share its commitment to good, clean and fair food or those that have potential to help the organization achieve its core work goals.
3. SFUSA will not pursue relationships with sponsors whose missions, values or conduct obviously conflict that of the organization.¹
4. SFUSA will consider relationships with sponsors who are not a perfect fit at the time being, but that are working to be by improving in specific areas within a reasonable timeframe.

Acknowledgement of Sponsorships

A List of Sponsors will be published on SFUSA's website during the periods in which the respective sponsorship agreements are in effect. In general, SFUSA will acknowledge its sponsors on the List of Sponsors by providing each sponsor's logo, as well as a hyperlink to each sponsor's homepage. Links to any external website or to any third party's commercial or non-commercial product or service shall not constitute a recommendation or endorsement of such sponsor's products, services, facilities or business by SFUSA.

Decision-Making

Decisions about sponsorships will be made by the staff's executive team and led by the Development Department. Of course, this will require both input and support from other departments: Communications and Network Support before, during and after sponsorships are confirmed. No written agreements, a requirement of all sponsors, will be signed without approval of

¹ Though the idea of designing a litmus test for sponsorship approval is initially attractive, it would require an ongoing maintenance of key indicators of values consistent with SFUSA priorities and values. After all, it is our hope that these indicators are forever changing, reflecting improvements in our struggle for social good. As such, SFUSA does not maintain a list of indicators that immediately disqualify potential sponsorship candidates. Rather, SFUSA looks for evidence of movements towards good, clean and fair values. How good? How Clean? Or lastly, how fair are the potential sponsor's operations? This is where SFUSA deploys another of Slow Food's operating principles: a commitment to common sense. The farther a sponsor's practices are from Slow Food values, the greater is the risk of compromising SFUSA's reputation. Additionally, more resources will be required by SFUSA to justify its relationship with the sponsor. These considerations should enter into the decision-making process: How do the costs balance with the benefits?

the Executive Director or his/her delegate. Should the size of a potential sponsorship be so large as to compromise the integrity of SFUSA as an independent organization, then it is expected that the Executive Director will conduct due diligence to seek support (if not formal approval) from the Board of Directors. How large is so large as to constitute a risk of independence is difficult to estimate in advance; however, best practices require ongoing maintenance of relations and communications with Chapter Leaders and Governors to insure that surprises are few and comprehension of sponsorship purposes are understood (even if not agreed upon) at all levels of SFUSA's national community.

Note: These guidelines address sponsorships and not charitable donations for which businesses and organizations receive tax deductions; SFUSA does have a separate corporate giving program run by its Development team. Further, this policy does not cover commercial co-venture, embedded giving, or sweepstakes relationships, which are regulated by authorities and require additional consideration.