

WORLD HEART FEDERATION CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY TOOLKIT



FOREWORD

Dear Members

Tobacco remains the single largest preventable cause of diseases and deaths worldwide, accounting for approximately 17% of all cardiovascular disease deaths. The tobacco industry has a long history of systematic and deliberate interference in health and regulatory science, sowing unnecessary and harmful confusion and controversy among the public, scientists, and policymakers through biased and deceptive industry-funded research.

Regarded as *persona non grata* by the global health community, including the World Health Organization, the industry has recently intensified its efforts to reintegrate itself into scientific and policy circles. Its exploitation of so-called corporate social responsibility initiatives, greenwashing, sportswashing, and celebrity endorsement, as well as its funding of research and media and public relations, have been textbook tactics to refurbish its image and associate its products with positive attributes.

Tobacco industry interference even extends to the Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the highest decision-making entity for global tobacco control. In fact, Dr. Adriana Blanco Marquizo, Head of the Secretariat of the WHO FCTC, recently stated that no country – *big or small, rich or poor, developed or developing* – was spared.

In response, the World Heart Federation has identified a critical need to strengthen its conflict of interest policy pertaining to the tobacco industry, especially with regard to the organization of meetings and conferences. We are pleased to introduce a new resource for all your future events, in particular scientific congresses, both in-person and online. Our WHF Conflict of Interest Policy was designed to ensure that your events remain free from tobacco industry interference.

We hope that our toolkit will serve as both a practical tool for your immediate use and a springboard for further collaboration between our organizations. WHF remains committed to promoting *Cardiovascular Health for Everyone*. We stand with you as a faithful partner and enthusiastic supporter in all heart-health endeavours.

We look forward to your strong support and active engagement in preventing further tobacco industry manipulation.

