

Top tips for working with pharmaceutical companies

Here are some top tips for patients' organisations on developing strong partnerships with pharmaceutical companies. These top tips will help your organisation work effectively with the pharmaceutical industry while maintaining your independence.

They have been divided into three sections:

1. Supporting interactions with industry
2. Selecting projects and opportunities for interaction
3. Working with pharmaceutical companies.

1. Supporting interactions with industry

- Develop a framework for interaction that describes the basic principles, rules or policies of how your patient organisation interacts with industry. This framework can be used to help your patient organisation set up relationships with industry partners including pharmaceutical companies.
- Have a sponsorship programme that outlines how pharmaceutical companies can work with your patient organisation.
- Assign one person to look after all industry interactions.
- Publish information about your interactions with pharmaceutical companies (e.g. on your website or in a newsletter) to help ensure transparency.

2. Selecting projects and opportunities for interaction

- Make sure that the proposed project/interaction advances the mission of your organisation and benefits patients.
- Check that the proposed project/interaction is in line with the laws and regulations in your country.
- Partner with companies that respect how you work with industry and support your need to maintain independence.
- If possible, partner with multiple companies to help maintain independence and secure funding.
- Ensure that the interaction benefits both parties – your patient organisation and the pharmaceutical company.
- Projects should focus on external affairs and disease area activities (e.g. disease awareness campaigns). Avoid collaborative projects that support, or could be perceived to be supporting, a specific medicine. Do not engage in projects with industry partners where there is an implicit expectation or obligation to promote a branded, commercial product.
- Try to have long-term partnerships and, where possible, consider long-term projects and activities that align with your strategic plan.

3. Working with pharmaceutical companies

- For each project, agree the roles and responsibilities for yourself and the pharmaceutical company. For example, if the project involves running an educational meeting, the patients' organisation could be responsible for deciding the content of, and selecting speakers for the meeting, while the pharmaceutical company could be responsible for supplying information and logistical support.
- Agree project/interaction objectives at the start of the project/interaction.
- Develop a project plan and sign a project agreement.
- Be transparent and accountable for the actions of your patient organisation.
- Agree use of materials, information and logos, and how the parties will be acknowledged before initiating a project.
- Hold mid-project reviews and meetings to ensure the project is on track, and that each party is working to the agreed framework and project plan.
- Review and evaluate project/interactions.