

# Conflict of Interest Policy: Partners and Sponsors

## 1. OBJECTIVE

The *Conflict of Interest Policy: Partners and Sponsors* aims to ensure that work undertaken by the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) meets the highest standards of ethics and integrity, and that organizations working with CCSA, sponsoring CCSA or both are not in a position of conflict with CCSA's interests and activities.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions are used:

- a) **Conflict of interest:** A situation in which an individual's or organization's interests may affect or compromise, or appear to affect or compromise, their objectivity, fairness or professional judgment in their work with CCSA. An interest may be personal, professional, financial, political, social, moral or religious. A conflict of interest may be real, potential or perceived.

A **real** conflict of interest arises when a CCSA partner or sponsor has a bias, relationship or interest that may affect or compromise their work with CCSA. Relationships may be personal, professional or financial.

A **potential** conflict of interest arises when an individual foresees that a bias, relationship or interest may influence their work with CCSA sometime in the future, but it has not yet done so. An identified future commitment is an example of a potential conflict of interest.

A **perceived** or apparent conflict of interest arises when a person could have a reasonable concern that a conflict of interest exists, whether there is a real or potential conflict or not.

- b) **Donor or sponsor:** An individual, corporation or organization (either for-profit or not-for-profit) that enters into a business arrangement with CCSA to commit financial or in-kind contributions to CCSA but that does not share in the profits or underlying risks of any project or activity.
- c) **Partner:** An individual, corporation or organization (either for-profit or not-for-profit) that engages with CCSA to complete a task or achieve a goal. The individual, corporation or organization may enter into a business arrangement with CCSA to commit in-kind contributions to CCSA but does not share in the profits or underlying risks of any project or activity. For example, partners may include speakers, moderators and facilitators at CCSA-convened events; experts participating in CCSA-led working groups and panels; co-chairs and members of CCSA advisory groups; authors contributing to CCSA publications; and peer reviewers.
- d) **Reasonable person standard:** An approach that considers whether a reasonable person would interpret the circumstances of a situation as potentially being sufficient to influence somebody's judgment. This standard should be used to determine whether a conflict of interest should be declared.



- e) **Waiver:** A waiver may be granted by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or Chief Operating Officer (COO) to allow an individual or organization with a conflict of interest to participate in a CCSA activity. The CEO or COO may limit the individual's or organization's participation in various ways and must document the rationale and parameters for the waiver.

### 3. PRINCIPLES

The principles of transparency and disclosure are essential to achieving the objectives of this policy. Disclosing relevant biases, relationships or interests related to CCSA activities will ensure that conflicts of interest are identified and resolved, preserving the objectivity and credibility of CCSA's work.

### 4. ETHICAL STANDARDS

CCSA partners and sponsors shall act with honesty and uphold ethical principles.

CCSA acknowledges that individuals have varied backgrounds, ideas, biases, personal experiences and influences that may affect how they view or react to someone or something. In certain instances, it may be advisable or even essential that individuals contribute their experience, expertise and knowledge to resolve the issues at hand. Expertise in an area or familiarity with the relevant issues is not in itself a conflict of interest, nor is the holding of tentative views on a relevant matter. However, a bias that could unfairly affect an outcome may lead to a conflict of interest.

### 5. APPLICATION

This policy applies to CCSA partners and sponsors only.

Guidance on conflicts of interest for CCSA employees is provided in CCSA's *Code of Professional Conduct and Business Ethics*. Related guidance for board members is provided in the *CCSA Board Governance Policy Manual*.

Declaration of a conflict of interest does not automatically preclude an individual from engaging in CCSA activities. The guidelines in this policy and the application of the reasonable person standard will enable CCSA to apply good judgment to any decision.

Representatives of a sponsor or any organization hired by a sponsor cannot participate in decisions.

An individual or organization may have a conflict of interest with CCSA activities if they:

- Have a financial or equity interest in a for-profit company that develops, produces, markets or distributes products related to alcohol, tobacco, other drugs or gambling. Equity includes stocks, stock options and other ownership interests;
- Own patents for or receive royalties from any intellectual property or product related to alcohol, tobacco, other drugs or gambling;
- Receive personal income, honorariums or other remuneration (e.g., reimbursement or financial support for the costs of travel) from any for-profit company that develops, produces, markets or distributes products related to alcohol, tobacco, other drugs or gambling;
- Are involved in research that is funded or supported (e.g., grants or in-kind support) by any for-profit company that develops, produces, markets or distributes products related to alcohol, tobacco, other drugs or gambling;
- Serve on an advisory board or as a member of a speakers' bureau linked to a for-profit company that develops, produces, markets or distributes products related to alcohol, tobacco, other drugs or gambling;



- Are employed by an organization that has a stated position that contradicts the interests of public health or safety as indicated by the evidence;
- Have a governance relationship with a for-profit company that develops, produces, markets or distributes products related to alcohol, tobacco, other drugs or gambling that could be perceived to influence their contributions to CCSA;
- Stand to gain or lose by a decision made by CCSA, either in the form of money or other special consideration;
- Have a personal interest sufficient to impair, influence or appear to influence their work with CCSA;
- Are a party to a claim, application or proceeding against CCSA;
- Use confidential CCSA information for their own purpose or benefit, or for the benefit of a friend or family member, or knowingly divulge confidential CCSA information to anyone, unless required to do so by law; or
- Have any other investments (e.g., stocks), affairs, affiliations, activities or interests that could be seen by a reasonable person as a real, potential or perceived conflict of interest that could influence CCSA activities.

