

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Conflicts of Interest Policy – Volunteers

1 Why does the IET have a Conflicts of Interest Policy?

The Charity Governance Code contains provisions regarding the identification and recording of conflicts of interest. This Policy, together with others such as those covering things like Bribery and Corruption, and Gifts and Hospitality helps the IET comply with the appropriate principles set out in the Charity Governance Code.

2 Who does the Policy apply to?

The general guidance in the Policy applies to all volunteers, although the need to submit a declaration of interests normally applies only to those involved in the governance of the IET. It is important that everyone is aware of conflicts that might arise and that Committees and other groups can handle them effectively and transparently. As mentioned above, the request to complete a declaration applies to volunteers who are active in the Board of Trustees, Council, Main Boards, other governance boards and committees that report directly to the Board of Trustees, and the Communities Resourcing Committee (CRC).

3 Why does it apply to volunteers other than Trustees?

The Charity Commission is clear that there should be a Policy on Conflicts of Interest for Trustees. This has been extended to ensure that not only Trustees receive guidance and demonstrate high standards of governance, but that all volunteers involved in governance do so as well. Those volunteers on Boards and Committees who take decisions which are delegated by the Board of Trustees are also asked to adopt the same level of rigour as the Board of Trustees. The IET is a large and complex charity with major decisions taken on financial, resource and reputational issues outside of the Board of Trustees. It is sensible therefore to adopt the same approach for those key decision-making volunteers.

4 What should be declared?

The Policy is about identifying and managing conflicts of interest and potential or perceived conflicts of interest with a person's activities as an IET volunteer. The Register/declaration is of Interests which may give rise to a conflict or perceived conflict. Interests which have no impact on the volunteer's role with the IET and which would not be perceived as having an impact, do not need to be disclosed.

5 How was the Declaration Form developed?

The Form is based on a standard template developed by the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators which was felt to meet the IET's needs, rather than developing a bespoke document.

6 Do staff have a similar declaration to make?

Senior staff already complete an annual declaration on related party transactions. This has been extended below the senior management team to include a wider number of staff. In addition, a Conflicts of Interest Policy has been rolled out which will apply to the IET's 'extended leadership team' (the directors and their direct reports), which includes the requirement to make a declaration of Interests.

7 Are the Declarations held securely?

Yes, they are. The Policy outlines that the declarations are sent to the Head of Governance. The Policy also confirms who may have access to the information. The Head of Governance will hold these securely (in the case of both hard copy and electronic forms) and they will not be available more widely within the IET or publicly.

8 What happens to the information collected and how will it be used?

The information is held securely by the Head of Governance. It will only be accessible by the people listed in paragraph 5.15 of the Policy, namely the Trustees (which will include the Chairs of each of our Main Boards), the IET's Internal Auditor, the Director of Governance and External Engagement, the IET's General Counsel, and the IET's auditors. The way we have currently drafted the policy is designed to enable the chairs of central governance boards and the Head of Governance to be aware of potential conflicts of interest in advance, to assist in managing them.

The information is used to identify potential conflicts of interest, and to show that the IET is seeking to identify potential conflicts by having forms returned.

9 I am not sure what to put on the form – where can I get confidential help?

Declaring potential conflicts of interest often has a degree of subjectivity and many guidance documents recommend the approach of "if in doubt, declare". This is because declaring something does not necessarily mean that there is any action to take, just that there is an awareness and transparency. The Head of Governance and the General Counsel are happy to give informal advice. The decision to declare on the form is ultimately yours.

10 If I disclose a potential conflict of interest, how is a decision made?

Decisions are made at the relevant meeting (see paragraphs 5.1.1 to 5.1.3 and 5.7 of the Policy). Where decisions are made at the relevant meeting, you will have the opportunity to make representations.

11 The Policy says the information I give the IET will be processed in accordance with the principles in the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) – what does that mean?

The DPA sets out a whole range of provisions designed to control what organisations can do with personal data they hold. These include only using it lawfully and fairly, only using it for the purpose it was provided, holding it securely, and only keeping it for as long as necessary.

12 How long will you keep the information?

The IET will keep the information for 3 years from when you stop serving on one of the relevant bodies. This is because the IET's auditors may want to review previous years, or one of our periodic governance reviews may want to look back over a period.