

Air Shows/Open Houses

The following information is provided as general guidance to assist you in understanding the various rules and regulations dealing with Air Force Open Houses and Air Shows. The information was obtained from several sources and has been reviewed by the Air Force Services Agency's Legal and Marketing/Commercial Sponsorship Offices for accuracy. It is not all-inclusive and is not intended to replace or supersede information in Air Force Regulations or local Base Supplements.

Purpose of Open Houses

Open Houses are primarily Public Affairs activities and are designed to inform the public about the capabilities, equipment, training and professionalism of the Air Force and its people. Open Houses are not to take on the character of a fair, carnival, circus, or civilian air show, and they are not to be used as an avenue for the display or sale of commercial products.

Open House/Airshow Funding

Appropriated Funds (APFs)

The essential elements of Open Houses are funded by APFs, which are tax dollars that Congress has authorized the US Government to obligate to pay for goods and services. APFs used for an Open House come from the same pot of funds used to operate the base. Essential elements include those items used for the health, safety and comfort of the guests of the Open House. Examples include fencing, trash containers, shuttle buses, security, air boss, narrators, expenses incurred for warbird performers and static display participants. APFs cannot be used to pay for food, drinks, live and/or recorded music, theatrical performances and any other activities designed for entertainment.

Non-Appropriated Funds (NAFs)

NAFs are used for non-essential elements of the Open House. Services/MWR administer NAFs, which can be used for ground acts, chalets (not the DV tent), advertising, concerts, receptions open to the entire base and resale items such as food, beverages, souvenirs, and the like. NAFs cannot be used to augment or subsidize mission related elements or other elements not related to the MWR programs. Outside sources can provide commercial sponsorships and gifts in support of MWR elements of an Open House.

Commanders can authorize the use of NAFs for Special Morale and Welfare (SM&W) purposes if the SM&W expenditures are considered necessary to contribute to the overall morale and welfare of the military community. These funds may NOT be used where APFs are authorized, unless specifically authorized in AFI 34-201.

Private Funds

In addition to APFs and NAFs, there are “*private*” funds. There are two sources for private funds: Private Organizations (POs) that are base-sanctioned, and Non-Federal Organizations (NFOs) that operate outside of the official Private Organization Program. Examples of POs include the Company Grade Officer’s Council, Spouses’ Club, Top 3, and Credit Unions. Examples of NFOs include Aviation Nation, local Chambers of Commerce, the Reserve Officer’s Association and the Air Force Association. POs and NFOs can be used to hold “seed money” for future shows, serve as a *conduit* for donation of funds or services, and for funding those requirements not funded by APF or NAF, but there are distinct differences between them.

Commercial Sponsorship of Open Houses

The Services Commercial Sponsorship Program may be utilized to offset costs and/or enhance MWR elements of the Open Houses. This is the only authorized method to solicit sponsorship support for base activities. There has been an increase in NFOs being utilized to raise money for Open Houses. All money and items coming from NFOs MUST be gifted to either the Air Force or a NAFI. There is very limited recognition for those providing gifts. There are no special “perks”; these come through the Commercial Sponsorship Program. The Government does not cover expenses or liabilities of POs or NFOs. This means that POs or NFOs donating air show acts or other items must ensure the acts or items have liability insurance or each individual member of the PO or NFO would be jointly and severally liable if there was some sort of mishap. A contribution of private funds may not be accompanied by an agreement that obligates the Air Force to extend recognition benefits or advertising privileges on base.

Generally, all events occurring on the flight line during an Open House are Air Force events. The POs or NFOs are not allowed to have their own events. If a PO or NFO wants a special tent then it must work that with Services in conjunction with commercial sponsorship it provides for the MWR elements of the Open House, not as a result of a gift to the Air Force or one of its NAFIs. Joint events between a NFO and the Air Force are prohibited during an Air Show. In addition, POs and NFOs are not authorized to provide parking passes, special privileges or recognition during the Open House to those people contributing directly to the POs or NFOs. The Services’ Commercial Sponsorship Program is the only authorized mechanism permitting vendors’ access to the base to display their wares or provide the public information about their product or services during the Open House.

Summary

Open Houses comprise many fiscal law and ethical issues. A new Air Force Instruction (AFI 10-1004) is currently in coordination at the highest Air Force levels and will be approved for use in the near future. The new AFI is intended to consolidate the information in several regulations into one AFI for Air Force Open Houses.

For additional guidance on Air Force Open Houses and Air Shows at your base, please consult your base Legal Office or the Air Force Services Guide To Open Houses And Air Shows.

Contact AFNAFPO Policy, Procedures & Training Center for more information.
Commercial 210-652-6931, DSN 487-6931 or email IBPSHelpdesk@randolph.af.mil.