

Procedures: Human Research Ethics**SOP 105A Conflicts of Interest – REB Members and REB Office Personnel**

Associated Policy	Human Research Ethics Policy AR-03
Procedure Holder	Associate Vice President Research
Executive Lead	Research Services
Approval Authority	President
Original Date	Replaces AR-03 procedures (May 2009, Oct. 2014)
Effective Date	July 2022

1.0 PURPOSE

This standard operating procedure (SOP) describes potential Conflicts of Interest (COI) for Research Ethics Board (REB) members, REB Chairs, ad hoc advisors and REB Office Personnel. This extends to consultants who are not REB members but may be asked to review a project because of their expertise. It describes the requirements and procedures for disclosure and management of COI.

2.0 SCOPE

This SOP pertains to the Yukon University REB that reviews human participant research in compliance with applicable regulations and guidelines.

3.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

All REB members and REB Office Personnel are responsible for disclosing any real, potential or perceived COI and for ensuring that the requirements of this SOP are met.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

See Glossary of Terms.

5.0 PROCEDURE

COI (real, potential or perceived) arise when an individual in a position of trust has competing professional or personal interests. Such competing interests may influence their professional judgment, objectivity and independence and can potentially influence the outcome of a decision, for personal benefit. A COI may exist even if no unethical or improper act results from the

conflict.

The YukonU REB should identify and manage COI to maintain the public confidence and trust and to maintain the independence and integrity of the ethics review. If a COI cannot be avoided, procedures should be in place to mitigate the conflict.

The YukonU REB must be perceived to be fair and impartial, immune from pressure either by the sponsor, affiliated organizations or the Researchers whose research is being reviewed, or by other professional and/or non-professional sources.

The standard that guides decisions about determining COI is whether an independent observer could reasonably question whether the individual's actions or decisions could be influenced by factors other than the rights, welfare and safety of the participants.

5.1 REB Reviewer Assignment

5.1.1 The REB Co-Chairs or designee reviews the agenda prior to the REB meeting to identify potential COI;

5.1.2 When the agenda is distributed, REB members are expected to disclose as soon as possible, any conflicting interest(s) for any of the projects on the agenda;

5.1.3 If a member is unclear as to whether a COI exists, they must contact the REB Co-Chairs or designee to seek clarification. The REB Chairs or designee will determine whether the circumstances should be defined as a COI and the member shall follow the REB's decision regarding any actions required to mitigate their real or perceived COI;

5.1.4 If a COI is identified in the reviewer assignments, the project is assigned to another REB member.

5.2 Full Board Meeting

5.2.1 At the beginning of the meeting, REB members are reminded of their obligation to verbally disclose/declare any real, potential or perceived COI. All declared COI will be recorded in the REB meeting minutes;

5.2.2 Any REB member who is named as part of a research team on a study application being reviewed by the REB will be blocked from having access to reviewer comments. If an REB member is not named on a study but is in COI in relation to the study, they must declare their conflict. The procedures for recusal of REB members, including the Chair from deliberating/voting on any protocols for which there is a potential or actual COI are detailed in the REB minutes.

- 5.2.3** If a COI is declared and determined as such, the REB member may be asked to provide information about the research, but must be recused for the deliberation and decision;
- 5.2.4** The REB member's recusal will be recorded in the minutes and the REB member will not be counted towards quorum for the specific protocol for which they are in conflict. In the event that a member's COI and necessary withdrawal from the meeting will threaten the maintenance of quorum, the REB can ensure that a substitute member be in attendance to maintain quorum;
- 5.2.5** If recused, the REB member should abstain from voting on/approving the minutes of that meeting.
- 5.3 Delegated Review**
- 5.3.1** The REB Co-Chairs or designee will assess projects undergoing the delegated review process to determine potential COI;
- 5.3.2** REB members involved in the delegated review process are expected to disclose any conflicting interests;
- 5.3.3** If a COI is identified, the project is assigned to another REB member.
- 5.4 REB Chair**
- 5.4.1** In the event that the an REB Chair declares a COI, the Co-Chair or alternate REB member will assume the REB Chair's responsibilities for the specific project(s).
- 5.5 REB Office Personnel**
- 5.5.1** All REB Office Personnel are expected to disclose any conflicts that arise and any REB Office Personnel whose job status or compensation is impacted by research that is reviewed by the REB must recuse themselves when such research is reviewed;
- 5.5.2** Any disclosure of a COI by REB Office Personnel should be referred to the REB Co-Chairs or designee for the development of a management plan;
- 5.5.3** If REB Office Personnel are unclear as to whether a COI exists, they must contact the REB Co-Chairs or designee to seek clarification. The REB Co-Chairs or designee will determine whether the circumstances should be defined as a COI.
- 5.5.4** REB Office Personnel whose job status or compensation is impacted by research that is reviewed by the REB must recuse themselves from any meeting at which such a protocol is reviewed.

5.6 External Ad Hoc Advisors

- 5.6.1 At their, the REB Co-Chairs or designee may invite individuals with competence in special areas to assist in the review of issues that require expertise beyond or in addition to that available on the REB;
- 5.6.2 All ad hoc advisors must sign a *Confidentiality of Information and Conflict of Interest Agreement* prior to commencement of their consultation, and disclose any COI to the REB Co-Chairs.
- 5.6.3 Any disclosure of a COI by an ad hoc advisor should be referred to the REB Co-Chairs or designee for the development of a management plan, as applicable.
- 5.6.4 If ad hoc advisors are unclear as to whether a COI exists, they must contact the REB Co-Chairs or designee to seek clarification. The REB Co-Chairs or designee will determine whether the circumstances should be defined as a COI.

5.7 Documentation

- 5.7.1 All REB members, guests and ad hoc advisors must sign a *Confidentiality of Information and Conflict of Interest Agreement* and agree to abide by the REB COI and confidentiality policies;
- 5.7.2 REB members sign a *Confidentiality of Information and Conflict of Interest Agreement* annually, or as determined by the organization;
- 5.7.3 The signed *Confidentiality of Information and Conflict of Interest Agreement* is filed in the REB office;
- 5.7.4 The REB minutes will record any COI that are declared on any of the projects under review at the REB meeting, and the decision on the management of the conflict;
- 5.7.5 The REB minutes will also record the recusal of an REB member;
- 5.7.6 At the time of hire, all REB Office Personnel sign a *Confidentiality of Information and Conflict of Interest Agreement* as a condition of their employment with the organization agreeing to abide by the COI and confidentiality policies of the organization. REB Office Personnel must also comply with REB COI SOPs;
- 5.7.7 The signed *Confidentiality of Information and Conflict of Interest Agreement* will be retained;

5.7.8 The REB management plan for Research COI declarations will be documented in the appropriate research files. Any discussion at the REB meeting regarding the COI and the management plan will be documented in the REB meeting minutes.

5.8 Education and Training in Conflicts of Interest

5.8.1 REB members and REB Office Personnel are encouraged to participate in education and training activities related to COI issues where available.

6.0 REFERENCES

See References.

7.0 REVISION HISTORY

SOP Code	Effective Date	Summary of Changes
SOP105A	July 2022	YukonU version adapted from N2/CAREB SOP 105A.003 (October 8, 2019) and CAREB SOP 105A.001 (January 2021)