

NSGIC Guidelines for Business Partnerships

The following principles are based on the premise that in certain circumstances, NSGIC may wish to collaborate with corporate partners and other entities to further NSGIC's core purposes and initiatives. In these cases, these guidelines will be followed to retain NSGIC's independence, avoid conflicts of interest, and guard our organizational and professional values.

Organizational Culture and its Influence on Externally Funded Programs

Organizational culture has a profound impact on whether and how NSGIC business partnerships are pursued. NSGIC activities reflect on all State geospatial coordination programs. Moreover, all State geospatial technology practitioners are represented to some extent by NSGIC actions. Thus, NSGIC must act as the professional representative for all State geospatial technology practitioners.

As a professional organization, NSGIC continues to operate with a high level of purpose representing the ideals of state governments with regard to geospatial ethics and professionalism. Non-profit associations today often require the generation of non-dues based revenues. NSGIC will continue to maintain and provide full disclosure and oversight on all financial interactions and follow the guidelines below for funding support through external sources.

Every Board, Committee and supporting organization member in the association must continue to be accountable to ethical standards derived from the vision and values of the Council. In turn, leaders of NSGIC must continue to recognize the critical role that the organization plays as the sole professional association for State geospatial technology practitioners in America. NSGIC leaders must continue to make programmatic choices that reflect a commitment to professional values and the core organizational purpose.

Overview of Principles

NSGIC's principles to guide business partnerships have been organized into General Principles that apply to all or nearly all situations, and Special Guidelines that deal with specific issues and concerns. These guidelines should be reviewed annually to assure their continued relevance to the policies and operations of NSGIC and to our business environment. These principles serve as a guide to anyone considering or developing a relationship with NSGIC from a business or for-profit organization perspective.

For the purpose of these guidelines, "business partnerships" shall mean transactions in which NSGIC receives funds or other contributions or services from a business or other for-profit organization, either as a direct contribution in support of a NSGIC program or activity or as part of a collaborative public program or event. These guidelines apply only to "corporate" business partnerships and not to non-profit organizational partnerships that are routinely pursued by the Outreach Committee. These guidelines do not apply to the standard sponsorship program for the Annual and Mid-Year Meetings which is established by the Sponsorship Committee and approved each year by the Board of Directors.

General Principles

1. NSGIC's vision and values must drive the proposed activity. NSGIC's vision and values ultimately must determine whether a proposed relationship is appropriate for NSGIC. While it is assumed that any potential business partnership opportunity arises from mutual benefit, NSGIC will carefully weigh relationships with organizations or industries whose principles, policies or actions conflict or appear to conflict with NSGIC's vision and values. NSGIC's mission statement will provide additional guidance for externally funded relationships. Activities that are inconsistent with the organization's mission are unacceptable. In general, NSGIC will proactively choose its priorities for external relationships and participate in those that fulfill these priorities.

2. The relationship must preserve or promote trust in NSGIC and the geospatial technology profession. NSGIC primarily represents the interests of state governments and must continue to be sensitive to issues of “public trust.” Corporate or other relationships that could undermine the public's trust in NSGIC are not acceptable.

3. The relationship must maintain NSGIC's objectivity with respect to geospatial issues and technologies. NSGIC will only consider business partnerships from businesses or for-profit organizations when such partnerships do not conflict or in any way impact the objectivity of the association, its members, activities, programs or employees. NSGIC's objectivity with respect to geospatial issues should not be biased by external relationships.

Special Guidelines

The following guidelines address a number of special situations where external funding will not be utilized.

1.) NSGIC will advocate for its membership and States within the geospatial technologies industry, but will not involve itself in the production, sale, or marketing to consumers of geospatial technology products. Marketing geospatial technology-related products (e.g., GIS software, GPS products) undermines NSGIC's objectivity and diminishes its role in representing geospatial technology values and educating the public about the technology.

2.) Activities should be funded from multiple sources whenever possible. Activities funded from a single external source are at greater risk for inappropriate influence from the supporter - or the perception of it, which may be equally damaging. Therefore funding for activities should be done with multiple sponsors if possible NSGIC recognizes that for some activities the benefits may be so great, the harms so minimal, and the prospects for developing multiple sources of funding so unlikely that single-source funding is a reasonable option. The Board should review single-sponsor activities prior to implementation to ensure that: a) reasonable attempts have been made to locate additional sources of funds; and b) the expected benefits of the project merit the additional risk to NSGIC of accepting single-source funding. In all cases of single-source funding, NSGIC will guard against conflict of interest.

3.) The relationship must preserve NSGIC's control over any projects and products bearing NSGIC's name or logo. NSGIC shall retain editorial control over any information produced as part of a business partnership arrangement. When a NSGIC program is supported by a business partnership arrangement, NSGIC must remain in control of its name, logo and all content, and must approve all marketing materials to ensure that the message is congruent with NSGIC's vision and values.

4.) Relationships must not permit or encourage influence by the corporate partner on NSGIC. NSGIC corporate or other business relationships must not permit influence by the partner on NSGIC's policies, priorities, and actions. Relationships that appear to be acceptable when viewed alone may become unacceptable when viewed in light of other existing or proposed activities.

5.) Participation in a business relationship does not imply NSGIC's endorsement of any external entity or its policies. Participation in sponsorship of a NSGIC conference or other program does not imply NSGIC approval of that sponsor's general policies, nor does it imply that NSGIC will exert any influence to advance the sponsor's interests outside the substance of the arrangement itself. NSGIC's name and logo should not be used in a manner that would express or imply a NSGIC endorsement of the sponsor or its policies.

6.) Identification of supporting sponsor partners must be disclosed on all promotional and briefing materials. The use of sponsor partnership support must be disclosed in promotional and briefing materials for events that use that support.

7.) Programs, projects, and solutions supported by NSGIC will be equitable and based on open standards whenever possible.

8.) Corporate support of a NSGIC sponsorship event does not directly or indirectly imply that any member state is endorsing a particular vendor, its products or services. Member states shall have the right to elect whether to participate in a proposed NSGIC sponsorship event.

Organizational Review

All proposed corporate or other business partnerships are reviewed by the NSGIC Sponsorship Committee, with recommendations prepared for consideration by the Board of Directors for approval.

1.) The Sponsorship Committee shall review business partnerships to ensure consistency with these principles and guidelines. All recommendations for business partnerships shall be reported by the Sponsorship Committee to the Board at the next scheduled Board meeting following acceptance by the Sponsorship Committee.

2.) New business partnerships shall be approved by the Board. Business partnership procedures and policies regarding Board review are as follows: a) The Board routinely should be informed of all business partnerships; b) The Board should perform an annual audit of an appropriate sample of business partnership activities for consistency with these guidelines and other policies;

3.) NSGIC's Sponsorship Committee and Communications Committee shall review and approve all materials that are prepared by others when they will bear NSGIC's name, logo or corporate identity.