

IAI Conflicts of Interest and Standards of Ethical Conduct

The IAI Conference of the Parties (CoP) at its VII meeting, held from July 27-28, 2000 in Merida, Mexico approved this document, which constitutes the official policy of the IAI concerning Conflict of Interest situations and recommends Standards of Conduct when making funding and budget decisions on proposals and administration of IAI awards. Recommended procedures are also given regarding the limitations which service with the IAI may place on IAI personnel participation with IAI-sponsored institutions before, during and after their involvement with the IAI.

1. General

For the purpose of this document, "IAI personnel" refers to Directorate staff, members of the Executive Council (EC), and members of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC), unless otherwise noted.

1.1. Why should the IAI worry about Conflicts of Interest ?

The success of the IAI as an enterprise depends to a great extent on the effectiveness of its decision-making process in recommending the best and most important work to be done, whether this is the field of research or internal decision about structure or policy. If judgements and decisions of this sort cannot be made without Conflicts of Interest, then the IAI will not be regarded as producing reliable results, or supporting worthwhile research. The confidence of the scientific community, the Member State Governments, other donors, and the public in the integrity and effectiveness of the IAI will be severely compromised. Such confidence is extremely difficult to regain if lost.

*The IAI must therefore avoid or minimize actual **and apparent** Conflicts of Interest to maintain its integrity, internal effectiveness, and public trust.*

1.2. What is a Conflict of Interest ?

A Conflict of Interest exists when an individual has divided loyalties between the IAI and another entity. There are three basic sources of Conflicts: personal interest, outside affiliations, and favors. The following illustrate cases where there is a possible Conflict of Interest:

1.2.1 Personal Interest

IAI personnel must not use their positions within the IAI to further their personal interests at the expense of the IAI (e.g. deciding to fund a conference, serving as Chair, and delivering the keynote address), or to further the interest of their friends (e.g. giving positive comments to a colleague who is responsible for evaluating a friend's proposal.)

1.2.2. Outside Affiliations

IAI personnel must not participate in decisions regarding institutions or individuals with which they have some sort of relationship (e.g. requests for funding from one's recent or near future employer, requests from relatives, requests from old advisors or students).

1.2.3 Favors

IAI personnel must not accept gifts or favors from actual or potential grantees. This behavior creates a definite impression of Conflict, if not a moral or an actual legal debt (e.g. the acceptance of travel expenses, meals, etc.)

1.3. “Disqualification”

There are certain cases where the real or apparent Conflict is so strong that they will certainly damage the credibility of the IAI. These cannot be allowed to occur, and steps taken to prevent this type of Conflict should be clearly documented. Certain IAI employees and reviewers must be disqualified from participation in the decision process.

1.4. Flexibility and Interpretation

It should be recognized that applying Conflict of Interests rules to an extreme would lead to a situation where all the experts that IAI relied on to give opinions were disqualified. Some measure of judgment must always be applied in enforcing these rules so that such a situation does not occur.

2. Proposal Processing

All IAI personnel with a Conflict of Interest in a particular decision will identify themselves and a decision regarding the Conflict of Interest must be documented. The Director is responsible for Conflict decisions. In the case where the Director has the Conflict, the Chief Scientific Officer will decide it (note that this may not necessarily require that the person be recused from the decision-taking process).

All reviewers of proposals, from the mail reviewers through the Director, SAC Members, Chief Scientific Officer, Administrative Officer, and Communications and Training and Education Officer, will disclose any possible Conflicts of Interest. Mail and panel reviewers will do this through a signed statement.

The following situations are considered to create disqualifying Conflicts of Interest:

2.1. Affiliations with an applicant institution

- a) Current appointment as a professor (including adjunct, visiting, etc.) at the applicant institution.
- b) Current employment or consideration of employment at the applicant institution (including consultancy or advisory roles).
- c) Formal or informal re-employment arrangements with the applicant institution.
- d) Visiting committee membership for the Department from which the proposal is submitted.
- e) Investment or other financial interest in the applicant institution.
- f) Office holding, membership on a governing board, or directly relevant committee membership at the applicant institution.
- g) Current enrollment as a student in the Department submitting the application.
- h) Acceptance of an honorarium from the applicant institution within the last twelve months.

2.2. Relationships with persons with a personal interest in the application

- a) Known family relationship with an investigator on the project.
- b) Business or professional partnership.
- c) Employment at the same institution within the last 12 months.
- d) Past or present association as thesis advisor or student.
- e) Collaboration on a project within the last 36 months.

2.3. Other affiliations

- a) Any affiliation as an investigator with a separate application submitted in response to the same IAI announcement.
- b) Affiliations of spouse/husband or children under any of the above conditions.
- c) Personal friendship or other relationship that might affect judgment, or be perceived as affecting judgment.

3. Service with the IAI

Service with the IAI – whether through paid, seconded, honorary, designated or elected positions carries certain responsibilities regarding Conflict of Interest both before, during and after the period of service.

3.1. Before IAI Service

This situation applies only to those persons who are to take up a position or responsibility within the IAI. For the purposes of Conflict of Interest, these person must be considered as if they had already assumed their roles within the IAI.

3.2. Members of the SAC as IAI Investigators

Members of the SAC may participate in proposals to the IAI as investigators, however, they cannot directly contact the IAI in any manner whatsoever regarding the project, whether it is being evaluated, administered, or closed out. An alternate investigator must conduct all negotiations, and the SAC member cannot participate in any discussions or evaluations of the program under which the proposal was submitted.

3.3. Member State Delegates as IAI Investigators or from Institutions Submitting Proposals

While an IAI Member State may accredit a delegation to the EC or the CoP of its own choosing, it must be noted that having applicants among the delegations creates a strong Conflict of Interest of the delegation and for the body as a whole, and portrays a very biased image to the public of the decision-making capacity of the Institute.

A similar Conflict of Interest may arise from IAI Member Delegates who are employed by institutions submitting proposals.

Therefore, the Member State Delegates cannot participate in EC/CoP funding decisions with which they have Conflicts of Interest.

3.4. IAI Directorate Staff

IAI Directorate staff, including the Director, will in no circumstances be involved as applicants to the IAI.

3.5. Conflicts After Service

Staff, Members or Representatives from any organ of the IAI will be aware of the strong appearance of Conflict generated by their participation in programs subsequent to their period of service. Particularly, IAI staff personnel will be disqualified for one year of participating in programs subsequent to their period of service.