

CFI Assessment Committees

Statement on Ethics, Conflict of Interest, and Confidentiality

The Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) is required to meet the highest ethical standards in all that it does in order to continue to merit the trust and confidence of the research community, the government and the public. The members of CFI committees must meet very high standards of ethical behaviour in their task and must be perceived as doing so in order to honour and enhance public confidence in the CFI's ability to act in the public's best interest and for the long-term public good.

Members of the CFI committees are appointed as individuals; they are not the advocates or representatives of their disciplines nor are they the delegates of any organization. Their duty is to make the best possible objective recommendations on the investment of public funds in research infrastructure based on the merits of the application(s).

Rules and procedural guidelines may help committee members meet their obligations but only if they choose to invoke them and to follow them in the spirit in which they were formulated. Given their particularly sensitive mission, committee members may consider these rules as only minimally adequate for its purposes and may choose to add to them.

Conflict of Interest

Due to the technical content of the issues it must address, expert review committees must be comprised of members who have current knowledge of the issues in research. However, the activities which maintain that current knowledge could put individual members in situations of real, potential or apparent conflict between their private interests and their public duties as committee members.

If there is any potential for a real or perceived conflict, there must be full and open disclosure (e.g. if a committee member has been a recent – within the last six years – collaborator, departmental colleague, student, or supervisor of the project leader or any principal user). Where a conflict is found to exist, members will be expected to take whatever measures are necessary to ensure that public interests are protected where a conflict is found to exist. A committee member shall be free to withdraw from further review of any proposal potentially putting the member in a conflict. Additionally, the committee shall take whatever measures required to ensure that the public interest is protected. Such disclosures and compliance measures shall be discussed with the CFI staff and documented and retained for the record.

Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure

CFI is subject to the federal **Privacy Act** and the **Access to Information Act**. These laws govern how information may be used and disclosed by federal government institutions and certain federally-funded organizations. All documentation and information that the CFI entrusts to committee members must be maintained in strict confidence by the members at all times to avoid unauthorized disclosure. This documentation frequently contains personal information about others, as well as confidential scientific, technical and commercial information. To assist the CFI in meeting its legal obligations, you are asked to read the following instructions and to sign below to attest that you are aware of the importance of confidentiality and that you agree to comply.

Review documentation provided to committee members must be used only for the purpose for which it was originally collected (i.e. to assess CFI applications and make funding recommendations or decisions, as appropriate). It must not be used for any other purpose or discussed with or disclosed to others.

Committee members must ensure that CFI documents in their possession are stored in a secure manner to prevent unauthorized access. They must be transmitted using secure techniques and when they are no longer required they must be destroyed in a secure manner (e.g. by deleting electronic data files, or by shredding or burning paper or arranging for its return to the CFI).

Review deliberations are confidential. Comments made by committee members during the assessment of applications and the conclusions of the committee's review must never be discussed or disclosed except where the disclosure is:

- i. at the request of the CFI
- ii. required under legal compulsion, such as by order of a court

Consensus comments of the committee on specific applications are recorded and CFI staff will provide such comments to the applicant(s). The CFI Board of Directors reviews recommendations of committees and makes final decisions. Thus, committee members must not discuss the results of their deliberations.

Enquiries or representations received by committee members from institutions or project leaders about their projects or their review must be referred to CFI staff. There must be no disclosure by committee members of matters arising out of the assessment.

Confirmation

The CFI recognizes that the ultimate guarantee of the integrity of the assessment process is dependent upon the integrity of the individuals appointed as members of the committees.

Upon appointment, all members are required to indicate, in writing, that they understand and accept the CFI's requirements concerning conflict of interest, confidentiality and non-disclosure.

I have read the Statement of Ethics including the instructions on the need for disclosure of potential conflict of interest as well as the instructions above on the need for confidentiality with respect to CFI information and committee deliberations and the requirement for secure management of all information entrusted to me by the CFI. I agree to comply with these requirements.

NAME (please print)

SIGNATURE

DATE

Please return this form to: Canada Foundation for Innovation, 230 Queen Street, Suite 450, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5E4 or by fax to 613-943-0923