

# CGIAR Advisory Services Conflict of Interest Policy

## 1. Introduction

The CGIAR Advisory Services provide the CGIAR with external, impartial and expert advice related to strategic planning and positioning, program evaluation and impact assessment. The independent Advisory Services comprise:

- the Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC) <sup>1</sup>,
- the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA) <sup>2</sup>, and
- an evaluation workstream that implements the CGIAR System's multi-year evaluation plan <sup>3</sup>.

The CGIAR Advisory Services Shared Secretariat (CAS Secretariat) facilitates and supports these independent advisory services, delivering operational support to ISDC and SPIA and executing the System's multi-year evaluation workplan.

The ISDC is a standing panel of impartial, world-class scientific experts providing rigorous, independent strategic advice to the CGIAR System Council and other stakeholders. The ISDC contributes to the strategic and portfolio planning and positioning of CGIAR. It produces foresight work and horizon scanning that informs CGIAR's longer-term research strategy. Emerging from the foresight and horizon scanning efforts, ISDC supplies System Council with advice on its priority setting exercises and provides guidance for periodic proposal assessment processes.

The Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA) is an external, impartial panel of experts in impact assessment that is responsible for providing rigorous, evidence-based, and independent strategic advice to the broader CGIAR System on efficient and effective impact assessment methods and practices, including those measuring impacts beyond contributions to science and economic performance, and on innovative ways to improve knowledge and capacity on how research contributes to development outcomes.

The evaluation unit in the CAS Secretariat manages and supports external evaluations which aim to provide accountability, support to decision making, and lessons for improving quality and effectiveness of agricultural research for development outcomes.

To fulfill its mandate, the CGIAR Advisory Services work with a wide range of partners inside and outside CGIAR. It is imperative that the Advisory Services and its Secretariat are, and are seen to be, independent and objective. If their independence and objectivity are compromised, the quality of their advice is reduced and trust in the Advisory Services' advice is lost.

Conflicts of interest (CoI) associated with the Advisory Services could compromise, or be perceived to compromise, its independence and objectivity.

The aim of this policy is therefore to ensure that any potential Conflicts of Interest are made open and transparent, and that processes are managed to take declared interests into account. No policy can account for every eventuality; it is the responsibility of all individuals working for and with the CGIAR Advisory Services to declare any unforeseen associations which could be perceived as a conflict.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://storage.googleapis.com/cgiarorg/2018/10/TOR-ISDC\\_Approved\\_04Oct2018.pdf](https://storage.googleapis.com/cgiarorg/2018/10/TOR-ISDC_Approved_04Oct2018.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://storage.googleapis.com/cgiarorg/2018/10/TOR-SPIA-Approved-4Oct2018.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://storage.googleapis.com/cgiarorg/2018/10/TOR-SharedSecretariat-Approved-4Oct2018.pdf>

## 2. Conflict of interest

There are many types of conflicts of interest, including personal, institutional, scientific, political or ethical. In these, an individual is compromised by their loyalty to individuals (themselves, family members, or friends), institutions (former students or colleagues), scientific interests or political allegiance.

The potential benefit or gain accrued may be obvious, such as financial reward or employment, or more subtle, such as reputational gain or access to privileged knowledge. The 'benefit' might also be negative, in the sense that a grievance or dislike is reflected by a negative opinion.

In the specific Advisory Services context, common examples of when conflicts of interest may arise include:

- Commissioning work from family members, friends, colleagues, employers, former colleagues, former employers;
- Being involved in reviews or evaluations of projects/programs/proposals from, or including, family members, friends, colleagues, employers, former colleagues, former employers, competitors of current or former colleagues or employers;
- Considering family members, friends, former colleagues and former employers for appointment as ISDC/SPIA Council or consultants.

The appropriate time definition of "former" is given in the Annexes, in the Statements to be signed by ISDC and SPIA Chairs/Members, CAS Secretariat staff and Reviewers/Evaluators.

### 2.1 Chair/Member recruitment and conflicts of interest

When recruiting ISDC and SPIA Chairs/Members, an important criterion to be considered is possible conflict of interest. For example, recent employment by or collaboration with a CGIAR Center may be considered sufficient grounds for non-selection.

Annex 1 and 2 show the Statements to be completed by potential ISDC Chairs/Members (Annex 1) and SPIA Chairs/Members (Annex 2) at the time of interview.

The information is requested for the benefit of the Selection and Nomination Committee for ISDC and SPIA Chairs/Members in the first instance, but if recruitment is successful also for the CAS Secretariat register of Conflicts of Interest. The bullets below categorize the degree of potential conflict.

- A 'yes' to question 1 would disqualify an applicant for membership of the Council. To maintain independence, current employees of the CGIAR cannot be Council members as recent affiliation to a Center, research program or major Center collaborator could introduce biases.
- A 'yes' to questions 2 and/or 3 still represents a significant potential conflict of interest, but an applicant for the Council could be considered on the understanding that such conflict would have to be carefully managed. Managing such a conflict of interest may be considered worthwhile for the services of an otherwise strong candidate.
- A 'yes' to question 4 and/or response to question 5 would not disqualify an applicant for the Council, but there may be a low risk of conflict of interest which would have to be managed.

## 2.2 Staff recruitment and conflicts of interest

When recruiting Secretariat staff or consultants, an important criterion to be considered is possible conflict of interest. For example, recent employment by or collaboration with a CGIAR Center may be considered sufficient grounds for non-selection.

