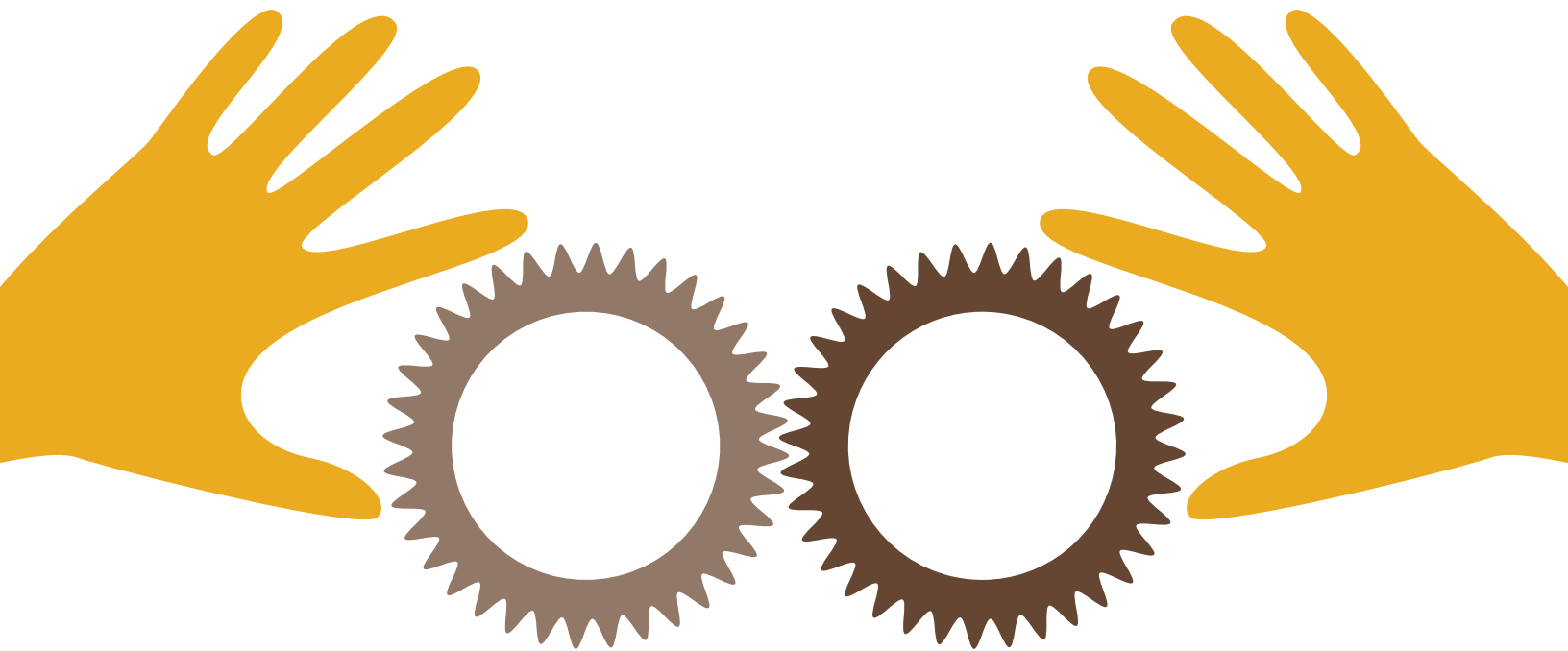
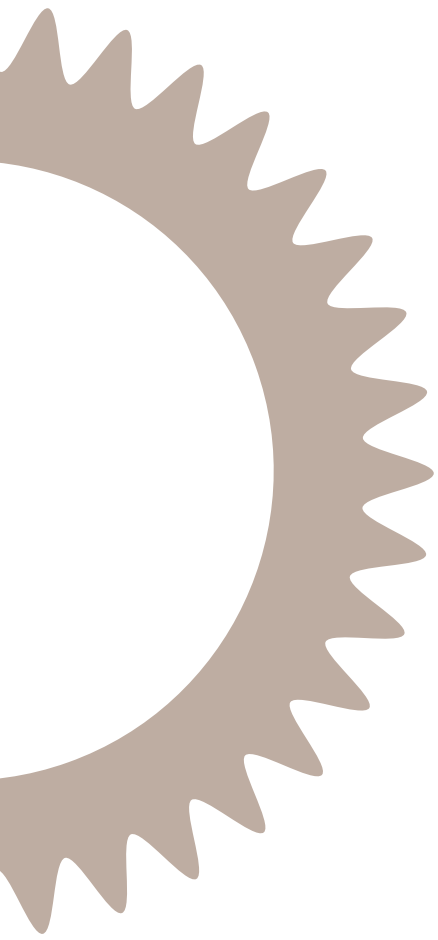