Sincerely,



Professor Daniel Piñeiro
President, World Heart Federation



Ms. Mawya Al Zawawi
Chair of the WHF Tobacco Expert Group

WHF CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY



Background

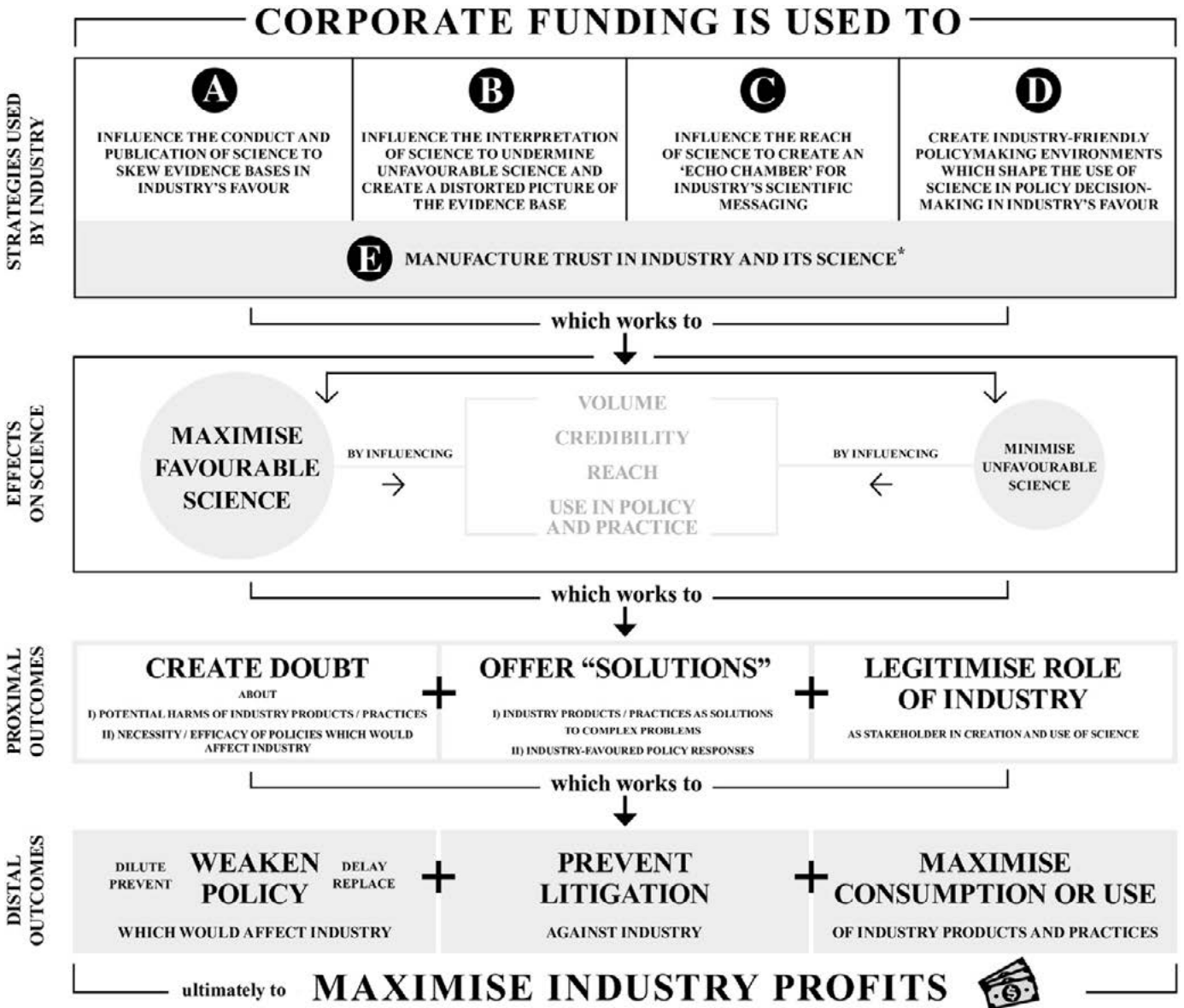
The tobacco industry has a long history of systematic and deliberate interference in health and regulatory science. Through biased and deceptive industry-funded research, it has sought to sow unnecessary and harmful confusion and controversy in the mind of the public, scientists, and policymakers.¹ In the past, the tobacco industry has infamously denied and downplayed the harmful effects of tobacco, second-hand smoke, and newer tobacco and nicotine products, prioritizing profits over human lives. In particular, the industry has honed its tactics to influence research and policy through:²

- **Industry-funded research** that supports its agenda;
- **Manipulation and concealment** of unfavourable study outcomes;
- **Commission of studies** designed to deflect attention from harmful findings;
- **Contesting study outcomes** to dispute established science;
- **Contracting third parties or establishing front groups** to further its interests under the guise of neutrality; and
- **Positioning itself as part of the solution** despite blatant conflicts of interest.

The tobacco industry has no intention of promoting legitimate scientific knowledge; rather, it aims to capitalize on any opportunity to advance its agenda. From its perspective, scientific congresses are ideal platforms for spreading misinformation and creating uncertainty. As panellists, tobacco industry representatives can, and will, promote industry-funded research and biased findings. As participants, tobacco delegates will aim to create confusion by questioning the validity of study results. **Over time, such activities can erode the credibility of organizations and congresses.**

The World Heart Federation believes that health and scientific organizations have a duty to protect both the integrity of scientific research and public health by adopting robust conflict of interest policies that address tobacco industry interference.

TOBACCO INDUSTRY INFLUENCE IN SCIENCE



* WHICH UNDERPINS AND ENABLES ALL THE PRECEDING STRATEGIES

Figure 1: The Science for Profit Model³

OBJECTIVES



- To ensure that all WHF and WHF Members events remain free from any influence of the tobacco industry.
- To exclude all prospective speakers, delegates, or participants funded by the tobacco industry from WHF and WHF Members in-person or online events, including scientific congresses.
- To expose the Philip Morris International-funded Global Action to End Smoking, formerly the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World, as a front group of the tobacco industry.

