

SPONSORSHIP GUIDELINES: QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

OVERVIEW

FCC

- The federal law affecting noncommercial broadcasters.
- All public broadcasters – national and local – are **REQUIRED** to abide by federal law and FCC rules for underwriting on public television.

PBS NATIONAL GUIDELINES

- Rules for credit content, duration and placement.
- Adhered to by any producers that have underwriting credits attached to content that is distributed by the national distribution services.
- Three fundamental principles:
 1. Public television is a major participant in the great tradition of a free and independent American press. Therefore public television must protect its **journalistic integrity** and it must reinforce the accurate perception that it is a free and independent institution.
 2. Public television's nonprofit, non-commercial status contributes to its independence and public television also enjoys certain financial and other benefits by virtue of its non-commercial, nonprofit status. Therefore, its **non-commercial character** must be preserved.
 3. The **diversity of program funding sources** is a key element in the preservation of a free and independent public television system. Therefore, these guidelines should encourage national program funding from all corners of the public and private sector.
- PBS will examine the funder and the program to ensure that the funder meets the three-part test:
 1. **Editorial Control Test:** Has the funder exercised editorial control? Could it?
 2. **Perception Test:** Might the public perceive that the funder has exercised editorial control?
 3. **Commercialism Test:** Might the public conclude the program is on public television principally because it promotes the funder's products, services or other business interests?

LOCAL GUIDELINES

- There are the local underwriting policies that individual stations may use for local underwriting credits.
- Local stations may adopt the national guidelines as their local underwriting guidelines.
- Local stations are NOT REQUIRED to adhere to national underwriting policies for local credit content and duration.
- Local stations are bound by federal law and FCC rules and regulations that address underwriting on public television.

ON-AIR SPONSORSHIP

What are FCC guidelines regarding underwriting credits on public television?

- The FCC requires that all underwriters be identified by their name and/or logo. If a logo by itself does not adequately disclose the identity of the funder, then the funder's name must be stated in audio or video.
- An underwriter MAY NOT be anonymous.
- Spots can include: 1) logos or slogans which identify and do not promote, 2) location information, 3) value neutral descriptions of a product line or service and, 4) brand and trade names and product or service listings.

What underwriting copy is ACCEPTABLE to the FCC?

- Value neutral descriptions of a product line or service
- Brand and trade names and product or service listings
- Visual descriptions of specific products
- Location information, including telephone numbers and web addresses
- Logos or slogans which identify and do not promote

Words to avoid using in sponsorship messages:

Efficient	Delightfully Honest	Reliable
Economical	Quality	Excellent
Dependable	Fair Price	Leading
Dedicated	Number One	Quick & Clear
Prompt	Very Accommodating	Luxury

What underwriting copy is UNACCEPTABLE to the FCC?

- Calls to action ("Come in, Call now")
- Superlative description or qualitative claim about the company, its products, or its services ("The best" or "The most")
- Direct comparison with other companies, their products or services
- Price or value information ("7.7% interest rate" and "affordable," "discount," or "free")
- Inducements to buy, sell, rent, or lease ("Six months free service when you buy" or "lifetime guarantee")
- Endorsements ("recommended by 4 out of 5 doctors")
- Demonstrations of consumer satisfaction

For more information, visit www.lush.pbs.org