Conflict of Interest Guidelines

1. Introduction and Definitions

The Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research is a registered non-profit society in British Columbia, accountable to its members, the health research community and the public for acting in a responsible and ethical manner. It is therefore essential that the Foundation and those undertaking its activities conduct themselves so as to avoid real or perceived conflict of interest. It is the responsibility of everyone involved to ensure these guidelines are observed at all times.

In these guidelines, the following definitions apply:

- An **ACTUAL OR POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST** arises when a person is in a situation whereby his or her personal, financial or professional interest, or that of an immediate family member or collaborator, conflicts or appears to conflict with his or her responsibility to the Foundation or participation in any recommendation or decision within the Foundation or the process leading to such a recommendation or decision.

- An **ADVISORY BODY** is a committee, task force, council or other group (not including the Board of Directors) convened on behalf of the Foundation to consider, advise and/or decide on issues relating to Foundation activities.

- An **APPLICANT** is a person, group or institution making application to the Foundation for funding, support, contract(s) or other benefits as may be decided upon by individuals acting on behalf of the Foundation.

- An **INDIVIDUAL** is a director, employee, member of an advisory body, officer, volunteer or contractor involved with, serving, engaged by or charged with certain duties by the Foundation.

- **NEXT LEVEL OF AUTHORITY** is:
  - In an employee relationship, the individual to whom an individual reports.
  - The chair of the advisory body in which an individual participates.
  - In the case of advisory body chairs, the chair of the RAC.
  - In the case of the RAC chair and the president & CEO, the chair of the Board of Directors.
  - In the case of the Board of Directors and the Board chair, the Board as a whole.

These guidelines are provided to assist individuals and advisory bodies in meeting their responsibility for recognizing and declaring any actual or potential conflict of interest to the Foundation. They are intended to provide guidance on the exercise of judgment, and as such cannot cover all possible situations. Anyone who is concerned they may be at risk of an actual or potential conflict should seek clarification immediately from the next level of authority.

Updated April 13, 2015
2. Declarations

Every individual associated with the Foundation is required to review the Foundation’s policies related
to conflict of interest, along with these Conflict of Interest Guidelines. Following this review, they must
complete and submit the **Conflict of Interest Declaration Form**, which will be kept on file by the
Foundation. Completed declaration forms should be submitted, in a timely fashion, to the individual’s
next level of authority.

3. Applications for Funding

The Foundation will make every effort to ensure not only that its decisions are fair and objective, but
also that they are seen to be so. Therefore, no member of an advisory body with an actual or potential
conflict of interest may participate in the review of an application. All such individuals must declare any
actual or potential conflict of interest to the chair of their advisory body immediately upon receipt of
the related competition information. For further clarity, individuals are in a conflict of interest when they:

- Are from the same immediate department, research group, centre, institute, company or other
type of institutional subdivision as any applicant named in a project.
- Have collaborated, published or been a co-applicant, within the last five years, with any
applicant named in a project.
- Have been a student or supervisor of the applicant within the last 10 years.
- Are or have been a close personal friend or relative of the applicant.
- Have had long standing or serious professional or personal differences with the applicant.
- For some other reason believe they cannot in good faith provide an objective review of the
application.

If any of these circumstances apply, the individual must not be involved in the application for the
review. During the portion of any meeting to evaluate the application, the individual must leave the
room, without comment, before discussion of the application commences, and not otherwise be
involved in any dialogue or communication with respect to the application. Where an individual seeks
direction on the exercise of his/her discretion in the event of a potential conflict, the next level of
authority shall exercise his/her judgment and/or seek a vote of the advisory body to clarify the
appropriate course of action.

When a member of an advisory body is named as applicant or collaborator in a project, the application
must be evaluated by a minimum of three external referees appointed by the Research (Scientific)
Advisory Council on the advice of the council chair. When the chair of an advisory body has concerns
about the potential perception of conflict in such matters, they may refer the issue to the Research
(Scientific) Advisory Council for advice and direction.

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4. Purchasing and Contracting

Any individual acting on behalf of the Foundation who has an actual or potential conflict of interest related to a specific purchasing or contracting decision in which he/she is likely to be involved must refrain from involvement in that transaction. He/she must disclose the circumstances to the next level of authority at the earliest opportunity. In such matters, the term “vendor” applies to both potential and actual vendors/suppliers to the Foundation. For further clarity, individuals are in a conflict of interest and must report if at any time they have:

- Received a loan from the vendor.
- Been negotiating to become or currently are an employee of, or a contractor to, the vendor.
- Immediate family member(s) employed by the vendor.
- Been or currently are a director and/or officer of the vendor company.
- Received gifts, favours, research funds, educational grants or other items or services of more than nominal value.
- Greater than a one percentage interest in the shares of the vendor, if a public company, or if a private company, is currently a shareholder therein.
- Done or may do business with a close relative on behalf of the Foundation.

5. Monitoring Enquiries and Complaints

Individuals who receive enquiries or complaints regarding real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest in any matter relating to the Foundation’s business must direct these contacts to the Office of the President of the Foundation. A record of these contacts will be maintained for review by the Nominating & Governance Committee during its annual review of the related policies.

Individuals having concerns or suggestions with respect to these guidelines are encouraged to bring such comments to the attention of their supervisor or chair.