# Guiding Principles for Partnerships in Nutrition Science



THE SACKLER INSTITUTE  
*for* NUTRITION SCIENCE  
AT THE NEW YORK ACADEMY OF SCIENCES



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The Sackler Institute for Nutrition Science is a program  
of the New York Academy of Sciences

# Introduction

The Sackler Institute for Nutrition Science, a program of the New York Academy of Sciences, recognizes the need for scientific integrity and transparent collaborations to conduct and disseminate nutrition research to various audiences. The Sackler Institute strives to be an unbiased voice in nutrition, a unique science because of its interdisciplinary focus and of the evolving body of evidence across diverse fields and sectors. The broad range of actors involved in generating nutrition research requires engaging diverse stakeholders through collaborations across disciplines and sectors.

Involving varied partners in collaboration may be accompanied by competing personal, professional, institutional, and commercial interests. In 2014, the Sackler Institute reviewed partnership guidelines from other organizations, such as the World Health Organization and The National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine<sup>1</sup> and conducted a number of in-depth interviews with nutrition experts and practitioners to develop guiding principles and a process for fostering and engaging in partnerships in ways that promote scientific objectivity.

This document guides The Sackler Institute in the management of scientific partnerships. Its key aim is to minimize the risk of bias and of conflict of interest, whether real or perceived. It identifies the Sackler Institute Partnership Guidelines and defines how they are applied. It also proposes an Engagement Assessment Tool to evaluate the benefits and risks of specific partnerships (Appendix A) and an in-depth Declaration of Conflict of Interest (COI) form (Appendix B). The application of these Guiding Principles is overseen by a three-seat Engagement Review Committee that serves in an advisory capacity (Appendix C). Members of that Committee have a history of supporting public health in the nutrition science field.

Each principle is adapted to the four core activities of the Sackler Institute:

- Scientific conferences—open to the public for education and research and dissemination
- Collaborations— including closed-door workshops to facilitate expert discussion on a technical topic
- Research grants—to address knowledge gaps
- Publications—manuscripts published in *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, technical briefs, e-Briefings and podcasts.

The Guiding Principles are structured around four core axes:

- Independent Programming
- Systematic External Review
- Transparency
- Funding Diversity

<sup>1</sup> Among references consulted:

American Society for Nutrition Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Attestation

Canadian Institute for Health Research. Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Ethics Framework for Partnerships with the Private Sector, 2011 updated 2013.

Institute of Medicine –IOM (2009) Conflict of Interest in Medical Research, Education and Practice

FAO/WHO (2007) Framework for the Provision of Scientific Advice on Food Safety and Nutrition

# Guiding Principles for Partnership

## 1. Principle of Independent Programing

Decisions to engage in activities are based on gaps in nutrition research, dissemination, and expertise as outlined in [\*\*A Global Research Agenda for Nutrition Science\*\*](#) (The Sackler Institute for Nutrition Science, 2013), as well as on expertise and resources the Sackler Institute assembles and summons as needed.

### How the principle is achieved:

The Sackler Institute has two modes in which supporters provide financial funding: mission support and special project collaboration. Organizations that offer mission support provide unrestricted funding for overall Sackler Institute programing and those with relevant scientific expertise may participate in Sackler Institute's projects such as working groups and technical meetings.