BENEFITS



- To protect the credibility of WHF and WHF Members as leaders in cardiovascular health.
- To ensure that all WHF and WHF Members events and congresses adhere to the highest standards of scientific integrity.
- To ensure that all advocacy initiatives and health policies are based on unbiased and evidence-based research.
- To ensure that WHF and WHF Members align with the World Health Organization with regard to engagement with the tobacco industry.

STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

Policy Audit



- Review the existing conflict of interest policies of your organization.
- Assess the need to implement the WHF Conflict of Interest Policy.

Policy Development



- Download the WHF Conflict of Interest Policy (please see annexe I).
- Adapt the WHF Conflict of Interest Policy to suit your specific needs.

Stakeholder Engagement



- Present your draft policy to key stakeholders, including Board members, executives, and staff, to collect feedback and comments.
- Incorporate stakeholder inputs and finalize the draft conflict of interest policy.

Approval



- Submit the final draft conflict of interest policy for formal approval from the highest level of governance within your organization.
- Communicate the new policy organization-wide, once adopted.

Implementation



- Implement the WHF Declaration of Interest Form on the registration pages of all your events, including scientific congresses.

CASE STUDY: WHF MODEL

Features

• **Simple and Intuitive:**
User-friendly for all registrants.

• **No Additional Workload for Event Organisers:**
Automates compliance with no extra effort from event staff.

• **Mandatory Compliance:**
Registrants must check all required boxes to be eligible for participation. All boxes must be checked to proceed forward and complete registration.

WHF Model



 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TcBE3VWXQE>

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the position of the World Health Organization?

The World Health Organization strictly prohibits engagement or partnership with individuals and organizations that are affiliated or funded by the tobacco industry or that furthers its interests, as outlined in the **WHO Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors**. All individuals or organizations that engage with the World Health Organization are required to disclose any conflicts of interest.

What is the position of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control?

The World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) is the first international public health treaty negotiated by Member States, under the auspices of the World Health Organization, to combat the global tobacco epidemic.

The WHO FCTC is a legally binding instrument that recognizes a “*fundamental and irreconcilable conflict between the tobacco industry’s interests and public health policy interests*.”⁴ In particular, **Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC** mandates that “*in setting and implementing their public health policies with respect to tobacco control, Parties shall act to protect these policies from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry in accordance with national law*.”⁵ As such, representatives from Parties, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, the media, and the public are required to complete a **Declaration of Interest** form to attend meetings convened by the Convention Secretariat or its subsidiary body.⁶

What is the Global Action to End Smoking?

The Global Action to End Smoking (GAES), formerly known as the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World, portrays itself as an independent organization committed to ending the smoking epidemic. However, due to its funding, connections, and activities, most public health organizations, including the Secretariat of the WHO

Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, consider GAES as a front group of the tobacco industry.⁷

In fact, the organization has been exclusively funded by Philip Morris International, which compromises its claim to independence. In addition, it regularly collaborates and engages with scientists, lawyers, lobbyists, and public relation firms connected to the tobacco industry. The GAES has also invested substantial resources in advertising and lobbying efforts that align with the interests of the industry.⁸

What is an instance of tobacco industry interference in science?

Historically, the tobacco industry has denied and severely downplayed the harmful effects of tobacco use and exposure to second-hand smoke on health, including the addictive nature of nicotine.⁹

The tobacco industry has more recently funded a number of studies to sway public and scientific opinion on newer tobacco and nicotine products such as heated tobacco products (HTPs) and e-cigarettes.¹⁰ Unsurprisingly, these industry-sponsored studies typically minimized the health risks associated with such products. However, independent research has consistently contradicted and disproved industry-funded findings, reporting that heated tobacco products and e-cigarettes are far from innocuous.¹¹ These discrepancies between industry-funded results and independent studies highlight the industry’s continued efforts to manipulate scientific evidence to suit its interests.

What is the position of scientific and medical journals?

