

West Neighbourhood House	
Policy Title:	Conflict of Interest
Approved by:	West Neighbourhood House Board of Directors
Approval date:	February 2006
Revision dates:	December 2011 / September 2015 / April 2019 / April 2024 /

Policy Statement

A conflict of interest exists in any decision-making situation where personal or business interests of a Board member, staff, or volunteer conflict, or could be perceived to conflict, with the best interests of West Neighbourhood House.

A conflict of interest also exists in any decision-making situation where relatives, spouses, partners, or friends of a Board member, staff, or volunteer have personal or business interests that conflict with the best interests of West Neighbourhood House.

A high standard of due diligence is required for non-profit organizations. Even the perception of a conflict of interest can be as damaging to organizational reputation and credibility as an actual conflict.

Any actual or potential conflicts of interest that may currently exist or that may arise in the future shall be declared. Individuals covered by this policy shall not seek to receive or give any benefit, advantage, gain, or privilege for themselves, for any business in which they have an interest, or for any family members or businesses in which they have an interest or a perceived interest through their work (volunteer or otherwise) with West Neighbourhood House.

Anyone aware of a conflict of interest shall immediately report it to the appropriate Director/Manager. For conflicts of interest involving a Director/Manager, the report shall be made to the Executive Director. For a conflicts of interest involving the Executive Director or a Board member, the report shall be made to the President of the Board.

Applicability

- All Staff
- Students
- Volunteers
- Donors

General Principles

Management, staff, and volunteers shall make organizational and business decisions based solely on the organization’s requirements and interests. All inside parties shall operate at arm’s length from all outside parties with which West Neighbourhood House does business. West Neighbourhood House shall treat and be seen to be treating everyone equally, fairly and objectively.

Volunteers serving on non-profit Boards of Directors shall use their good judgment and experience to determine the best interests of the organization and the proper use of public and donor funds, uncompromised by personal, business, friendship or family interests.

For this reason, the zone of personal responsibility of any individual captured by this policy is extended to include friends and family members by birth, adoption and marriage when judging whether a conflict exists or could exist.

This can involve the individual, friends, or family members, directly or indirectly giving and/or receiving a benefit, gain, privilege, or advantage through an insider relationship. In that situation, the individual is, or can be seen to be, serving competing interests: their own interests and that of the organization. Further, independent judgment and objectivity are threatened, or could be perceived to be threatened.

West Neighbourhood House will adopt and enforce all reasonable measures to ensure that its decisions, including business, organizational, and employment decisions, are not tainted by conflicts of interest.

Declarations

All Board members, staff, students or volunteers shall acknowledge in writing that they have received and read the Conflict of Interest Policy (or have had it explained to them) and that they understand it. All individuals will be advised to avoid all actual or potential conflicts of interests in their business dealings for West Neighbourhood House and to immediately report any instances that do occur. Conflict of interest requirements shall be clearly set out in the Board Manual and be part of an annual Board orientation, as well as part of orientation for new staff, students, and volunteers.

Board or Committee Meetings

At Board or committee meetings, any Board member, staff, student, or volunteer upon becoming aware of a personal, friend, or family interest in an item shall immediately declare this. If it is determined that a conflict actually does or could exist, the individual will abstain from any further discussion or voting on the item in question at this or any future meeting until a decision is made. At Board meetings, the individual may be asked to leave the meeting while the item is under discussion. Quorum is not affected by this temporary absence. Minutes of Board and committee meetings shall record that a declaration was made and the actions that were taken to contain and avoid it.

Board Appointments

Board members shall resign their positions or take a leave of absence before they intend to compete for any permanent or contract position at West Neighbourhood House.

To ensure the Board benefits from the full and focused judgment of all of its members, no two family members may sit on the Board at the same time. Family members of the Executive Director, Director/Managers, or any other staff normally reporting to or advising the Board on significant business decisions may not serve as a Member of the Board. Should such a situation occur, one of the parties shall resign.

Board Member Expenses

Board members shall serve without profit or remuneration of any kind whether direct or indirect. A Board Member may be reimbursed for reasonable expenses (out-of-pocket) incurred while conducting business for the organization, as approved by the Board.

Due Diligence

Anyone who believes another individual has or might have a conflict of interest has a duty to report this as soon as reasonably possible. The Board or management, as appropriate, shall determine if a conflict exists or could exist and will take the required steps to address it.

Staff Due Diligence

All staff with the authority to make decisions on behalf of West Neighbourhood House or advise on contracts, purchases, and hiring/promotion shall avoid conflicts of interest.

The Executive Director is responsible for the proper and ethical operation of the organization; therefore, they shall ensure that effective safeguards are in place and enforced.

All staff with a conflict of interest shall absent themselves from discussions or decisions on the contract, purchase, or hiring in question.

Objective Business Practices

Procedures for all contracts (e.g. goods, services, employment) shall be based on a standard set of specifications or current requirements. Reviews of submissions or applications/interviews shall treat all bidders/applicants equally and objectively. Contracts for goods and services shall be awarded as outlined in the Procurement Policy. Offers of employment shall be made to the most suitable applicant, consistent with the collective agreement, other relevant organizational policies, and labour practices.

Failure to Declare

Any Board member, staff, student, or volunteer who fails to declare a conflict of interest that is subsequently discovered shall be subject to an investigation of the potential conflict, and a finding of an undeclared conflict of interest may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Acknowledgement of Policy

I acknowledge that I have received and read the Conflict of Interest Policy (or have had it explained to me) and I understand it.

I understand that it is my responsibility to abide by this policy and related policies of West Neighbourhood House as a condition of my employment and participation in West Neighbourhood House.

Date: _____

Name of Employee/Volunteer: _____

Signature: _____