Organizations that support **special collaboration** provide dedicated funding earmarked for specific public conferences, closed-door workshops, research challenges, research, Working Groups, and/or specific products (publications, videos, podcasts, etc.). All such support has a Letter of Agreement (LOA) or other official gift agreement, signed by all parties. This LOA outlines the roles and responsibilities of parties, including the level of engagement in the preparation of the activity, and refers to the Partnership Guideline. Decisions to engage with potential supporters are evaluated separately by the Engagement Review Committee using the Engagement Assessment Tool (Appendix A).

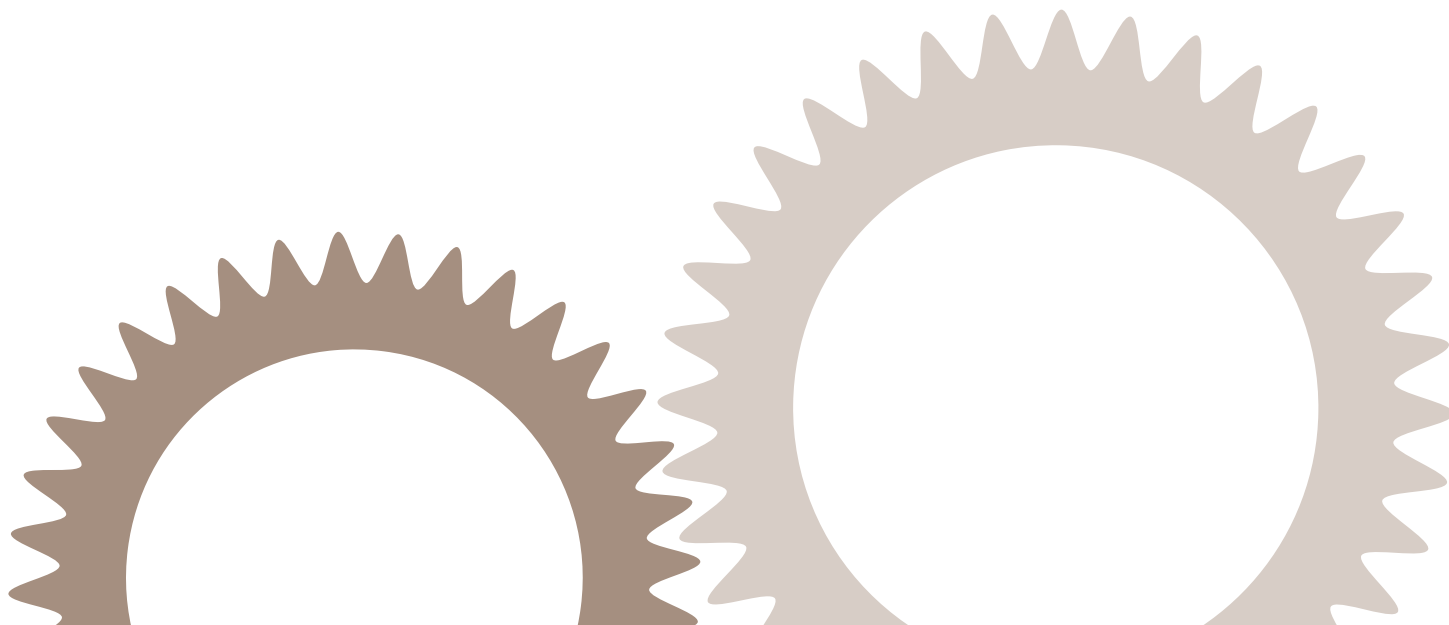
## 2. Principle of Systematic External Peer Review

The scientific content of Sackler Institute products and activities reflects rigorous research findings.

