



Guidelines for Sponsorship and Collaborative Partnerships with the Association for the Study of Obesity

1. Introduction

Sponsorship or collaborative partnerships with other organisations are important to The Association for the Study of Obesity (ASO). They are of potential benefit to the Association in the following ways:

- Raising the profile of the ASO as a result of association with a prominent partner
- Providing an income stream and resourcing for the ASO events and activities.

The Association seeks support from a range of organisations including government departments, non-government organisations, industry, third-sector organisations and other bodies for its activities in order to enhance opportunities for its members. In addition to supporting our main flagship event UKCO, sponsorship supports educational events, training courses/materials, networking events (including Early Career Researcher (ECR) activities) and supporting the involvement of patients and public at events.

In accepting support (financial or otherwise), the ASO enters into a mutually beneficial collaboration with these organisations. The ASO recognises that through the sponsorship of activities and events and other collaborative activities, organisations are provided with an opportunity for exposure to experts and opinion formers in the field of obesity and mutual aims may be achieved. However, ASO recognises that organisations may wish a collaborative approach with ASO for other reasons, such as access to customers or credibility. When seeking commercial support for an Association event, the underlying principle is that the integrity of the ASO and the independence and professional standing of its reputation is maintained.

ASO costs cannot be fully met through our membership subscriptions and therefore sponsorship is an important way to ensure sustainability. As an organisation, we have made a choice to work towards sponsorship of events and other activities rather than passing on running costs onto members via inflated membership or event costs. As a result, we are able to offer low cost registration and subsidised membership.

This document aims to establish a framework for the ASO working in partnership, with consistent procedures for all types of Sponsorship agreements and collaborative projects.

2. Background

The Association for the Study of Obesity (ASO) is an independent organisation, the leading Learned Society for obesity in the UK, with affiliation to its European (EASO) and International (WOF) bodies. Members of ASO are individuals who have an interest in obesity and who work in a wide array of roles (or are retired from such roles), are themselves living with obesity or are studying obesity or a topic closely allied to it.

The mission of the ASO is:

‘To develop an understanding of obesity through the pursuit of excellence in research and education, the facilitation of contact between individuals and organisations, and the promotion of action to prevent and treat obesity’.

Currently, the main activities of the ASO are:

- Developing and disseminating obesity research and best practice for prevention

through events and grants

- Providing advice/opinion on obesity matters to external agencies.

Other activities include:

- Providing advice and consultation on relevant policies and guidance
- Training and accreditation for health care professional and ECRs
- Supporting the development of students and early career researchers
- Facilitating networking
- Leading on Centres for Obesity Management activities

Throughout its history the ASO has had successful partnerships with various government departments, non-government organisations, industry, third-sector organisations and other bodies. These have been predominantly through the ASO conferences. This document aims to build upon this success and to develop a framework for future collaborations.

In undertaking such ventures, the ASO will ensure that:

- consistent, scientific and evidence-based information is provided where relevant
- independent expertise in the field of obesity research is offered
- it will endeavor to promote itself as the UK learned society to be approached regarding all aspects of obesity research, policy and practice.

The ASO acknowledges that a wide range of organisations with an interest in obesity, health and disease across clinical and research communities may be interested in sponsoring or working collaboratively with the ASO. Such collaborations can mutually support the objectives of the ASO and of the collaborating organisation. Forming new alliances is a positive way forward for the ASO.

Following strategic review and consultation with members, the ASO will only in future be offering the opportunity for sponsorship of clearly defined activities and events. The ASO will no longer accept monies to support the Association per se or for non-defined activities. Collaborations with not-for-profit agencies such as government bodies, charities etc will be considered in relation to the mutual benefit proposed to its members, as well as the reputational benefit to the Association itself.

3. The ethos of the ASO sponsorship and partnerships

- ✓ All companies and organisations are welcome to discuss opportunities with the ASO, but ASO will endeavor to avoid working with one company exclusively across a range of activities.
- ✓ Any claim used in the collaboration must have a sound, scientific evidence base.
- ✓ Health messages must be consistent with recognised policy from a bone-fide professional or government body or accepted peer-reviewed scientific research.
- ✓ The ASO is committed to promoting obesity research especially in the context of health policy and practice. This creates the context within which any acceptable collaboration might take place.
- ✓ All material which receives support from the ASO will be of an educational nature.
- ✓ The ASO does not seek to endorse any product, service or individual. Any partnership will not be a demonstration of endorsement by the ASO.
- ✓ The final agreement with any collaborating partner will be embodied in a formal Memorandum of Understanding.

- ✓ All agreements, for example, permission to use the Association's name and logo, will embody specific conditions and be limited to the collaboration in question.
- ✓ All agreements will be time-limited. Lengthy or recurring collaborations will be subject to periodic review and re-evaluation.
- ✓ ASO will acknowledge all sponsorship and collaborations to provide clear and transparent information to its members and the public
- ✓ Following the consultation exercise undertaken with members, it was determined that the ASO will not work with commercial organisations whose primary focus is food/drink sales.
- ✓ Sponsorship ethos will continue to be a key part of future ASO membership consultation and amendments will be considered accordingly

4. Guiding principles for collaborations

Before entering into any partnership or project the ASO's core principles will be paramount. The suitability of any collaboration will always be assessed with these in mind.

The principles are:

The ASO's scientific integrity reputation will always be the first consideration.

- Scientific validity, ethical soundness and professional appropriateness will always be the criteria against which any potential collaboration will be judged.

The wider-picture will also always be considered when assessing collaborations e.g. the social and socio-political context.

5. Procedure for considering a sponsor or collaborative partnership

When a new sponsor or collaborative partner for an activity or event is suggested to the ASO, it will be considered by the Treasurer who will discuss it with the wider ASO Committee. All expressions of interest should be directed to the ASO Secretariat in the first instance:

ASOoffice@aso.org.uk

The ASO may proactively approach companies or organisations, but any such proposals will be considered and agreed by the Trustees.

This Policy will be reviewed on a regular basis by the trustees (usually every three years) and comments from the members are welcome. Trustees have requested consultation specifically regarding the organisations that ASO accept as Sponsors as a priority in 2022.

Date of last review by trustees: 27th October 2021

Date of next review: October 2024