

Policy on Commercial Funding Opportunities

Statement on Commercial Funding

PIRE promotes all aspects of health and well-being among individuals, families, and communities throughout the nation and world. Our mission is to promote, undertake, and evaluate activities, studies, and programs that improve individual and public health, welfare, and safety. In support of this mission, we create and support an environment within which innovative, diverse, and dedicated researchers and practitioners work to extend the frontiers of scientific knowledge and its application.

PIRE does not routinely accept funding through either grants or contracts from commercial business interests with a history of negatively impacting public health. Uncritical acceptance of funding from these types of commercial sources is a conflict of interest with the fundamental health-improvement mission of PIRE and creates a risk to the reputation of the organization for unbiased scientific integrity.

Specifically, a funding opportunity with a commercial interest that potentially undermines public health is one in which the resources are provided by either the commercial business itself or a subsidiary of the business, such as a non-profit foundation funded solely by one or more entities engaged in specific commercial purpose (e.g., beverage alcohol production).

Application to Commercial Entities

This policy applies to circumstances when an assessment of the beneficence, fairness, and respect aspects of the commercial funding opportunity could indicate that the potential public health impact compellingly outweighs the risk of accepting the funding.

The list of commercial entities required to follow this review process, or are excluded from funding consideration, will be examined and updated during the annual Center Directors meeting each November, with additions or subtractions made as determined by a majority vote of the Centers with each revision recorded by date.

As of November 10, 2023, the process set forth in this policy is required for any commercial funding opportunities from:

- Alcohol, cannabis, firearm, and pharma entities.
- Tobacco is excluded from funding consideration.

Any PIRE Center Director can request that this policy be applied to a commercial funding opportunity for an entity not on the required list. PIRE staff who wish to raise a concern about a commercial funding opportunity can do so through their Center Director.

Even if the public health impact of a potential project is deemed compelling, the scientific integrity of PIRE must be guaranteed to the extent possible, before considering acceptance of commercial funding. The grant or contract from the commercial entity must contain specific language approved by the PIRE Corporate Officers to ensure that PIRE scientists have independence in publication decisions and research design, and that the data can be freely shared with the public and other researchers, in accordance with appropriate human research protections.

Commercial Funding Review Process

PIRE investigators seeking to respond to a commercial funding opportunity must provide a rationale based on the PIRE CAIRES principles of beneficence, fairness, and respect.

Initiation of the Commercial Funding Review Process is the responsibility of PIRE investigators seeking to respond to a funding opportunity by formally notifying the appropriate Center Director and PIRE CEO. The review process begins at that point in time, with the Commercial Funding Review Form (CFRF) due within three business days. It is the responsibility of the investigators to ensure that there is sufficient time to complete the review prior to a submission deadline.

The CFRF is used by the investigators to specify why the public health impact (beneficence) of the project may outweigh the risks to PIRE's organizational reputation for scientific integrity, while appropriately balancing respect and fairness for colleagues, the public, and affected populations. The PI/PDs will have up to three business days to develop the CFRF and submit it to the CEO.

The CEO will distribute the CFRF to the Center Directors, who will have three business days to review the document. A Center Director will name a replacement from other Center staff for the review if the Center Director is part of the team seeking to respond to a commercial funding opportunity, or if the Center Director is not available.

The CEO will schedule a one-hour meeting of the Center Directors three business days after distributing the CFRF for a discussion and final vote. Each Center will have one vote (either Yes or No, abstentions are not allowed) with the majority being the recommendation.

Any application required to follow this policy, but has not done so, will be withdrawn from funding consideration by notification to the commercial entity.

The CEO will review the CFRF and the recommendation of the Center Directors to make a final decision. The CEO will inform the PIRE Board Executive Committee of the decision each time a commercial funding opportunity is reviewed.