### How the principle is achieved:

For public conferences, Working Group presentations, and technical consultations, peer review is an open process where diverse scientific experts are solicited to join a Scientific Organizing Committee (SOC) and work through consensus to achieve a rigorous and balanced program. For publications in *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, peer reviewers are anonymous. Grants awarded by the Sackler Institute are evaluated with a double-blind review, where reviewers are not known to applicants prior to the award announcement and applications are anonymized before reviewer receipt. Reviewers who are affiliated with the organization of an applicant, or who declare relevant conflict of interest (COI), are recused from review of these individual application(s).

Every five years, an external peer review of the Sackler Institute's output and operation is conducted, serving as an independent audit mechanism. A summary of each review will be made available to the Sackler Institute Board Committee (Appendix C).



### 3. Principle of Transparency

Transparency is achieved by disclosing the funding source of activities and by making COI statements of organizers, presenters, collaborators, and supporters public:

- Funding source, including level of funding, activities funded and type of partnerships (mission support or special project collaboration) are publicly acknowledged.
- Full COI disclosures for speakers and organizers of specific conferences, authors of publications are publicly available on the Sackler Institute website and on publications with authorship. COI disclosure of Working Group members, Sackler Institute staff, and the Sackler Institute Board Committee are available upon request from the Sackler Institute.

#### **How the principle is achieved:**

A robust COI statement, containing declarations of both professional and personal interest (Appendix B), are made available for all public-facing events, projects, and other programming on a case-by-case basis as recommended by the Engagement Review Committee. COI for activities that are not public (e.g. closed door workshops) are available upon request. The intent of the COI statement is to identify any conflict of interest and disclose it publicly. Should a COI be identified and require resolution, the Sackler Institute will follow the steps described in the Engagement Assessment Tool (Appendix A).

### 4. Principle of Fundraising Diversity

Funding for the Sackler Institute comes from various sources and sectors, through unrestricted grants for mission support, and dedicated support for special collaborations.

#### **How the principle is achieved:**

The Sackler Institute leverages the resources provided by the Mortimer D. Sackler Foundation by seeking additional funds, and tracks both the origin and the allocation of these funds. These additional funds fall under different categories

#### **Unrestricted funds**

- Mission supporters provide unrestricted funding to advance the mission of the Sackler Institute
- Sponsors provide financial support associated to an already established activity. Sponsors receive corresponding recognition for their support in live and enduring activity materials. Sponsors are not engaged in the development of the activity, and the role of sponsor is clearly stated in external communication, alongside the support they provide.

#### **Dedicated funds**

- Presenting partners jointly develop an activity with the Sackler Institute and provide financial support to this activity. The exact content is driven by a diverse group of expert scientists assembled specifically for this activity. More details are provided below, in the 'Engagement Assessment Tool' section
- Promotional Partners are partners that promote the Sackler Institute activity through multiple modes at no financial cost, in exchange for similar promotion of the partner by the New York Academy of Sciences.

When a specific activity is fully supported by a single supporter, the supporter agrees that all decisions pertaining to the execution of the project are done in accordance with the peer review process, where scientific input from experts is solicited based solely on criteria of scientific excellence.

Supporters providing dedicated funding to an activity cannot promote products during this activity. If all activity costs are not defrayed by a supporter, the Sackler Institute has full autonomy to seek additional support.

# APPENDIX A: The Engagement Assessment Tool

## 1. Engagement Assessment for Scientific Conferences

### Assessment of Presenting Partner for Scientific Conferences

A Presenting Partner provides financial support for a scientific public conference that includes a formal Letter of Agreement outlining roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in the partnership.

- Prerequisite to Engagement
  - Is there a clearly defined and achievable goal to benefit the public?
- Assessment of Engagement
  - Does funding come from multiple sources and/or sectors?
  - Is the presenting partner free from benefiting commercially or financially from the proposed activity?
  - Is the proposed activity free from potential public health controversies (e.g., dietary intake of sugar, fat, salt; infant formula; genetically modified organisms)?
  - Will the event focus on technical scientific discussion and not on the crafting of policies or positions that impact public health?<sup>2</sup>

If the answer to all the above questions is “YES,” the engagement review will conclude that the partnership can move forward. If the answer to any of these questions is “NO,” the engagement review will carry out the following additional investigation:

- Does the presenting partner agree with the Guiding Principles, including scientific peer-review?
- Does the presenting partner agree that competing ideas, research, initiatives, when scientifically relevant, will be included?

