

General Policy on Underwriting

Northern Community Radio is a media organization that serves a diverse, rural population in northern Minnesota. In this era of polarized politics and public skepticism, our goal is to be a trusted place where stories can be told and many points of view are shared and heard.

To this end, our policy is to be open, with very few exceptions, to all funding sources. Diversified funding helps us stay strong and independent.

Specifically in regard to one of these sources—underwriting—we have an open access policy. All legitimate businesses within our listening area (and beyond) are welcome to underwrite, although we might not necessarily accept the language that a business might want to use.

An underwriting relationship is transactional. Underwriters support our programming in return for a value-neutral acknowledgment of that support. Although the intent on the part of a business may be to “buff up” their image or position themselves in the marketplace, underwriting does not imply approval of a business or its message by Northern Community Radio. It does not imply a collaboration or partnership.

Underwriters especially do not influence our programming or coverage of issues. To the extent possible in a small organization, Northern Community Radio maintains a firewall between underwriting and its news/public affairs reporting or other programming.

From time to time there are calls for us to drop an underwriter due to controversy or ideology. This is counterproductive. Refusing to accept underwriting from a given business introduces bias and undermines our work: How could any report be seen as fair and unbiased if someone inside Northern Community Radio had already decided that sponsorship from one side or the other was objectionable?

People in our organization, especially those producing or hosting news, take the perception of bias seriously. Staff members are asked to refrain from political or controversial posts in social media. Campaign signs and literature intended to influence voters are prohibited in the workplace. News staff refrain from participating in political caucuses and other activities that could identify them as partisan. By these and other means we endeavor to assure the public that our reporting can be trusted.

Our journalistic aspirations are to inform and educate. We do not practice advocacy journalism, such as is sometimes found at Pacifica on the left or Fox News on the right. Our goal is to be a trusted community media resource that presents the highest quality news and information that we can to all.

Underwriting exceptions:

Northern Community Radio reserves the right to refuse any underwriting for any or no reason. This includes but is not limited to the following:

- We will not accept underwriting from “hate” or “terrorist” organizations (i.e., Skinheads, Neo-Nazis, ISIS, or the Ku Klux Klan)
- We will not accept underwriting for products prohibited from advertising by statute, such as tobacco
- We will not accept underwriting that intentionally baits or misleads
- Public radio stations cannot carry paid political ads