

WCHRI Statement on Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest for Committee Members

All committee members are required to maintain the highest level of ethical behavior and integrity standards to merit and safeguard the trust and confidence of our members, funders and stakeholders. WCHRI supports rigorous compliance with institutional policies and procedures and impresses upon all committee members that confidentiality and conflict declaration are a cornerstone of grant review processes.

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest is a conflict between a person's duties and responsibilities with regard to the review process, and that person's private, professional, business or public interests. A conflict may be real or perceived when the review committee member:

- would benefit and/or has a financial interest in or from the funding opportunity or application being reviewed;
- has a personal relationship with an applicant;
- has scientific or personal differences with the applicants;
- are closely affiliated with the applicants, as a result of having recently published or shared funding with the applicants;
- feel for any reason unable to provide an impartial or unbiased review of the application.

Disclosure and Compliance Measures

Any committee member who becomes aware of a conflict of interest must promptly disclose the conflict to WCHRI Grants Administration. No committee member may participate in the review process of an application with which he/she is in conflict of interest, either real or perceived. Declared conflicts and resultant compliance measures are retained as a matter of record. Conflict of interest is assessed by WCHRI Grants Administration and/or the committee chair; where conflict exists, committee members are required to exclude themselves from the meeting for the entirety of discussions pertaining to the conflict.

Confidentiality

Application materials contain personal/ confidential information. WCHRI notifies all applicants of their application outcome by email. Applicant results/outcome includes (blinded) reviewer assessments and may include scientific officer notes. Review committee members' names are released at the time of award announcement. At no point are reviewers identified or identifiable in any way to applicants. Committee members must in turn ensure that:

- all documentation and information provided to the review committee members is kept in strict confidence and used only for the purpose of application review and funding recommendation,
- application materials and review documentation must be stored securely according to UAPPOL to prevent non-user/ named reviewer (unauthorized) access. All material must be promptly destroyed, following the competition results announcement. Any loss, theft, or unauthorized access must be reported to WCHRI;
- all enquiries or representations received by committee members must be forwarded to WCHRI Grants Administration without delay. Review members will not discuss, or reveal any application or aspect of any application, including review, except to WCHRI and/or the committee chair outside of the committee meeting;
- Review deliberations are strictly confidential. Comments made by review committee members during the review of applications and the conclusions of the committee's review must never be discussed or disclosed.