

Frameworks and agreements explained

Maintaining independence and showing transparency are key factors when interacting with industry partners. There are two key documents that will help to ensure transparency and protect each party's independence:

1. Framework for interaction
2. Project agreement.

Framework for interaction

A framework for interaction is a set of general principles or policies, or a code of conduct/practice, which governs how one party will interact with another, e.g. how your patient organisation will interact with industry partners. It can be used to guide your organisation in setting up relationships with industry partners, including pharmaceutical companies. The framework sets out the boundaries of interaction, and specifies the rules of engagement. They **are not** usually project or collaboration specific.

When working with industry there may be two frameworks for interaction that need to be taken into consideration and followed:

1. **Patients' organisation**

It is recommended that your patients' organisation has its own policies, principles, or code that it adheres to when working with industry partners. If your organisation does not already have a framework for interaction, you can develop one using the framework for interaction template, provided in the '*Working With Partners And Stakeholders*' toolkit.

2. **Industry partner**

The industry partner that you are collaborating with may also have its own set of policies, principles or a code that it adheres to when working with patients' organisations. It is important to be aware of these, and try to work within their framework while maintaining the independence of your organisation. If you are concerned in any way, do have a discussion with the industry partner and try to resolve any issues.

Project agreement

A project specific agreement is a signed document that defines the purpose of the project/interaction, the responsibilities of both parties and provides an overview of the project plan. Each project/interaction should have its own specific project agreement.

Ideally, for each collaboration, a detailed project plan should be developed. Once this plan has been agreed, it should be written up into an agreement and signed by both parties. The agreement should include:

- Name of the project
- Names of the involved parties
- Approach/type of project, e.g. meeting, information campaign, unrestricted funding
- Purpose/objectives
- Roles, responsibilities, tasks and deliverables
- Level and source of financial support
- Scope and content of non-financial support
- Timelines
- Sign-off process
- Acknowledgements (i.e. how each party will be acknowledged for their contribution)
- Co-endorsement (use of logos and other identifying symbols).