



SONORA ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE, INC. (SERI) CODE OF CONDUCT - CONFLICT OF INTEREST

INTRODUCTION

This policy governing financial conflict of interest applies to all SERI officers, members of the board of directors, employees or agents, any member of his or her immediate family or an organization that employs any of the indicated parties. It includes specific policies for Public Health Service (PHS) sponsored Investigators of the Institution. The Institutional Official is responsible for ensuring implementation of this policy and may suspend all relevant activities until the financial conflict of interest is resolved or other action deemed appropriate by the Institutional Official is implemented. Violation of any part of this policy may also constitute cause for disciplinary or other administrative action pursuant to Institutional policy.

DEFINITIONS

Conflict of Interest Committee (COI Committee) means the SERI's committee or individual that advises the Institutional Official on conflict of interest matters.

Responsible Person means any SERI officer, members of the board of directors, employee or agents, including all Public Health Service (PHS) sponsored Investigators of the Institution.

Family means any member of the immediate family, specifically, any spouse, domestic partner, parent, child or spouse of a child, or a brother, sister, or spouse of a brother or sister of a Responsible Person.

Financial Interest means anything of monetary value received or held by Responsible Persons or his or her Family, whether or not the value is readily ascertainable, including, but not limited to: salary or other payments for services (e.g., consulting fees, honoraria, or paid authorships for other than scholarly works); any equity interests (e.g., stocks, stock options, or other ownership interests); and intellectual property rights and interests (e.g., patents, trademarks, service marks, and copyrights), upon receipt of royalties or other income related to such intellectual property rights and interests.

Financial Interest does NOT include:

- a) salary, royalties, or other remuneration from SERI;
- b) income from the authorship of academic or scholarly works;
- c) income from seminars, lectures, or teaching engagements sponsored by or from advisory committees or review panels for U.S. Federal, state or local governmental agencies; U.S. institutions of higher education; research institutes affiliated with institutions of higher education, academic teaching hospitals, and medical centers; or
- d) equity interests or income from investment vehicles, such as mutual funds and retirement accounts, so long as the SERI officer, members of the board of directors, employee or agent does not directly control the investment decisions made in these vehicles.

Financial Interest also includes any reimbursed or sponsored travel undertaken by the Responsible Person and related to his/her institutional responsibilities. This includes travel that is paid on behalf of the Responsible Person as well as travel that is reimbursed, even if the exact monetary value is not readily available. It excludes travel reimbursed or sponsored by U.S. Federal, state or local



governmental agencies, U.S. institutions of higher education, research institutes affiliated with institutions of higher education, academic teaching hospitals, and medical centers.

Significant Financial Interest means a Financial Interest that reasonably appears to be related to the Responsible Person's Institutional Responsibilities, and:

- a) if with a publicly traded entity, the aggregate value of any salary or other payments for services received during the 12 month period preceding the disclosure, and the value of any equity interest during the 12 month period preceding or as of the date of disclosure, exceeds \$5,000; or
- b) if with a non-publicly traded entity, the aggregate value of any salary or other payments for services received during the 12 month period preceding the disclosure exceeds \$5,000; or
- c) if with a non-publicly-traded company, is an equity interest of any value during the 12 month period preceding or as of the date of disclosure; or
- d) is income exceeding \$5,000 related to intellectual property rights and interests not reimbursed through the Institution; or
- e) is reimbursed or sponsored travel related to their institutional responsibilities.

Financial Conflict of Interest means a Significant Financial Interest (or, where the Institutional Official requires disclosure of other Financial Interests, a Financial Interest) that SERI reasonably determines could directly and significantly affect the design, conduct or reporting of federally funded projects and/or PHS-sponsored research.

Institutional Official means the individual within SERI that is responsible for the solicitation and review of disclosures of significant financial interests including those of the Responsible Person's Family related to the Responsible Person's institutional responsibilities. For the purposes of this policy, the Institutional Official is designated as Anna Spitz, Ph.D., Secretary/Treasurer SERI Board of Directors, 3202 E. Grant Road, Tucson, AZ 85716, ahspitz@seriaz.org, 520-321-9488.

Institutional responsibilities means the Responsible Person's professional responsibilities associated with his or her Institutional appointment or position, such as project management, research, teaching, clinical activities, administration, and institutional, internal and external professional committee service.

Investigator means any individual who is responsible for the design, conduct, or reporting of PHS sponsored research, or proposals for such funding. This definition is not limited to those titled or budgeted as principal investigator or co-investigator on a particular proposal, and may include postdoctoral associates, senior scientists, or graduate students. The definition may also include collaborators or consultants as appropriate.

