

Who paid for the study shapes how to *read it*

One mechanism of institutional communication — why a sponsored or commissioned report is not the same as an independent one, and why the funding belongs in the frame.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

How This Guide Works

This is part of **Incognati Civics**, applying the field-guide format to the way institutions communicate — press releases, official statements, guidance documents, corrections, embargoes — the packaging between a record and the public, examined the same way regardless of which institution or which side it favors. Each specimen goes deep on one mechanism, with primary documents, regulations, and nonpartisan scholarship listed in full on the references page.

INCOGNATI CIVICS — INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

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| 01 Press Release vs. the Study | 02 Spokesperson's Statement vs. the Report |
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Commissioned Report Presented as Independent

Qui Solvit, Iubet

Governing precedent / case Sponsorship disclosure norms **Status** Recurring in policy and product debates

OBSERVED SPECIMEN

TRADE-GROUP AND COMPANY-FUNDED REPORTS

*An industry group, company, or campaign commissions a report or “study,” then releases it as though it were a neutral, third-party finding. The funder chooses the question, the scope, and often the firm, and **funding source is a documented predictor** of favorable conclusions. Disclosure standards — from medical journals to the FTC's rules on endorsements — exist because sponsorship changes how a result should be weighed. “A new report finds” omits the clause that matters most: who paid for it, and what they wanted it to say.*

THE HOOK

‘A new independent report’ sounds neutral, so the funder's interest disappears from the story.

THE MECHANISM

Whoever commissions a report sets its question and scope; sponsorship correlates with favorable findings, which is why disclosure is a professional and legal norm.

Field mark: when a report is announced, ask who paid for it and who chose the question — commissioned findings are not independent ones, and the funding belongs in the headline, not the footnotes.

See the full references page for complete citations.

References

every source checkable at the link provided; DOIs given where the source has one

PRIMARY SOURCE · REGULATION

FTC, “Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials,” 16 C.F.R. Part 255.

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-16/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-255>

Requires disclosure of material connections (including funding) behind endorsements and studies.

REFERENCE · ICMJE

International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, disclosure of funding and conflicts of interest.

<https://www.icmje.org/recommendations/>

Standard requiring funding sources and conflicts to be disclosed because they affect interpretation.

Reading a Commissioned Report: A Gut Check

four questions before 'a new report finds' settles the argument

- 1 Find the funder**
Who commissioned and paid for the report?
 - 2 Check who set the question**
The framing is chosen by whoever ordered the study.
 - 3 Weigh the interest**
Sponsorship predicts favorable conclusions; adjust accordingly.
 - 4 Demand disclosure**
'Independent' requires no material tie to the subject.
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INCOGNATI CIVICS

The Series Continues

This is Specimen No. 8 of the Institutional Communications section within Incognati Civics. The full queue of twelve specimens is listed on the cover. This section joins Elections, Federal Laws, and Official Data Reporting within Civics, with local government planned beyond it. The Incognati Atlas catalogs the underlying patterns across all of it.