



South London Botanical Institute (SLBI)

Ethical Funding Policy (3.5.22)

1) Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to provide: (i) a process for the South London Botanical Institute (SLBI) to follow when determining whether to accept a donation of funds or other resources and (ii) criteria to assess potential or perceived ethical concerns associated with the acceptance of donations from prospective funders.

The policy is adopted to ensure that the SLBI properly manages its priorities and projects with appropriate independence from its funders. This policy also aims at providing transparency regarding the identity of the SLBI's sources of funding to avoid any suspicion of inappropriate influence or conflicts of interest concerning the SLBI's activities.

Irrespective of the category of funder, each donation over £10,000 should be reviewed by a committee (including at least one SLBI trustee, one staff member and one independent individual) to consider relevant (e.g., organisational, political, reputational) risks, in deciding whether to accept the donation.

The SLBI will apply the considerations in this Policy from the date of its signing, irrespective of whether the SLBI has made decisions in the past to accept funding inconsistent with the policy's principles now.

This policy applies largely to unsolicited donations/grants, rather than grants for which applications are proactively made. Any staff/trustees developing grant applications will ensure that the conditions in sections 3 and 4 of this policy are met, without need for further discussion, unless they feel that applying to a funder might be in conflict with this policy.

2) Definitions

- i. "Board" shall mean the SLBI trustees.
- ii. "Funder" shall mean any person or entity that provides funding, in any amount or form, to the SLBI.

- iii. "Funding" shall mean support to the SLBI, generally in the form of financial resources, but which also can take the form of services rendered by a funder (in-kind support,) or other resources, such as office premises, provided by a funder. Funding will consist of only voluntary, unilateral support to the SLBI without return compensation or service rendered by the SLBI.
- iv. "Reviewer¹" shall mean the group responsible for performing the in-depth review of proposals for funding according to the criteria set forth in this Policy, including mandatory review of funding of £10,000, e.g., committee of the Board.

3) Funds Acceptance: General Conditions

- a. The SLBI shall advise the Reviewer of all proposed donations of £10,000 or more, so that the Reviewer may determine whether the donation should be accepted. The Reviewer shall review the donation for compliance with, among other things, the terms and conditions of this Policy, the other policies and guidelines of the SLBI, and any other considerations that the SLBI determines are appropriate given the nature of the funder and/or funding. The SLBI shall present the Reviewer's determination to the Board which may reverse the Reviewer's determination and must approve the acceptance of any donation exceeding £10,000.
- b. Donations valued at less than £10,000 need not undergo review by the Reviewer. However, acceptance of all donations must comply with the requirements of this Policy.
- c. Subject to the requirements set forth in this Policy, the SLBI shall have broad discretion in determining which donations to accept and which donations to reject; the SLBI may choose to make public information relating to the rejection of any donation in accordance with the transparency provisions set forth in this Policy.
- d. In addition to the specific considerations based on funder type in this Policy, the SLBI will also take into account the following general considerations for all types of funders:
 - i. The SLBI has ascertained that the funder generally and the proposed funding specifically comply with applicable law and any regulations pertinent to the funder.

- ii. The SLBI has ascertained that the funding will not threaten or cause inappropriate influence over the SLBI's programmes and activities, including funder representation on the Board.
 - iii. The SLBI has ascertained that the programmatic and reporting requirements of the funding will not impose an undue burden on the capacity of the SLBI.
 - iv. The SLBI has ascertained that no conflicts of interest exist with the mission and programmes of the funder according to the SLBI's conflict of interest policy. In making a determination whether to accept funding, the SLBI will consider the extent to which the funder is funding other organisations with missions and/or programmes that contradict or conflict with those of the SLBI.
 - v. The SLBI has ascertained that there is no significant risk that public association with the funder will compromise the integrity, or negatively impact the reputation, of the SLBI, and that the SLBI's members, partners, and other constituencies relevant to the mission and affected by the work of the SLBI would not reasonably perceive acceptance of the funding to be inappropriate or unethical.²
 - vi. In particular, the SLBI has ascertained that the funding in no way conflicts with the SLBI's key aims, values and mission ('Discovering Plants, Enriching Lives, Sustaining the Future') eg it would not accept funding derived from destruction of our natural world or from a funder known for working in way that worsens the climate emergency.
 - vii. The SLBI has determined with reasonable confidence that the funder's source of funding to ensure compliance with local money laundering laws (for example, United Kingdom Proceeds of Crime Act of 2002).
- e. The SLBI has confirmed that the type of costs or activities to be funded by funder are consistent with the SLBI's policies and procedures (e.g., if government funding is only accepted for specific types of projects, the SLBI shall confirm funding can and will be used accordingly).
 - f. The SLBI has confirmed that the funder's reporting and disclosure requirements are consistent with the data and other privacy policies of the SLBI and the privacy rights of its employees and beneficiaries.