Public Health Service or *PHS* means the Public Health Service of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and any components of the PHS to which the authority of the PHS may be delegated. The components of the PHS include, but are not limited to, the Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Aging, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Federal Occupational Health, Food and Drug Administration, Health Resources and Services Administration, Indian Health Service, National Institutes of Health, and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Research means a systematic investigation, study, or experiment designed to contribute to generalizable knowledge relating broadly to public health, including behavioral and social-sciences research. The term



encompasses basic and applied research (e.g., a published article, book or book chapter) and product development (e.g., a diagnostic test or drug).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

This policy is predicated on the expectation that Responsible Persons should conduct their affairs so as to avoid or minimize conflicts of interest, and must respond appropriately when conflicts of interest arise. To that end, this policy informs Responsible Persons about situations that generate conflicts of interest related to federally funded projects and research, provides mechanisms for Responsible Persons and the Institution to manage those conflicts of interest that arise, and describes situations that are prohibited. Every Responsible Person has an obligation to become familiar with, and abide by, the provisions of this policy. If a situation raising questions of conflict of interest arises, a Responsible Person should discuss the situation with the Institutional Official.

1) DISCLOSURE OF FINANCIAL INTERESTS

All Responsible Persons are required to disclose their outside financial interests as defined above to the Institution on an annual and on an ad hoc basis, as described below. The Institutional Official is responsible for the distribution, receipt, processing, review and retention of disclosure forms.

a) Annual Disclosures

All Responsible Persons must disclose their Significant Financial Interests that are related to the his or her institutional responsibilities to SERI, through the Institutional Official, on an annual basis using the SERI Financial Interests Report form. All Responsible Persons also must complete on an annual basis the SERI gift policy certification. All forms should be submitted to the Institutional Official or designee by March 1 for the previous calendar year.

b) Ad hoc Disclosures

In addition to annual disclosure, certain situations require ad hoc disclosure. All Responsible Persons must disclose their Significant Financial Interests to SERI, through the Institutional Official, within 30 days of their initial appointment or employment.

Prior to entering into PHS-sponsored projects or applications for PHS-sponsored projects, where the Responsible Person has a Significant Financial Interest, the Responsible Person must affirm the currency of the annual disclosure or submit to the Institutional Official an ad hoc updated disclosure of his or her Significant Financial Interests with the outside entity. SERI will not submit a research proposal unless the Responsible Persons have submitted such ad hoc disclosures.

In addition, all Responsible Persons must submit to the Institutional Official an ad hoc disclosure of any Significant Financial Interest they acquire or discover during the course of the year within thirty (30) days of discovering or acquiring the Significant Financial Interest.

c) Travel

Responsible Persons must also disclose reimbursed or sponsored travel related to their institutional responsibilities, as defined above in the definition of Financial Interest and Significant Financial



Interest. Such disclosures must include, at a minimum, the purpose of the trip, the identity of the sponsor/organizer, the destination, the duration, and, if known, the monetary value. The Institutional Official will determine if additional information is needed (e.g., the monetary value if not already disclosed) to determine whether the travel constitutes a Financial Conflict of Interest with the Investigator's research.

2) REVIEW AND DECISION OF THE INSTITUTIONAL OFFICIAL

If the disclosure form reveals a Significant Financial Interest, it will be reviewed promptly by the Institutional Official or designee for a determination of whether it constitutes a Financial Conflict of Interest. If a Financial Conflict of Interest exists, the Institutional Official will take action to manage the financial conflict of interest including the reduction or elimination of the conflict, as appropriate.

A Financial Conflict of Interest will exist when the Institutional Official or designee determines that a Significant Financial Interest could directly and significantly affect the design, conduct, or reporting of federal funded projects and research including PHS-sponsored research. If the Institutional Official determines that there is a Financial Conflict of Interest that can be managed, he or she must develop and implement a written management plan. The affected Responsible Person must formally agree to the proposed management strategies and sign the written management plan before any related federally sponsored work including PHS-sponsored research goes forward.

The Institutional Official will periodically review the ongoing activity, monitor the conduct of the activity (including use of students and postdoctoral appointees), to ensure open and timely dissemination of the research results, and to otherwise oversee compliance with the management plan.

3) REPORTING TO PHS

The Institutional Official will report financial conflicts of interest or non-compliance to PHS in accordance with PHS regulations. If the funding for the Research is made available from a prime PHS-awardee, such reports shall be made to the prime awardee prior to the expenditure of any funds and within 60 days of any subsequently identified financial conflict of interest such that the prime awardee may fulfill their reporting obligations to the PHS.

