



A M E R I C A N
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Guidelines for Supporting Specialty Group Activities through Sponsorships

AIC is dedicated to supporting the goals and activities of its Specialty Groups (SGs), including through facilitating and soliciting sponsorships. Sponsorships make SG activities more financially sustainable and provide opportunities to enrich SG members' experience. The following are our guidelines for developing and maintaining these sponsor relationships.

Finding Sponsors Leads

AIC highly encourages SGs to be proactive about searching for opportunities for sponsors. There are a limited number of organizations who currently provide sponsorship funding for SG activities and those related to conservation, and it is crucial to expand this group. We encourage SGs to think creatively; consider all connections to the field (materials, suppliers, researchers or research providers, allies, collaborators, etc.) and review specific topics your group is exploring that might be of interest to potential sponsors. If SGs officers have suggested leads for sponsorship opportunities, including contacts at these organizations, these leads should be provided to both AIC's Meetings and Advocacy Director and FAIC's development staff.

Managing Sponsor Leads

As AIC and FAIC are frequently in conversation with potential funders, it is crucial to ensure that all asks are strategic, targeted, and coordinated. This allows us to bundle asks and bring multiple projects that may be of interest to a potential sponsor, ensuring the maximum sponsorship funding possible. Additionally, AIC may have an existing relationship or pending funding request with an organization and it is important to acknowledge those factors in considering when or how to approach a potential sponsor. As such, sponsorship requests needs to be centralized within a representative of AIC who has knowledge of SG activities and sponsorship opportunities, as well as legal capacity to accept sponsorship funds. AIC's Meetings and Advocacy Director is ideally situated to advocate for SGs in this position and can manage communications and activities for all parties involved.

Entering into a Sponsorship Agreement

Specialty groups are not independent legal entities and cannot accept funds. Accordingly, negotiating any kind of contract must be done by designated AIC staff, as group officers cannot enter into or sign a binding contract or agreement, including sponsorships. All sponsorship funds must be received by and made payable to AIC, who will apply the sponsorship funds accordingly. SG officers will be able to track these funds through their quarterly reports, which are provided by AIC's Finance Manager via the SG Staff Liaison.

Acknowledging Sponsors

SGs can also help maintain positive relationships with sponsors. This is an essential aspect of soliciting and capitalizing on sponsorships. Acknowledging sponsors before, during, and after an event is a key aspect of sustaining these relationships. AIC recommends that sponsors be acknowledged in all promotional materials, at the event, and following the event, both at

subsequent related events and via a written note of thanks. Also consider any tangible or intangible benefits the sponsor receives from sponsoring your event or project. If SG officers would like assistance in contacting sponsors to offer thanks or discuss opportunities for sponsors to engage with the SG members, the SG Staff Liaison and Meetings & Advocacy Director can assist with these communications.

Annual Meeting Exhibit Hall

An active Exhibit Hall at the Annual Meeting will result in higher Annual Meeting sponsorships. By both exhibiting at the Annual Meeting and sponsoring an event, the sponsor increases their exposure to AIC members. Those vendors exhibiting at the Annual Meeting should receive the first opportunity to sponsor events. AIC has facilitated this by including sponsorship amounts in the Diamond and Gold booth packages.

FAIC Workshops

These sponsorships should not be confused with workshop sponsorships, which help allay material costs and are procured via FAIC development staff. Any leads for workshop support should be passed along to foundation@conservation-us.org.

Sponsorship Timeline

This is a general timeline to help provide context for the sponsorship process. As sponsors may be operating on different fiscal schedules, flexibility may be necessary.

June – Right after the Annual Meeting, current year sponsors are thanked and asked if they would like to continue the sponsorship next year.

June to July – Previous exhibitors contacted about sponsoring events in the upcoming Annual Meeting. Speciality Groups contact their membership to ask for recommendations of vendors who don't currently exhibit or sponsor at the Annual Meeting. This information is discussed with the Meetings and Advocacy Director. As many exhibitors have variable timetables for signing up to exhibit, it can be difficult to establish more precise timing. If an SG thinks there is a current vendor who would be ideally suited for sponsorship due to programming content or services, these connections should be discussed with the Meetings and Advocacy Director to ensure that if and when they commit to their booth, sponsorship is discussed.

August to October – AIC and each Speciality Group set realistic sponsorship goals. AIC and each Speciality Group decide who is the best point of first contact for the new vendors. Both AIC and the Speciality Groups work together on their established plan to bring in new Gold Booth exhibitors and sponsors.

November to February – Work to bring in exhibitors and sponsors continues.

February to March – Those company reps who said they would not exhibit are contacted one more time about sponsoring. (Note: as soon as a company rep says they won't exhibit, the rep will be asked about only sponsoring; this is an additional contact made by the Meetings director.)

March 1 – After running ideas and leads by the Meetings and Advocacy Director, SGs may approach organizations to propose sponsorships. The Meetings and Advocacy Director, SG Board Liaison, and Staff Liaison should be copied on these communications, if the communication to the vendor is in writing.

April – The format of onsite sponsor recognition is finalized.

May – Annual Meeting Month

Generally, the push to get sponsors will end in the beginning of April and the focus turns to taking care of the sponsors we have in place. However, this does not rule out the possibility of last-minute sponsorships.

Staff Contacts

For questions about sponsorships, contact the Meetings & Advocacy Director and SG Staff Liaison.

- Meetings & Advocacy Director: Ruth Seyler, rseyler@conservation-us.org
- SG Staff Liaison: Erika Goergen, egoergen@conservation-us.org
- FAIC Development: foundation@conservation-us.org