² In making this inquiry, the SLBI should consider among other factors, the following questions: i) the nature of the business that the funder is involved in or associated with, ii) whether the funder has received unfavourable media attention for its actions, iii) whether the funder has been or is currently involved in litigation, and iv) the perception of the funder with key partners and/or the field in which the SLBI operates.

- g. The SLBI has determined the grant-making procedures and requirements of the funder comply with the transparency and freedom of information policies and practices of the SLBI.

4) **Funds Acceptance: Funder-Specific Conditions**

Government Funders

- a. The SLBI will accept funding from government entities, agencies, or other bodies owned or controlled by them, regardless of whether they are presented as independent, only when the following criteria are met:
 - i. The SLBI has determined that the funder poses no risk of interference with the SLBI's current and future projects, based on political or other considerations.
 - ii. The SLBI has ascertained that the funder's institutions, policies, and practices are consistent with the SLBI's mission, vision and principles;
 - iii. The affiliation of the SLBI with the funder based on accepting the funding does not limit the programmatic scope of the SLBI's projects and strategic choices or does so to an extent the SLBI has ascertained is acceptable in the circumstances; and

Foundation Funders

- b. The SLBI will accept funding from independent foundations, charities, and similar non-governmental, non-sectarian, and non-profit institutions only when the following criteria are met:
 - i. The SLBI has ascertained with reasonable confidence that the source of the funds of the funder is legitimate and transparent;
 - ii. The SLBI has reviewed the history of the foundation, including publicly available information regarding previous grants and funding from the foundation, and based on this information, has determined that the SLBI has no reason not to be affiliated with the funder and its previous grantees;
 - iii. The SLBI has ascertained that any specific philosophical or programmatic agenda or other interest of the funder does not conflict with the mission and programmes of the SLBI;

Corporate Funders

- c. The SLBI will accept funding from corporations, including foundations or other entities that they or their owners, directors and/or officers own and/or control only when the following criteria are met:
 - i. The SLBI has determined that the agreement between the funder and the SLBI regarding the provision of the funding clearly distinguishes between philanthropic funding by the funder and advertisement and/or sponsorship of the funder;

The SLBI has determined that the funder has not participated in deceptive advertising or promotional practices such as greenwashing³, rightswashing⁴, or whitewashing⁵;

- ii. The SLBI has determined that the funder's public reputation, based on publicly available information, will not negatively affect the SLBI by association. The SLBI will not accept funding from any funder whose business practices are unlawful or unethical or threaten harm to the reputation of the SLBI;

Religious Funders

- d. The SLBI will accept funding from funders affiliated with organised religious or similar sectarian institutions only when the following criteria are met:
 - i. The SLBI has determined that affiliation with the funder will not conflict with the mission or programmes of the SLBI;
 - ii. The SLBI has determined that accepting funding from the funder will not unreasonably limit its future affiliation with other funders;
 - iii. The SLBI has determined that the funder's public reputation, based on publicly available information, will not negatively affect the SLBI by association. The SLBI will not accept funding from any funder whose ideology or practices are unlawful or unethical or threaten harm to the reputation of the SLBI, such as discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender or gender identification, sexual preference, nationality, age, disability, or other embodiment or expression of fundamental human rights; and

Individual Donations

³ Defined for this policy as disinformation disseminated by an organisation so as to present an environmentally responsible public image.

⁴ Defined for this policy as attempting to falsely present a human rights-friendly public image.