If the answer to either of these questions is “NO” and efforts to resolve these questions have failed, the Engagement Review Committee will reject the partnership.

Once accepted, the project is implemented in two phases:

- 1) Project conceptualization:** a representative of the presenting partner and a representative of the Sackler Institute agree on the overall format and cost of the activity (e.g. whether it is a conference, a workshop, a publication). The representative of the presenting partner may not be a subject matter expert in the topic covered by the activity, but is given authority to deal with all matters related to the deliverables that do not fall under the responsibility of the Scientific Organizing Committee (SOC).
- 2) Project development:** the Sackler Institute develops the project in collaboration with expert scientists assembled in the SOC.

<sup>2</sup> The aim of the scientific conference is to discuss the state of knowledge on the subject. It is not meant to produce a position paper that directly prescribes health policy.



## Preventing Potential Conflicts of Interest in Scientific Conferences: Role and Composition of the SOC

The SOC develops the content for public conferences. The SOC is set up to prevent topical institutional and personal bias. Resources and materials for the conference may be drawn from the proceedings of the Working Groups assembled by the Sackler Institute (Appendix C) and search in the peer-reviewed literature. The goal of the Sackler Institute is to create an SOC that is as diverse as possible. Membership includes leading experts in the field and potential SOC members are asked to disclose potential COI prior to their confirmation. The Sackler Institute will review the submitted information as follow:

- Should no conflict of interest be identified, the proposed individual is confirmed in his or her role in the SOC.
- Should a conflict of interest be identified, the proposed individual will be contacted and asked for clarification or additional information. Methods of resolution will be identified and discussed with the individual. Resolution methods may include, but not be limited to, assuring valid content through evidence- based content using best available evidence, highest strength of evidence; assigning a different role or topic for the individual; cancellation of the individuals' participation.
- The SOC is facilitated by Sackler Institute and works by consensus. In cases where consensus cannot be reached, the Sackler Institute reserves the right to make final decisions.

A Presenting Partner may nominate one subject matter expert it employs to participate in the SOC. In circumstances where topical expertise is limited, one additional subject matter expert employed by or affiliated with the Presenting Partner may be included. Other SOC members include two Sackler Institute staff members as well as additional subject matter experts not employed by or affiliated with the presenting partner, nominated in mutual agreement by the Sackler Institute and the Presenting Partner. SOC members are selected based on the sole criteria of topical expertise and scientific excellence.

## 2. Engagement Assessment for Special Project Collaboration other than conferences

### Assessment of Supporters for Special Projects and Collaborations

A supporter provides financial funding to projects and collaborations implemented by the Sackler Institute and may also provide scientific contributions to these projects. Such projects include ongoing Working Groups and technical consultations. The roles and responsibilities of the parties are described in a formal LOA.

- Prerequisite to Engagement:
  - Is there a clearly defined and achievable goal to benefit the public?
- Assessment of Engagement:
  - Is the partner free from benefiting commercially or financially from providing financial support to the Sackler Institute?
- Will partner's representative(s) be involved as scientific expert(s) in activities focused on technical scientific discussion, which do not include the formal release of recommendations or positions that impact public health?

If all the above questions are answered "YES," the engagement process review will conclude that the partnership can move forward. If any of these questions are answered "NO," the engagement process review continues

- Does the partner agree with the Guiding Principles, including scientific peer-review?

If the answer is "No," and efforts to resolve these questions have failed, the support will be rejected with approval from the Engagement Review Committee, which will focus on assessing both real and perceived risks of financial COI and scientific bias.

