



Guidelines for Outside Engagements: Tools for “Focus and Counsel”

The Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on Guidelines for Outside Engagements developed two tools to “provide focus and counsel” to MIT faculty and staff in assessing outside engagements. The tools and corresponding questions, as articulated by the committee, are below.* For additional context, please see [the committee’s report](#), particularly pages 15–25. Faculty and staff involved in gift conversations are asked to consider the questions in the tools for themselves in evaluating potential gifts.

INDIVIDUALS TOOL

Per the committee, this tool “should be used for gifts from or engagements with: (i) specific individuals, or (ii) foundations whose funds come from a single person, couple, or nuclear family.”

Red lights

1. Has this individual directly engaged in, funded, or otherwise supported any activities that compromise U.S. national security?
2. Has this individual directly engaged in, funded, or otherwise supported any gross violations of political, civil, or human rights, or serious violations of the laws of war?
3. Does this gift or engagement restrict the academic freedom or autonomy of MIT faculty, students, or staff?
4. Has this individual been (i) convicted of or (ii) indicted and not cleared of engaging in conduct that constitutes a felony under U.S. federal and/or state law? If yes, are there mitigating circumstances? If no, red light. If yes, yellow light.

Yellow lights

1. Does engaging with this individual or accepting this gift negatively impact our ability to promote MIT’s core values on our own campus or in our own community?
2. Could the association with this individual damage MIT’s reputation for excellence in research and teaching, and thus, ultimately, its core mission?
3. If the gift or engagement involves naming, will using their name in such a public way on our campus negatively impact our ability to promote MIT’s core values on our own campus or in our own community?
4. If you were a representative of MIT, would you be willing to publicly disclose taking money from or engaging with this individual?
5. If you were a representative of MIT, would you be willing to publicly defend taking money from or engaging with this individual?
6. If you were a representative of MIT, would you be willing to allow this individual to visit our campus and meet faculty, students, or staff?
7. Does this gift explicitly advance MIT’s fundamental mission for education or basic and applied research?
8. Could this gift or engagement impede our ability to best serve the nation and the world?
9. Could this gift or engagement have the effect of committing MIT to promote a specific dogma or political agenda in a way that is inconsistent with maintaining our academic integrity or our commitment to our core mission to promote knowledge creation and education?



ORGANIZATIONS TOOL

Per the committee, this tool “should be used for gifts from or engagements with all organizations, including: (i) companies, (ii) non-profits or non-governmental organizations, (iii) foundations where money comes from multiple individuals, or (iv) governments or government departments or ministries.”

Red lights

1. Has this institutional partner engaged in, supported, or funded any activities that compromise U.S. national security?
2. Does this gift or engagement involve any actions or activities that compromise U.S. national security?
3. Has this institutional partner directly engaged in, supported, or funded any gross violations of political, civil, or human rights?
4. Do the institutional partner’s policies and their enforcement in this engagement involve a gross violation of political, civil, or human rights?
5. Does this gift or engagement restrict the academic freedom or autonomy of MIT’s faculty, students, or staff?
6. Does this gift or engagement, or actions or activities involved in this engagement, violate U.S. federal and/or state law?

Yellow lights

1. Does this gift or engagement negatively impact our ability to promote MIT’s core values on our own campus or in our own community?
2. Does engaging with this institutional partner negatively impact our ability to promote MIT’s core values on our own campus or in our own community?
3. Could association with this institutional partner damage MIT’s reputation for excellence in research and teaching, and, ultimately, its core mission?
4. If the gift or engagement involves naming, will using their name in such a public way on our campus negatively impact our ability to promote MIT’s core values on our own campus or in our own community?
5. If you were a representative of MIT, would you be willing to publicly disclose the details of this gift or engagement with this partner?
6. If you were a representative of MIT, would you be willing to publicly defend the judgment to engage with this institutional partner in this engagement?
7. If you were a representative of MIT, would you be willing to allow this institutional partner or any non-MIT persons involved in this engagement to visit the campus and meet with faculty, students or staff?
8. Does this gift or engagement explicitly advance MIT’s fundamental mission of education and/or the conduct of basic or applied research?
9. Could this gift or engagement impede our ability to best serve the nation and the world?
10. Can it reasonably be assumed that the gift or engagement will require MIT, or members of the MIT community, to promote a specific dogma or political agenda in a way that is inconsistent with maintaining our academic integrity or our commitment to our core mission to promote knowledge creation and education?

* Following a 2021 experiment of the Interim Gift Acceptance Committee, the wording of the fourth red light in the individuals tool was adjusted to make assessment regarding felonious conduct more concrete.