⁵ Defined for this policy as deliberately attempting to conceal unpleasant facts about an organisation.

- e. The SLBI will accept funding from individual funders only when the following criteria are met:
 - i. The SLBI has ascertained that the risk of influence by the funder is acceptable to the SLBI and will not interfere with the mission or programmes of the SLBI. The SLBI will confirm in writing with the funder what, if any role, the funder will have in advising, promoting, or otherwise being involved with the SLBI and specifically any programme that the funding supports;
 - ii. The SLBI has determined any specific privacy concerns of the funder, including maintaining the anonymity of the funder, the funding amount, or the stated purpose of the funding are consistent with the SLBI's transparency policies; and
 - iii. The SLBI has determined the lawfulness and legitimacy of the source of the funding and the individual's reputation.

Public Donations

- f. The SLBI will accept funding collected from the general public only when the following criteria are met:
 - i. The SLBI has ascertained that the practices used to collect the funds comply with ethical standards acceptable to the SLBI. The SLBI will examine multiple factors in determining whether the collection methods are acceptable, including:
 - ii. Collectors do not annoy or obstruct people when soliciting donations in public spaces;
 - iii. Collectors do not solicit from residences or by telephone or other electronic communication outside standard working hours;
 - iv. Collectors do not use aggressive or misleading collection methods; and
 - v. Collectors respect people's decisions not to donate.
 - vi. The SLBI has determined that the funder documents its collection methods, any expenses incurred, and any complaints received about its collection accurately, fully and verifiably and gives the SLBI access to the documentation on reasonable request.
 - vii. The SLBI has determined that the funder solicits donations made only based on charitable motives, not for rewards or other benefits, and retaining only expenses of collection that are actually incurred, reasonable, and customary.

Academic Institution Funding

- g. The SLBI will accept funding from academic institutions only when the following criteria are met:
 - i. Any use that the institution proposes to make with data produced by the funded programmes of the SLBI will comply with generally accepted ethical standards for academic research, as well as those to which the institution specifically is subject;
 - ii. The institution will use data produced by the funding only for academic purposes and not any commercial, partisan, or sectarian purposes; and

Anonymous Funding

- h. In the cases of (1) funding when the funder requests anonymity from the public, or (2) funding for which the SLBI cannot ascertain the identity of the funder, the SLBI will comply with the following additional considerations:
 - i. The SLBI will accept funding of only less than £1,000 when it cannot ascertain the identity of the funder and shall report such funding as having anonymous funders. In the event that the SLBI receives any reasonable indication that such funding is inappropriate in any way, it shall reject, return, or provide to an alternative public service organisation, as the case may be;
 - ii. The SLBI will accept funding from funders requesting anonymity from the public only when the following requirements are met:
 - iii. The SLBI has determined sufficiently the identity of the funder to confirm that no conflicts of interest, undue influence, or any other risks may arise from the funder's anonymity;
 - iv. The SLBI has determined that the method in which the anonymous funder approached the SLBI to express interest in providing funding does not raise any substantial concerns of non-compliance with applicable law or regulations, or this Policy.
 - v. If the anonymous funder approached the SLBI through a representative, the SLBI has determined that the representative is reputable within his or her field and meets any other standards of review that the SLBI considers appropriate given the circumstances of the funding;
 - vi. The SLBI has considered with the funder a less limited form of concealing the identity of the funder, such as disclosing his/her initials, nationality and/or profession; and

- vii. The SLBI has determined that the reason which the funder has provided to remain anonymous is reasonable under the circumstances and does not raise a substantial risk of non-compliance with this Policy, any applicable laws, or any additional considerations that the SLBI has determined are appropriate given the nature of the funder and/or the funding;

Crowdfunding

- i. In the case of crowdfunding, the SLBI will comply with the following additional considerations:
 - i. The SLBI has determined that the reputation and methods of the crowdfunding platform are acceptable to the SLBI and comply with the requirements and standards of this Policy;
 - ii. To the extent that the platform identifies donors, their identities conform to the requirements and standards of this Policy;
 - iii. The platform maintains compliance checks and standards to ensure compliance with any relevant anti-money laundering and similar legislation; and
 - iv. The SLBI shall obtain specific prior approval from the Board before entering into an arrangement to seek funding from crowdfunding.

