

Blood cancer UK Policy on conflicts of interest in funding decisions

1. Purpose and scope

- 1.1. This policy is intended to identify and minimise actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest when acting on behalf of Blood cancer UK.
- 1.2. A conflict of interest is any situation in which personal or professional interests, or loyalties owed to another person or body, may (or may appear to) unduly influence or affect a decision. These can include: financial interests that apply to a person, someone close to them or an affiliated body; non-financial interests, such as reputational gain; and, loyalties arising from a personal connection or duty to another person or organisation.
- 1.3. As an organisation reliant on continuing public support and to act in the best interests of patients, it is important to identify and manage potential conflicts of interests, even where there may simply be a perception of undue influence.
- 1.4. This policy applies to employees involved in the grant-making process and external members of funding committees and panels.

2. Principles and responsibilities

- 2.1 Those acting on behalf of Blood cancer UK are expected to be objective, open and honest, making recommendations or decisions on grants with integrity and accountability and in a way that best serves the interests of Blood cancer UK. These principles are expected to be applied with consistency and in a way that promotes and supports their application by others.
- 2.2 It is ultimately the individual's responsibility to declare potential conflicts of interests by disclosing these to the relevant people at the earliest opportunity. Funding committee members should complete and return the annual declaration of interests form and employees should report relevant information in one-to-one meetings with their line manager.
- 2.3 It is also the individual's responsibility to subsequently work with the relevant people to determine whether an actual or perceived conflict of interest exists, to decide its scale and relevance, and then to manage the situation to best protect the integrity and reputation of the Charity.
- 2.4 If an individual is concerned that another person's potential conflict of interest has not been disclosed, then they should raise the matter in confidence with the relevant staff contact, committee Chair or line manager, as appropriate.
- 2.5 For the sake of transparency, the nature of any conflicts of interests and where these have affected the role of a person in a decision-making process will be recorded, and Blood cancer UK will be as open as possible whilst protecting sensitive information.

3. Application of principles

- 3.1. Potential conflicts of interests will usually result in the relevant person being excluded from the decision- or policy-making process, including being absent from relevant parts of meetings and restriction to related information.
- 3.2. Funding committee members are automatically excluded from participating in a decision on a grant proposal if they:
 - are directly involved in the application as an applicant, co-investigator or collaborator;
 - have collaborated with any of the applicants or co-investigators in the last five years;



- are personally connected to any of the applicants or co-investigators, either as a spouse or partner, close relative or previous supervisor/student;
- are a business partner of any of the applicants or co-investigators;
- are employed or affiliated with the same institution or organisation as any of the applicants or co-investigators, or have been within the last three years.

3.3 Funding committee members may, at Blood cancer UK's discretion, be excluded from participating in a decision on a grant proposal if they:

- are a direct competitor of any of the applicants, as disclosed by the committee member or applicant(s);
- are personally connected to any of the applicants or co-investigators as a close friend or previous laboratory colleague;
- have provided technical or general advice to the applicant(s) or co-investigators but will not be involved in study;
- have served as a reviewer or panellist for the same grant proposal under consideration by another funding body.

In any of these circumstances, and after discussion with and consideration by the committee Secretariat and/or the committee Chair, funding committee members may be permitted to participate in the decision but not lead the discussion of a grant proposal.

3.4 Employees will not participate in scoring grant proposals or final funding decisions, but may advise reviewers and panellists on budget, remit, fit with portfolio and overall research strategy.

3.5 Information relating to grant proposals, meeting papers, application scores and the identity of external peer reviewers is strictly confidential and should not be discussed with persons outside the review process. Discussions of a proposal between members of a funding committee that occur outside a committee meeting should be declared to the committee Chair or Secretariat.

3.6 We recognise that the majority of conflicts or potential conflicts will be restricted to a particular issue and will therefore not present any long-term restrictions on an individual's ability to act on behalf of the Charity. If a major conflict of interest arises that does compromise an individual's ability to continue in their position within the Charity, the matter will be discussed by the Charity's senior leadership group.