### Prevention of Potential Conflicts of Interests in Special Projects and Collaborations

Prevention of potential COI follows the same guidelines as for Scientific Conferences described above.

### 3. Engagement Assessment for Grants Received by the Sackler Institute

A grantor funds the Sackler Institute based on proposals submitted by the Sackler Institute to a specific activity.

- Prerequisite to Engagement:
  - Is there a clearly defined and achievable goal to benefit the public?
- Assessment of Engagement:
  - Does the grantor's Request for Proposal and funding criteria align with the Sackler Institute's goals?
  - Is the grantor free from benefiting commercially or financially from the proposed activity?
  - Is the proposed activity free from potential public health controversies (e.g., dietary intake of sugar, fat, salt; infant formula; genetically modified organisms)?
  - Will the proposed activity focus on technical scientific discussion and not include recommendations, translation of research into policy, or positions that impact public health?

If all the above questions are answered "YES," the engagement process review will conclude that the partnership can move forward. If any of these questions are answered "NO," the engagement process review continues

- Does the activity proposed by the Sackler Institute comply with the Guiding Principles?

If this question is answered "No," the Sackler Institute will not submit a proposal. It may request guidance from the Engagement Review Committee, which will focus on assessing both real and perceived risks of financial COI and scientific bias.

### 4. Engagement Assessment for Mission Support Provided to the Sackler Institute

Mission supporters provide financial support in furtherance of the Sackler Institute's already established programs. Mission supporters receive recognition for their support on the Sackler Institute's website. Given that mission support is not tied to deliverables, the assessment is expedited.

- Assessment of Engagement:
  - Is the Sackler Institute's goal approved by the mission supporter in the Letter of Agreement?
  - Is the Supporter free from benefiting commercially or financially from the proposed activity?

If the answer is "No," and efforts to resolve these questions have failed, the support will be rejected with approval from the Engagement Review Committee, which will focus on assessing both real and perceived risks of financial COI and scientific bias.



# APPENDIX B: Declaration of Conflict of Interests

The declaration can be viewed at:

[https://nyas.formstack.com/forms/sackler\\_institute\\_coi](https://nyas.formstack.com/forms/sackler_institute_coi)

## APPENDIX C: Definitions

### The Sackler Institute Board Committee

The Sackler Institute is governed by a Board Committee composed of 11-18 members who provide strategic guidance and review the Sackler Institute's finances. The Board is chaired by the Executive Director of the Sackler Institute, and is comprised of

- Senior staff members of the New York Academy of Sciences
- Two members of The Mortimer D. Sackler Foundation
- Two New York Academy of Sciences Board of Governors Members
- Several members nominated for expertise in a field relevant to the Sackler Institute for Nutrition Science

The Board holds in-person meetings at the Academy a minimum of twice annually. Each member signs a Declaration of conflict of interest (COI; Appendix B) and is requested to update the Sackler Institute of any relevant changes. Continuation is determined on the willingness of the member to renew commitment. No Board member will have financial gain from the Sackler Institute except those employed by the New York Academy of Sciences. List of current Board members is available in the Sackler Institute's Annual Report. The 2015 report is available at

[www.nyas.org/NutritionAnnualReport2015](http://www.nyas.org/NutritionAnnualReport2015)

### Engagement Review Committee

The Engagement Review Committee evaluates activities on an annual basis and is on-call to assist the Sackler Institute's staff when necessary. Members serve in an advisory capacity and have a history of supporting public health in the nutrition science field. Each member signs a Declaration of COI (Appendix B) and updates this accordingly.

### Engagement Review Committee Members

- Juan Rivera Dommarco, PhD, Director, Research Center in Nutrition and Health, National Institutes of Public Health, Mexico
- Linda Meyers, PhD, Senior Science Advisor at American Society for Nutrition
- Third member to be confirmed

### Peer Review Publications

Publications produced by the Sackler Institute, either by staff or as products of programming or Working Groups, are published in peer-reviewed journals or through publications supervised by an advisory committee. Manuscripts are primarily submitted to ***Annals of the New York Academy of Science*** for peer-review and publication. The Sackler Institute provides funding for open-access to these volumes and/or individual articles.