## 6. GUIDELINES

### 6.1 Disclosure

- Before participating in any CCSA activity, a CCSA partner or sponsor must disclose any conflict of interest by submitting a completed *Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form*. The form should be completed as new situations arise but at least once per fiscal year. CCSA will retain this form and enclosed declarations. Based on the information provided, CCSA may review and verify this information and follow up with the CCSA partner or sponsor as required during the defined period of engagement.
- All CCSA partners and sponsors must disclose real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest resulting from relationships they have had with for-profit companies and not-for-profit organizations within the previous two fiscal years and as new situations arise.
- The obligation to disclose conflicts of interest is ongoing. Any conflict of interest that arises during an individual or organization's period of engagement with CCSA must be declared as soon as it is known by submitting a completed *Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form*.
- In situations where an individual or organization is believed to have a conflict of interest with CCSA but has not disclosed it, CCSA has an obligation to communicate privately with the individual or organization and give them an opportunity to disclose it. If that is not possible, the conflict should be disclosed within the group undertaking the CCSA activity.
- Any individual who fails to make their disclosures to the best of their knowledge, as described above, cannot serve as a CCSA partner or sponsor.
- CCSA is responsible for reviewing all real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest disclosed by CCSA partners and sponsors to determine whether action is required.

### 6.2 Content Development

- CCSA may consider data or advice from any source, but it must ensure that decision making related to its research, reports and publications is under its exclusive control.



### 6.3 Financial and In-Kind Support

- CCSA cannot be required to accept advice from a sponsor on the development, delivery or evaluation of CCSA activities as a condition of receiving financial or in-kind support.
- CCSA may assume or delegate to a third party the payment of travel, lodging, reimbursable expenses and any honorariums offered to CCSA partners. However, CCSA must first approve which payments may be delegated and retain overall accountability for these payments.
- The travel, lodging or other out-of-pocket expenses of spouses, partners or other family members of CCSA partners cannot be paid for or subsidized by a sponsor or any organization hired by a sponsor.
- CCSA has an obligation to ensure that its interactions with sponsors meet professional and legal standards, including the protection of privacy, confidentiality, copyright and contractual obligations.
- CCSA must recognize and disclose all financial and in-kind support received from sponsors of CCSA activities as part of its acknowledgement of sponsorship in its audited statements and research reports.

### 6.4 Advertising and Promotion

- Product-specific advertising, promotional materials or branding elements cannot be included on, appear within or be adjacent to any materials used as part of CCSA activities, including slides, abstracts and handouts; programs or calendars of events (preliminary or final); and webpages or electronic media containing educational material, unless agreed to by CCSA in writing.
- Product-specific advertising, promotional materials or branding elements cannot be included at CCSA-led symposia, conferences and educational activities in locations where CCSA sessions are occurring (e.g., lecture halls, small group discussion rooms) immediately before, during or immediately after a CCSA session, unless agreed to by CCSA in writing.
- Commercial exhibits or advertisements must be placed in a designated location.
- CCSA cannot be required to accept advice by an exhibitor or advertiser on the development, delivery or evaluation of a CCSA activity as a condition of accepting the exhibit or advertisement.
- The specific interests of any exhibitor or advertiser must have no direct or indirect influence on any aspect of the development, delivery or evaluation of a CCSA activity.

### 6.5 Exceptions

CCSA should cautiously consider its approach to potential collaborations to avoid reputational risk to the organization and its partners and sponsors. The associated risks and benefits of each situation should be assessed.

CCSA may choose to request feedback from individuals or organizations with a conflict of interest with CCSA when CCSA has deemed the feedback of the individual or organization to be critical to its research or knowledge products. In such instances, each contributor must complete CCSA's *Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form*.

### 6.6 Responsibilities

#### Chief Operating Officer



The COO is responsible for:

- Ensuring all identified conflict of interest situations adhere to this policy;
- Collecting feedback from the Senior Leadership Team members (or their designates) and providing a recommendation to the CEO;
- Reviewing this policy annually to ensure continued adherence to this policy and submitting a report to the Senior Leadership Team; and
- Recommending to the Senior Leadership Team any revisions to this policy.

**Chief Executive Officer**

The CEO is responsible for:

- Receiving recommendations from the COO, making and conveying their decision to the director most responsible;
- Determining, jointly with the Senior Leadership Team, any situation that may be an exception to this policy;
- Documenting any decision made about exceptions to this policy;
- Acting as final arbiter if a conflict of interest poses significant challenges or concerns to CCSA; and
- Presenting to the Board within the annual report any significant issues related to conflicts of interest.