5) Funds Acceptance: Type of Funding Considerations

- a. There are generally two types of funding: restricted and unrestricted funding. Restricted funding consists of grants or donations whose funders require that the funds be used in a specific way or for a specific purpose. Unrestricted funding consists of grants or donations whose funders authorise the SLBI to use the funding for any purpose consistent with the SLBI's mission, including administrative, programmatic, promotional, and other expenses. Unrestricted funds usually go toward the operating expenses of the SLBI or longer-term projects.

The SLBI may accept restricted funding only when the SLBI has determined that it reasonably can comply with the conditions set by the funder, including that it has the administrative capacity to control, account for, and report on the use of the funding.

The SLBI will examine the following additional factors in determining whether to accept restricted funding:

- i. Whether the permitted use of funding complies with the SLBI's policies and procedures;
- ii. Whether accepting restricted funding may tend to inhibit fulfilling the mission and goals of the SLBI; and
- iii. Whether the level of control, if any, sought by the funder providing the restricted funding over future policies or projects of the SLBI is conforms to the requirements and standards of this Policy.

6) Implementation of Funding

- i. The SLBI shall document in written agreements with funders all terms and conditions of the funding that they provide. These agreements shall provide that no other terms and conditions of the funding shall apply unless they too are documented in subsequent written agreements. The SLBI shall instruct its employees, trustees, contractors, and other representatives that they may not agree to any terms and conditions with funders regarding any funding that they provide, except through written agreements signed by authorised representatives of the SLBI.
- ii. In the event that the SLBI receives reliable evidence that the information provided by a funder was incomplete or inaccurate at the time that it was provided or since has become so, the SLBI promptly shall consider whether the agreement with the funder and the funding must be evaluated for possible amendment or rescission. For this purpose, the SLBI shall communicate with the funder appropriately and, as advisable, confer with legal counsel and/or financial specialists, whether within the SLBI or external.
- iii. In the event that the SLBI determines that it received funding in violation of this Policy or that circumstances have changed so that the funding now violates this Policy, the SLBI shall consider with respect to any amount of the funding remaining at its disposal (i) returning it to the funder, (ii) remitting it to an appropriate regulatory authority, or (iii) transferring it to an appropriate charity with which it is not related. The SLBI also shall consider appropriate communications with the funder and the public.

7) Transparency and Communications

- a. The relationship of the SLBI and the funder shall be made public upon acceptance of the funding through any means to which the SLBI and the funder agree, which may include, but are not limited to:
 - i. The SLBI shall agree that the funder may state its support to the SLBI in its own communications with the public;

- ii. The SLBI shall agree that the funder may publicise the nature of any specific project or initiative: (i) if the funding enabled the SLBI to implement, (ii) if the funding was specifically restricted for such project or initiative, (iii) if the funding was used entirely for a specific project or initiative, or (iv) under other conditions that the SLBI and the funder agree comply with the principles set forth in this Policy;
- iii. The SLBI shall disclose the name of the funder and the amount of the funding in its public communications, including its website, or in other materials of a similar nature, in a manner in which the funder has agreed; provided, however, that the SLBI may choose for reasons of economy not to disclose the identity of funders providing less than £5,000, but shall disclose the total number of such funders and the total amount of such funding.
- iv. The SLBI shall not disclose any confidential information about the funder or the funding, including any conditions attached to it, to any unauthorised parties, unless the SLBI and the funder have previously agreed that such disclosure is permissible.
- v. The SLBI shall disclose the total number of anonymous funders and the total amount of funds collected from them as a separate item of information.
- vi. The SLBI shall publish accurate reports on its income and expenditures (including expenses incurred in soliciting contributions, gifts and grants), that meet the standards set forth in applicable law and regulations and provide clear, complete, and accurate information on its activities for stakeholders, beneficiaries, funders and the public.

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years.

Approved on behalf of the Board of Trustees: Marlowe Russell

Date: 3/5/2022

Date for review: 3/5/24