



GUIDELINES FOR SOLICITING GIFTS AND SUPPORT FOR AGENCY ACTIVITIES

Extreme caution is necessary when seeking donations to support an agency conference, program, or other activity. It is important that a solicitation program not undermine Department activities by either coercing those who are contacted for a donation or creating an impression of favoritism toward donors.

GUIDELINES WHEN SEEKING FUNDS OR IN-KIND DONATIONS

To meet legal requirements and conform to Department policy, a solicitation program must comply with the following rules.

- Donations must support an agency program.
- There cannot be a “*quid pro quo*” – a gift to an agency in exchange for a service or significant benefit from the agency. This rule does not bar an agency from:
 - (1) providing tickets to an event, if the value of the tickets is less than the donation or
 - (2) acknowledging a gift in signs, on a website, and in remarks by agency speakers.
- Requests for support must be conducted on a non-preferential basis; to avoid appearances of preferential treatment, gifts should be solicited, order of preference:
 - from broad-based groups (such as business organizations, chambers of commerce, professional societies, and trade associations),
 - through broad-based groups to their members, or
 - directly from a wide range of individual companies or organizations in an industry sector or geographic area.
- Requests for donations should not be made to anyone from whom a gift cannot be accepted, which include:
 - (1) an agency contractor (or bidder on a contract),
 - (2) an agency grantee (or grant applicant),
 - (3) a licensee (or license applicant),
 - (4) anyone from an industry regulated by the agency, or
 - (5) anyone who has an interest in controversial matters pending before the agency.
- Gifts must be approved by the appropriate agency official and, for gifts of over \$35,000, by the Secretary of Commerce.
- Agency officials cannot ask for payments for the travel of Federal employees and funds that are solicited cannot be used for the Federal employees to attend meetings or similar events.
- Gifts cannot be coerced, or even appear coerced.
- Gifts of services cannot be solicited or accepted.