

Conflict of Interest Policy for the Tahoe Science Advisory Council

I. Introduction

The Tahoe Science Advisory Council (Council) is committed to promoting transparent and ethical decision-making in all its activities. This Conflict of Interest (COI) Policy is designed to ensure that the distribution of funds, operational resources, and other decisions made by the Council are made without bias or undue influence. This policy aims to avoid real, perceived, or potential conflicts of interest and safeguard the Council's integrity, credibility, and trust with stakeholders.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this Conflict of Interest Policy is to:

- Ensure fairness, transparency, and objectivity in all decisions related to funding, project selection and administrative operations.
- Provide clear guidelines on identifying, disclosing, and managing conflicts of interest.
- Foster a culture of accountability within the Council's processes.
- Protect the reputation of the Council and prevent any actions that could be construed as improper or unethical.

III. Definition of Conflict of Interest

A Conflict of Interest arises when an individual's personal, professional, or financial interests might interfere with their ability to act impartially in the performance of their duties with the Council. Specifically, a conflict may exist when an individual:

- Has a financial interest in or a personal relationship with a researcher or organization that could benefit from Council decisions.
- Is directly involved in the preparation, submission, or review of a proposal to which they may have a vested interest.
- Holds a leadership position in an institution or organization that is applying for funding or resources.

IV. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all members of the Council and supporting staff.

V. Conduct

All Council member and associated staff are expected to meet the highest standards of ethical conduct. They are expected to avoid any activity or situation that could conflict or appear to conflict with the best interests of the Council.

VI. Disclosure at the Time of Request for Proposal Development:

Before participating in any request for proposal development or review process (e.g., reviewing proposals or making funding recommendations), members must disclose any potential conflicts of

interest related to specific proposals under consideration. Disclosures should include, but not be limited to:

- Financial interests, including ownership or investment in entities related to the proposal.
- Employment or consulting relationships with organizations applying for funds or other resources.
- Familial relationships with individuals involved in the proposal.
- Any other relationship that could influence impartiality in decision-making.

VI. Review and Management of Conflicts

1. Initial Review of Disclosures:

- The Council Program Officer and co-chairs will review all disclosed conflicts, determine the level of risk associated with each conflict, and assess the potential impact on decision-making.
- If the disclosed conflict is deemed significant, Council members may be required to recuse themselves from participating in discussions or decisions regarding affected proposals. Recusal will apply to the entire development and review process.

2. Managing Conflicts of Interest:

- When a conflict of interest is identified, the Council may take one or more of the following actions:
 - Recuse the individual from reviewing or voting on the proposal.
 - Reassign the proposal to a reviewer without a conflict of interest.
 - Require the individual to make a full, transparent disclosure to the broader Council if they must remain involved in the discussion or decision-making process.

3. Documentation and Transparency:

- All conflict of interest disclosures and the decisions made regarding their management will be documented and made available to Council members, agency staff, or other stakeholders engaged in Council activities.