### Research Grants

The Sackler Institute awards research grants periodically, thematically based on research gaps identified in ***A Global Research Agenda for Nutrition Science*** (The Sackler Institute for Nutrition Science, 2013). A Request for Proposals is issued publicly, and proposals are screened by the Sackler Institute staff and blind-reviewed by a group of invited judges chosen for their expertise. Reviewers are not known to applicants prior to the award and applications are anonymized before being sent to reviewers. Reviewers disclose COI prior to reviewing applications and those who are affiliated with the organization of an applicant, or who declare relevant COI are recused from review these individual application(s). Judges are acknowledged in the press release and webpage when awards are announced.

## Working Groups

The Sackler Institute manages and facilitates Working Groups whose members are recruited by the Sackler Institute and include individuals from nonprofits, NGOs, academia, and industry with expertise that spans the breadth of the specific field, from policy to clinical practice and research. Each member signs a Declaration of COIs (Appendix B) and is requested to update the Sackler Institute of any relevant changes. Members receive no honorarium for participation.

## Scientific Organizing Committees

Each conference has a Scientific Organizing Committee (SOC) that is comprised of a diverse group of researchers with expertise in the conference theme. Nominees may be Working Group members or can be unaffiliated with the Sackler Institute, nominated for their topical expertise and scientific credentials. All SOC members are asked to disclose their COI prior to joining the SOC, which enables a balanced composition of the SOC. Disclosure statements for SOC members and conference speakers are included in conference programs, which are posted on the conference webpage, at the time of the conference. Organizers and conference presenters do not receive honorarium.