4) INVESTIGATOR NON-COMPLIANCE

a) Disciplinary Action

In the event of a Responsible Person's failure to comply with this Policy, the Institutional Official may suspend all relevant activities or take other disciplinary action until the matter is resolved or other action deemed appropriate by the Institutional Official is implemented.

A Institutional Official's decision to impose sanctions on a Responsible Person because of failure to comply with this Policy, or failure to comply with the decision of the Institutional Official, will be described in a written explanation of the decision to the Responsible Person, and, where applicable, the Institutional Review Board, and will notify the individual of the right to appeal the



decision. The institution will promptly notify the PHS Awarding Component of the action taken or to be taken. If the funding for the research is made available from a prime PHS awardee, such notification shall be made promptly to the prime awardee for reporting to PHS.

b) Retrospective Review

In addition, if the Institutional Official determines that a Financial Conflict of Interest was not identified or managed in a timely manner, including but not limited to an Responsible Person's failure to disclose a Significant Financial Interest that is determined to be a Financial Conflict of Interest, or failure by a Responsible Person to materially comply with a management plan for a Financial Conflict of Interest, the Institutional Official will complete a retrospective review of the Responsible Person's activities and research projects in which the Responsible Person participated in to determine whether the research conducted during the period of non-compliance was biased in the design, conduct or reporting of the research.

Documentation of the retrospective review shall include the project number, project title, name of the Principal Investigator, name of Investigator with the Financial Conflict of Interest, name of the entity with which the Investigator has the Financial Conflict of Interest, reason(s) for the retrospective review, detailed methodology used for the retrospective review, and findings and conclusions of the review.

For PHS-supported research, the Institutional Official will update any previously submitted report to the PHS or the prime PHS-awardee relating to the research, specifying the actions that will be taken to manage the Financial Conflict of Interest going forward. This retrospective review will be completed in the manner and within the time frame established in PHS regulations. If bias is found, the institution will promptly notify the PHS Awarding Component and submit a mitigation report in accordance with the PHS regulations. The mitigation report will identify elements documented in the retrospective review, a description of the impact of the bias on the research project and the plan of action to eliminate or mitigate the effect of the bias.

5) TRAINING

Each Responsible Party must complete training on this Policy and the Responsible Party's responsibilities regarding disclosure. They must also complete training within a reasonable period of time as determined by the Institutional Official in the event that this Policy is substantively amended in a manner that affects the requirements of Responsible Party if the Responsible Party is new to the institution, or if it is determined that the Responsible Party has not complied with this policy or with a management plan related to their activities. For PHS-supported research the Responsible Party must also complete training on the PHS regulations prior to engaging in research funded by PHS, and at least every four years thereafter.

6) RECORD RETENTION

The Institutional Official will retain all disclosure forms, conflict management plans, and related documents for a period of three years and/or three years from the date the final expenditure report is submitted to the PHS or to the prime PHS awardee, unless any litigation, claim, financial management review, or audit is started before the expiration of the three year period, the records



shall be retained until all litigation, claims or audit findings involving the records have been resolved and final action taken.

7) CONFIDENTIALITY

To the extent permitted by law, all disclosure forms, conflict management plans, and related information will be confidential. However, the Institution may be required to make such information available to a requestor of information concerning financial conflict of interest related to federal funding, to the PHS Awarding Component and/or HHS, to a requestor of information concerning financial conflict of interest related to PHS funding or to the primary entity who made the funding available to the Institution, if requested or required. If the Institution is requested to provide disclosure forms, conflict management plans, and related information to an outside entity, the Responsible Party will be informed of this disclosure.

8) PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY

Prior to the expenditure of funds, the Institution will publish on a publicly-accessible website or respond to any requestor within five business days of the request, information concerning any Significant Financial Interest that meets the following criteria:

- a) The Significant Financial Interest was disclosed and is still held by the senior and key personnel;
- b) A determination has been made that the Significant Financial Interest is related to a federal assistance award including PHS-funded research; and
- c) A determination has been made that the Significant Financial Interest is a Financial Conflict of Interest.

The information to be made available shall be consistent with the requirements of the PHS regulation.

9) REGULATORY AUTHORITY

This policy implements the requirements of 42 CFR 50 Subpart F and 45 CFR 94; where there are substantive differences between this policy and the requirements, the requirements shall take precedence.