



Code of Ethics: for all Members of AO Funding and Review Boards

An **AO Funding Board** is a governance body (such as a board, a commission, a committee or council) of the AO Foundation or one of its institutions (together **AO**) with a budget authority. It considers research applications for funding and/or allocates funds for research and other projects to entities (such as universities, clinics, laboratories, societies) (**Applying Entities**) or individuals (such as clinicians, researchers, scientists) (**Applying Individuals**).

The members of the Funding Boards (**MoFB**) generally are world known specialists (clinicians, scientists) in their field; they are elected by the Board of Directors of the AO Foundation (AOVA) or by the Academic Council (AcC). There should be a clear distinction between a Member of a Funding Board (**MoFB**) and a Member of a Review Board or Commission (**MoRB**) with no funding responsibility yet a role in the evaluation of applications for funding.

Normally **MoFBs** and **MoRBs** have very close ties to Applying Entities/Individuals (e.g., as member of the advisory board of an Applying Entity or as mentor of an Applying Individual or even as a co-applicant) (**Close Relationship**). A **MoFB** or **MoRB** with a Close Relationship to an Applying Entity or an Applying Individual is considered an involved **MoFB (IMoFB)** or involved **MoRB (IMoRB)**.

Under this code, it is only possible to select as reviewers for submissions such experts who do not have a perceived conflict of interest (see appendix to the Code of Ethics for all **MoFBs** and **MoRBs**) such as a recent (3 years) or current working or supervisory Relationship to the Applying Entity/Individual, i.e. a reviewer must be independent and unbiased (**Reviewer**).

It would not serve the purpose of the Foundation to exclude the network of the **MoFB** or **MoRB** from receiving funding for the submissions of their network, be it as an Applying Entity or Applying Individual.

The AO does not allocate taxpayer's money but privately owned Foundation money - therefore AO does not have to comply with public allocation rules and procedures.

However, AO does want to allocate money to those who have the capabilities to deliver best in class results. The evaluation and the decision must be unbiased.

Therefore the following **Code of Ethics must be** accepted and followed by all **MoFBs** and **MoRBs**:

1. Every **MoFB** or **MoRB** must disclose to the Chair of their Board, Commission, Committee or Council any relationship with Applying Entities/Individuals.



2. The respective Board, Commission, Committee or Council will decide whether or not the disclosed relationship is a Close Relation and therefore the individual an involved member (**IMoFB or IMoRB**).
3. A **MoFB or MoRB** who is listed on the list of applicants (either as Principal Investigator or as Co-Investigator) is an involved member (**IMoFB or IMoRB**).
4. The **IMoFB or IMoRB** must abstain, and be excluded from, the entire review and funding decision-making process pertaining to the application of Applying Entities/Individuals to which he/she has a Close Relation or in which he/she is a listed Investigator. He/she must not have sight of any of the documentation or reviews relating to that study unless it be as any listed Investigator and should not be present when the application is discussed.
5. No **MoFB or MoRB** shall make any communication on the decision process or on the decision made to anyone outside the deciding Board, Commission, Committee or Council. This information is always communicated by the chairperson of that body.

This **Code of Ethics** has been approved by the AcC / AOVA on July 9, 2010.

It must be signed by all Members of Funding and Review Boards.

The CFO of the Foundation has the responsibility of monitoring compliance with this Code of Ethics and will report annually to the AcC / AOVA.

Board, Commission, Committee or Council:

Function in Board, Commission, Committee or Council:

Name (block letters):

Place, Date, Signature:



Appendix to the Code of Ethics for all Members of AO Funding and Review Boards

Dated July 9, 2010

Employment: A member who is an employee, whether full-time or part-time, of the applicant institution, or who is negotiating for employment, may have a Conflict of Interest with regard to an Application to be considered or reviewed by him or her from that institution. However this does not preclude that member from participating in the decision making process provided that their relationship is disclosed and recorded.

Financial Benefit: If a Member or a close relative or professional associate of the Member (i) has received or could receive a direct financial benefit of any amount deriving from an Application to be reviewed by him or her or (ii) has received or could receive a financial benefit from the applicant institution, this shall be considered as a Conflict of Interest which must be declared and recorded.

Personal Relationships (Relatives): Personal relationships shall mean relationships with a close relative including but not limited to a parent, spouse, sibling, son or daughter or domestic partner. A Conflict of Interest exists if a close relative of a Member submits an Application to be reviewed by the Member, or receives or could receive financial benefits from or provides financial benefits to an applicant. That relationship must be declared and recorded.

Professional Associates: A Conflict of Interest may arise if a professional associate of the Member submits an Application to be reviewed by the Member. A professional associate is any colleague, scientific mentor, or student with whom the Member is currently conducting research or other significant professional activities or with whom the Member has conducted such activities within three years of the date of the review. That relationship must be declared and recorded.

Standing Review Group Membership: When a scientific review group meets regularly, a relationship among the individual members exists; therefore, a Conflict of Interest may arise where a member of such a group reviews an Application of another member of the group. That relationship must be declared and recorded.

Longstanding Disagreements: A Conflict of Interest may exist where a Member or a Reviewer has had longstanding scientific or personal differences with an applicant. That must be declared and recorded.

Multi-Site Or Multi-Component Project: An individual serving as either the principal investigator or key personnel on one component of a multi-site or multi-component project has a Conflict of Interest with all of the applications or proposals from all investigators or key personnel associated with the project. The individual should be considered a professional associate when evaluating applications or proposals submitted by the other participants in the project.