The tobacco industry has repeatedly demonstrated its duplicity and untrustworthiness. In turn, many reputable scientific and medical journals have ceased collaborations with the industry and adopted strong conflicts of interest policies. Unfortunately, the industry continues to target journals with less stringent policies to publish its deceptive findings.¹² In addition, the industry has also established its own journals, such as *Tobacco and Health*, to disseminate its biased findings.²



REFERENCES

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- ⁶ WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. Declaration of Interest for Observers to COP, Meeting of a Subsidiary Body, or Meeting Convened by the Convention Secretariat n.d.
- ⁷ WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Secretariat's Statement on the Launch of the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World 2017.
- ⁸ Luimes T, Keyzer T, Horel S, Schram E. The sheep's clothing of tobacco giant Philip Morris. *Investig Desk* 2021.
- ⁹ STOP. Decades of Lies Show Tobacco Companies Can't Be Trusted. *Bus Tob* 2023. <https://exposetobacco.org/news/tobacco-industry-lies/> (accessed May 20, 2024).
- ¹⁰ Pisinger C, Godtfredsen N, Bender AM. A conflict of interest is strongly associated with tobacco industry-favourable results, indicating no harm of e-cigarettes. *Prev Med* 2019;119:124–31. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2018.12.011>.
- ¹¹ Qasim H, Karim ZA, Rivera JO, Khasawneh FT, Alshbool FZ. Impact of Electronic Cigarettes on the Cardiovascular System. *J Am Heart Assoc* 2017;6:e006353. <https://doi.org/10.1161/JAHA.117.006353>.
- ¹² University of Bath. Big tobacco, big conflict of interest. *Univ Bath* 2021.

ANNEXE 1

DECLARATION OF INTEREST FORM

- I declare that neither I nor any organization I represent receives or has received any direct or indirect financial assistance or funding from the tobacco industry,¹ or any entity working to further its interests, within the past five years (excluding taxes, fiscal duties, court-mandated payments, or settlements).
- I declare that I am not working directly or indirectly for or with the *Global Action to End Smoking*, formerly known as the *Foundation for a Smoke-Free World*.
- I declare that neither I nor any ENDS/ENNDS² organization I represent receives or has received any direct or indirect financial assistance from the tobacco industry,¹ or any entity working to further its interests, within the past five years.

Full Name:

Date:

Signature:

¹According to the key principles of the **global tobacco control treaty**, WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and the provisions of FCTC Article 5.3 Guidelines, there is an irreconcilable conflict of interest between the commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry and those of public health. Accordingly, the **tobacco industry** is defined to include any tobacco or tobacco product manufacturer, distributor, importer, or retailer, any parent, affiliate, branch, or subsidiary of a tobacco manufacturer, distributor, importer, retailer, or front group or any individual or entity, such as an interest group, think tank, advocacy organization, lawyer, law firm, scientist, lobbyist, advertising agency, business, or foundation, that represents, receives funding from, or works to promote tobacco products, their sale or to limit their regulation.

² According to the definition in **FCTC_COP_7_11**, ENDS/ENNDS are products that “heat a solution (e-liquid) to create an aerosol which frequently contains flavourants, usually dissolved into Propylene Glycol or/and Glycerin. All ENDS (but not ENNDS) contain nicotine. Although generally considered a single product class, these products constitute a diverse group with potentially significant differences in the production of toxicants and delivery of nicotine. There are several coexisting types of devices on the market: first-generation or so-called cigarlike, second-generation tank systems and even larger third-generation or personal vaporizers. Others classify these devices into closed and open systems depending mainly on the degree of control that users have over the e-liquid used and the voltage and resistance applied to heating the e-liquid and ventilation features.”

Examples of **interests** that need to be disclosed are: consultancy/ advisory, ownership of stocks and other forms of ownership interests, honoraria, gifts, or favors, contractual relationship, research funding, former or present employment, or being a beneficiary of such funding, submission/ expression of positions in favor of the tobacco industry, direct or indirect funding, or any other interests not listed here that may be perceived to or give the appearance of potentially affecting your objectivity or independence.

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