



International Foundation
for Electoral Systems

IFES Terms of Engagement with Technology Companies

Purpose

Technology platforms and products have had a transformational impact on politics and elections in recent years. Some of this impact has been positive for society: for instance, technology platforms used to disseminate information to support an electorate to make informed choices and to give access to political space to individuals and groups who otherwise may have faced barriers to participation. At the same time, political actors, anti-democratic forces, malign foreign actors and others are increasingly using technology platforms to advance undemocratic objectives, including by disseminating misinformation, disinformation and hate speech, and ultimately to undermine the faith of a society in its governing and electoral institutions. The misuse of technology platforms for these purposes is increasingly recognized as a grave threat to democracies and electoral integrity.

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) works around the world to support democratic development, including by ensuring that technology, information and data positively serve elections and democracy. IFES believes that technology companies have the potential to play a valuable and constructive role in helping to address the challenges posed by technology to democracy and elections. In this context, IFES welcomes the industry's willingness to use its capabilities and resources to promote electoral integrity and strong democracies. IFES is willing and interested to work with technology companies that manifest a commitment to these objectives. IFES will only collaborate with technology companies on endeavors that are consistent with IFES' established mission – *together we build democracies that deliver for all* – and whose ultimate beneficiaries are the citizens and voters themselves. Thus, all IFES activities with technology companies must comply with the following guidelines.¹

Guidelines

Transparency and Oversight

IFES will disclose all collaborative partnerships with and funding received from technology companies in its public annual report. IFES will make public and disclose industry involvement in or funding of IFES activities to other partners and beneficiaries, including on its [website](#).

Limitation on the Use of Industry Contributions

Funds contributed from for-profit companies in the technology industry ("industry funding") will be tracked, accounted for and reported on separately from funding that comes from public and other sources. Separate accounting and reporting help ensure that such funds will be used in accordance with this policy and consistently with our community's expectations. IFES acknowledges that industry collaboration and funding may present real or perceived risks to the credibility of certain IFES activities

¹ These guidelines are consistent with, and adapted from, the Funding and Conflicts Policy of the [Design 4 Democracy Coalition](#), of which IFES is an international partner.

and reputation and will take steps to minimize such risks. Approval and oversight of industry collaboration will be overseen by IFES' executive leadership team.

Institutional Independence and Service of the Public Interest

While in principle IFES is willing to partner with, and accept funding from technology companies, such partnerships and funding will only be accepted if provided under conditions that allow IFES to retain full institutional independence in the design and execution of program activities and research.

IFES is committed to ensuring that any programming and research it conducts with industry funding should serve the public interest and be shared with relevant stakeholders. IFES maintains the full freedom to publish its findings, without approval by a funding company, and retains intellectual property rights over the products it produces. Any arrangement with a technology company that involves data-sharing or nondisclosure of results must be specifically considered and approved by IFES' executive leadership team. While IFES will always treat its partners with respect and professionalism, IFES will retain the ability to speak out about conduct or behavior that contravenes democratic principles or IFES' values no matter the origins, including if such conduct or behavior is manifested by a partner organization or company.

Use of Data

IFES complies with the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation ([GDPR](#)). IFES will not acquire, store, share or transfer Personally Identifiable Information (PII) with any entity that is not compliant with GDPR and reserves the right to restrict access to PII when it is in the best public interest. IFES' full guidelines on the use of data are available in the IFES Data Use Policy.

Branding

Use of the IFES name, brand and logo by a technology company partnering with IFES to disseminate information about a joint endeavor or for other purposes that generally serve the public good will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must be approved in writing in advance of such use. Industry partners may not use the IFES name, brand or logo for commercial purposes without advanced, written approval; in general, IFES does not allow its name, brand or logo to be used for commercial purposes.

Applicability

This policy applies to IFES as an organization as well as all its officers, staff and members of its Board of Directors. In accordance with IFES' Conflict of Interest policy, board members and staff must disclose any financial interest in an entity with which IFES has a financial relationship and recuse themselves from discussion and voting on any issues related to industry sources in which a conflict of interest exists.

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