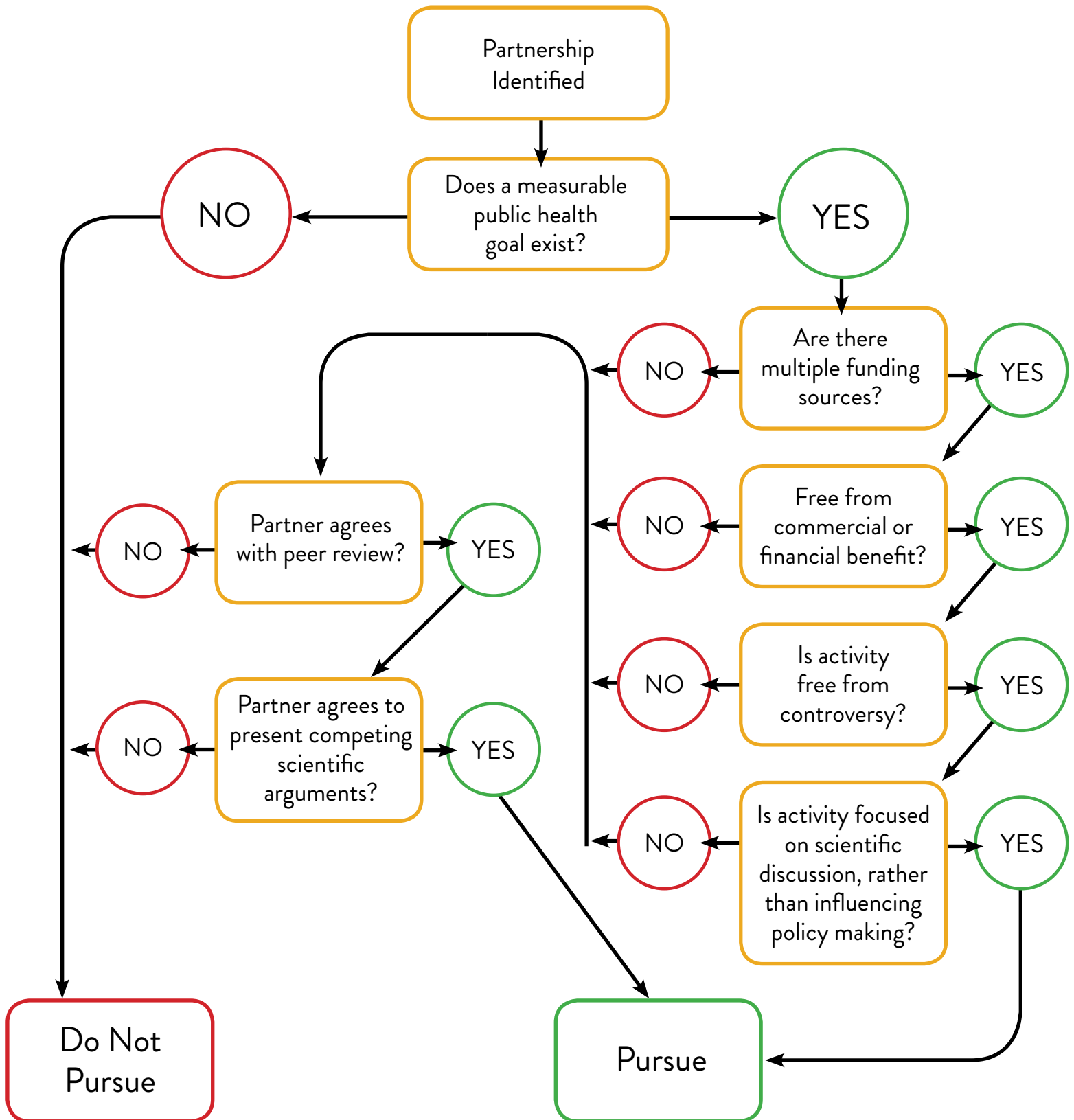
## Finances

The Sackler Institute's accounting system is organized in different revenue tracks classified as restricted or unrestricted funding and by donor type (e.g., corporate, foundation, government). Given the sensitive nature of nutrition, some activities will only be funded by restricted or unrestricted funds from entities independent from the private sector. In particular, any support from a commercial entity that would provide more than 20% of the Sackler Institute's annual budget is reviewed by the Sackler Institute's Engagement Review Committee. Financial and in-kind supporters for specific initiatives and activities can be found on event promotional materials, such as conference flyers, programs and **eBriefings**, **Working Group webpages**, and **podcasts**.

## Evaluating the Principles

The Sackler Institute's Guiding Principles are implemented following approval from the Board Committee. After one year, the Board Committee and the Engagement Review Committee will evaluate the guidelines using a mix of metrics (e.g., percent of participants across activities disclosing COI; number of times the Engagement Assessment Checklist was used) and case study analysis (e.g., specific instance where the guiding principles have been particularly useful for addressing concerns from members of the Sackler Institute's network of scientists, answering queries, improving a contract, etc.); and specific instances where the Guiding Principles failed to identify and address a problem that, in retrospect, should have been considered through the neutrality lens. Based on the evaluation, suggestions for amendments may be proposed and discussed.

# APPENDIX D: Engagement Assessment Decision Tree



## About Us

### The Sackler Institute for Nutrition Science

The New York Academy of Sciences, in partnership with The Mortimer D. Sackler Foundation, established The Sackler Institute for Nutrition Science to create a coordinated effort to support and disseminate nutrition science research. The Sackler Institute for Nutrition Science is dedicated to advancing nutrition science research and knowledge, mobilizing communities, and translating this work into the field. The Sackler Institute is generating a coordinated network across sectors, disciplines, and geographies that promotes open communication; encourages exchange of information and resources; nurtures the next generation of scientists; and affects community intervention design and public policy changes.

Visit us online at [www.nyas.org/nutrition](http://www.nyas.org/nutrition)

### The New York Academy of Sciences

The New York Academy of Sciences is an independent, not-for-profit organization that since 1817 has been committed to advancing science, technology, and society worldwide. With 20,000 members in 100 countries, the Academy is creating a global community of science for the benefit of humanity.

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