

Decision Matrix - when funding ties are under attack

A decision matrix is a simple tool that helps organisations make **fair, transparent and defensible decisions** when choices are difficult, controversial or risky. It turns opinions and emotions into structured judgment.

A decision matrix is a table that:

- Breaks a complex decision into key criteria
- Scores each criterion using the same scale
- Produces a total score that guides what action to take

Instead of asking:

“How do we feel about this sponsor?”

It asks:

“How risky is this across the things that matter most?”

Without a clear decision matrix organisations often struggle to respond consistently to sponsorship or partnership concerns. They may panic and overreact, ignore problems because funding is involved or make decisions that appear inconsistent or influenced by external pressure.

A structured matrix helps prevent knee jerk cancellations, reduces the risk of hidden bias and limits the influence of personal or political views or whoever is most vocal at the time. By balancing financial considerations, ethical factors and reputational impact it encourages leadership to consider all three together rather than prioritising one in isolation.

Decision Matrix – Funding Under Scrutiny

This matrix is used when a sponsorship, donation, or funding relationship becomes subject to public concern, media attention or internal ethical review.

Criterion	1 – Low Risk	3 – Medium Risk	5 – High Risk
Alignment with Mission	Fully aligned with organisational purpose	Partially aligned or ambiguous	Conflicts with mission or values
Reputational Impact	No criticism or concern	Some criticism or activist attention	Widespread public, media or sector criticism
Legal & Compliance risk	No legal or regulatory risk	Some uncertainty	High likelihood of breach or investigation
Stakeholder Trust	Strengthens or has no impact on trust	Mixed stakeholder views	Damages trust with audiences, staff or partners
Influence or Control	No demands or interference	Some informal influence	Attempts to control or shape decisions
Transparency of Funding	Fully disclosed and documented	Some gaps in information	Opaque, hidden or unclear source

Scoring and Actions

Total Score	Risk Level	Required Action
6–12	Low	Continue funding and monitor
13–18	Medium	Mitigate risk, clarify terms and increase transparency
19–30	High	Escalate to Board. Decide to maintain, pause or terminate relationship

This matrix should be applied whenever concerns or questions arise about a funding relationship or partnership. This might include situations where public or media criticism emerges, activist campaigns or petitions develop, staff or stakeholders raise concerns or new information about a funder comes to light. Using the matrix in these moments supports a consistent and transparent approach to decision making.