

WRKF Underwriting Policy

Background

WRKF is a noncommercial radio station, licensed by, and conforming to, rules and regulations of the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”).

Public broadcasting depends on public support, a significant portion of which comes from underwriters. By law, when a public broadcaster accepts funding from an underwriter, it must identify the underwriter without broadcasting any “advertisement” on its behalf. While the FCC periodically issues decisions that help illustrate what constitutes an impermissibly “promotional” announcement, ultimately, WRKF uses good faith, discretion to decide whether an underwriting announcement complies with FCC standards.

Policy Purpose

WRKF recognizes its duty to determine which programming and on-air material will best serve the public interest and maintain the noncommercial nature of public broadcasting. To that end, WRKF retains discretion over the format, subject matter, duration, and scheduling of all broadcast material, including underwriting announcements. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that WRKF complies with FCC underwriting rules and regulations and all other applicable laws.

WRKF makes underwriting decisions in the best interests of its mission and business needs—and continues to earn the public’s trust by providing a noncommercial service.

Review and Revision of Underwriting Announcements

WRKF reviews every proposed local radio underwriting announcement for compliance with this policy and requires revisions to proposed announcements to the extent it deems necessary to comply with FCC rules and regulations, and other applicable laws, and guidelines. WRKF will require revisions to proposed announcements to the extent WRKF deems advisable in view of the station’s underwriting goals, business needs, and the public interest.

Underwriting Categories

WRKF seeks underwriting representing a broad spectrum of funding sources: corporations, foundations, individuals, government agencies, and others.

WRKF reserves the right to reject any underwriter and/or announcement for any reason WRKF deems appropriate and in the interest of its audience and members.

Independence of News and Programming from Underwriting and Disclosure of Funding Relationships

WRKF’s news coverage and programming is independent of underwriting. Underwriters cannot pay for news coverage, with money nor other consideration. Whether a sponsorship comes from an individual, a corporation, or a foundation, NPR and public radio stations like WRKF follow the same guidelines to protect the firewall between their news service and their fundraising departments, so that funding does not affect news coverage or programming.

NPR and WRKF journalists are careful to disclose funding relationships that might foster the perception that underwriters have influenced their work. At the same time, a laundry list of disclosures would clutter programs, rendering appropriate disclosures meaningless, so they avoid rote disclosures each time a supporter is mentioned in their coverage. Whether or not to disclose a funder during the course of a particular story is a careful judgment made by producers on a case-by-case basis.

<http://ethics.npr.org/category/e-independence/#2-interacting-with-funders>