

## **The INSPIRE Foundation**

### **Conflict of interest policy**



#### **General**

This policy relates to all our Trustees and members of our National Scientific Committee (NSC) who advise our Trustees in their funding decisions (Committee Members). It also applies to employees or volunteers of the Foundation.

The purpose of this document is to minimise the potential for conflicts of interest and to protect the Foundation and those who work for it from any perception, real or otherwise, that the external interests and affiliations of its committee members might interfere with their ability to work in the interests of the Foundation.

#### **Declaration of interest**

Any persons covered by this policy, must declare any qualifying external interests upon their appointment to the charity, and annually thereafter. A register of interests will be kept up to date by the charity. Additionally, at the start of each meeting, members will be asked if they have any new or yet undisclosed conflicts of interest. These will be recorded in the minutes and any required actions noted.

Interests which should be disclosed by such individuals include:

Equity interests (if worth £10,000 or more, or more than 1% of the total issued capital) in enterprises with involvement in pharmaceuticals, healthcare, biotech or related areas, or in any other enterprise that may have a real or perceived interest in the work of the charity.

Third party investments (e.g. ISAs) should be held exempt from this.

Consultancies and other external appointments (paid and unpaid), together with details of any remuneration or other benefits arising from these.

As well as financial and research interests, committee members should also consider interests arising through close professional or personal relationships. In research funding settings, supervisory relationships, close collaborators, partners, or other personal connections as these might create perceived conflicts even where no financial interest exists.

Committee members should also adhere to the spirit of this document and declare any other interests which they feel may be a source of conflict, or which might be perceived to conflict, with the interests of the charity. This includes interests held by the panel members' spouse or children.

#### **Discussion of proposals**

Details of applications, meeting papers and related correspondence and the names of external referees are strictly confidential and should not be discussed with persons outside the review process.

Discussions of a proposal between members of The NSC or Board of Trustees which occur outside a committee meeting should be declared to the chair of the committee.

If a committee member (including serving trustees) is approached by an applicant for technical advice on an application, he or she may provide advice, but must report this to the committee chair and secretary. They may subsequently be asked by the chair to absent themselves from a discussion of the application concerned.

### **Managing conflicts of interests**

Where an NSC member is an applicant or co-applicant on a grant application or when the application is from the Chair's institution he or she must declare an interest and withdraw from any consideration of that application. He or she must retire from the meeting when the application is assessed. This should also apply to trustees who are applicants or co-applicants in the grant round.

Where the chair of the NSC is an applicant or co-applicant on a grant application or when the application is from the Chair's institution he or she must declare an interest and should not be involved in that its assessment by the NSC. The chair should appoint a vice chair for that discussion to prevent any undue influence.

Panel members who could be seen as a direct competitor of the applicant (e.g. they are funded or applying for funding on a similar project to the proposal under discussion) or have collaborated or published with the proposal applicant (usually within the past three years) or work in the same institution, should declare an interest and may be asked to withdraw from the meeting for that application, or may be allowed to stay, but not vote on the application.

If further clarity or guidance is required, we will refer to the Charity Commission guidance CC29:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/identifying-and-managing-conflicts-of-interest-in-a-charity-cc29/conflicts-of-interest-a-guide-for-charity-trustees>

### **Resolution conflicts of interest**

The Charity recognises that most conflicts or potential conflicts will relate to a particular issue and as such will not present any long-term restrictions on an individual's ability to work for the charity or to sit on its committees.

In a small number of cases, major conflicts of interest may arise which compromise an individual's ability to continue in their position within the charity. Where such a situation relates to a member of the Trustees or the National Scientific Committee, the matter will be discussed by the chair of the committee together with a committee staff member or

secretary. In cases where agreement cannot be reached through this means, the case will be referred to the committee, whose decision should then be taken as final.

Members of all committees are expected to declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to individual funding decisions to the committee secretary before the meeting wherein they will be discussed, or during the meeting as soon as the existence of a conflict becomes apparent.

In cases where an individual is uncertain as to whether a conflict of interest exists or not, they should report this to the committee secretary. The secretary shall discuss the matter with the individual as necessary and report to the Chair, who will decide on a course of action.

If an individual is concerned about a possible conflict of interest involving another member of a funding panel, then he or she should raise the matter with the chair of the panel as soon as possible.

**Policy Review:**

The charity will endeavour to review this policy every two years, in consultation with the board of Trustees.

**Date of policy:**

15<sup>th</sup> May 2026

**Date of review:**

May 2028 or sooner if guidance or legislation changes.

This policy was accepted by the Trustees.

**Signed**

**(Chairman of Trustees)**

**Signed**

**(Chairman of NSC)**

**Signed**

**(Director, INSPIRE Foundation)**