Annex 3 shows the Statements to be completed by potential CAS Secretariat staff members at the time of joining the Secretariat.

The information is requested for the benefit of the CAS Secretariat register of Conflicts of Interest. The bullet below categorizes the degree of potential conflict.

- A 'yes' to questions 1 and/or 2 and/or response to question 3 represents a significant potential conflict of interest, but an applicant for the Secretariat could be considered on the understanding that such conflict would have to be carefully managed. Managing such a conflict of interest may be considered worthwhile for the services of an otherwise strong candidate. The aim of asking for completion of this declaration is to enable the Director to make a decision on the appointability of the applicant and to manage the conflicts with respect to the allocation of tasks between Secretariat staff.

## 2.3 Reviewers/Evaluators and Conflicts of Interest

A wide range of conflicts needs to be considered at the time of reviewing/evaluating projects /programs/proposals due to the large number of partners which may be involved. Care needs to be taken to ensure that reviewers/evaluators do not have institutional conflicts.

Reviewers/evaluators are expected to self-report any potential or real CoI for the register of Conflicts of Interest, including measures taken to manage the risk. Attempts will be made to identify all conflicts described in the Statement in Annex 4 prior to allocation of review/evaluation tasks.

The bullets below categorize the degree of potential conflict.

- With respect to question 1: declaration of employment by a partner which is proposed to receive funds from a specific project/program/proposal would exclude a reviewer/evaluator from reviewing/evaluating the project/program/proposal.
- A 'yes' to question 2 would exclude a reviewer/evaluator from reviewing/evaluating the project/program/proposal.
- Where a project/program/proposal is known in advance to be incorporating aspects of published research (question 3) by a reviewer/evaluator, this should be declared, and detail provided to allow the Chairs and CAS Director to decide whether the individual is likely to benefit in any way and if so they should not participate in the review/evaluation.
- It is not always possible to know in advance if a conflict with respect to question 4 exists and action should be taken as for the response to question 3.
- With respect to question 5 this is also unlikely to be known in advance but should be declared if the student has graduated within the last 5 years.

### 3. Managing conflicts of interest

Potential, perceived and real conflicts of interest will occur. Provided that these are handled transparently and managed appropriately, it should not be a problem.

Conflicts of interest must be identified, declared, recorded and managed.

- (i) **Identification of conflicts of interest.** The onus is on individual ISDC and SPIA Chairs/Members, CAS Secretariat staff and Reviewers/Evaluators to identify actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest, since only they have detailed knowledge to do so. Council members and staff should always be on the alert for any possibility of conflict of interest, particularly potential or perceived conflicts, which may not always be immediately obvious.
- (ii) **Declaring conflicts of interest.** Once a conflict of interest is identified, to ensure transparency, it must be declared as soon as possible by the individuals concerned by bringing it to the attention of the ISDC and SPIA Chairs and the Director of the CAS Secretariat.
- (iii) **Recording conflicts of interest.** Conflicts of interest should be recorded on the appropriate pro forma and filed by the CAS Secretariat. This will provide a permanent record should any complaints or appeals arise in the future.
- (iv) **Managing conflicts of interest.** Having identified a conflict of interest, it must be managed appropriately. The conflict of interest should be discussed with the ISDC and SPIA Chairs (as appropriate) and the CAS Director, and agreement reached on the most appropriate way to manage it. Several options exist, including:
  - If the risk is considered to be low, and the input of the relevant ISDC and SPIA Chair/Member, CAS Secretariat staff or Reviewer/Evaluator is required for other reasons (perhaps for their particular expertise or experience), then the individual could proceed as usual, the Chairs and Director having noted the possible (low risk) conflict of interest.
  - In some situations, it may be deemed appropriate for the ISDC and SPIA Chair/Member, CAS Secretariat staff or Reviewer/Evaluator to proceed with other related work (such as assessing other proposals), but to be recused from comment on the work with the conflict of interest.
  - For a high-risk conflict of interest, the safest approach is to recuse the ISDC and SPIA Chair/Member, CAS Secretariat staff or Reviewer/Evaluator from all work related to the conflict of interest, including other linked work. For example, if a conflict of interest has been declared with one applicant for a grant, the individual should not be involved in assessing that proposal, or any competing proposals. Staff members recruited directly from Centers or programs should not be involved in assessment of proposals from those Centers/programs for at least 2 years.

## **4. CAS procedures for managing conflicts of interest**

### **Recruitment**

When offered an engagement as ISDC and SPIA Chairs/Members, CAS Secretariat staff and Reviewers/Evaluators, individuals should be asked to complete the appropriate Statement in the Annex and to declare any additional conflicts not covered by the stated questions, so that any potential conflicts can be explored. Copies of the signed and dated form should be retained by the CAS Secretariat, in the Conflict of Interest registry, including all risk mitigation measures.

### **Ongoing**

Once appointed, ISDC and SPIA Chairs/Members, CAS Secretariat staff and Reviewers/Evaluators should bring to the attention of the Chairs and the CAS Director any new activity which they engage in, which relates to any of the questions in the original Statement (by updating and signing the Statement).

### **On leaving the ISDC/SPIA or Secretariat**

If ISDC and SPIA Chairs/Members and CAS Secretariat staff enter into negotiations on employment or a joint funding activity with a CGIAR Center, program or other System entity for post-contract activities, prior to closing their association with the ISDC/SPIA/CAS or within 12 months of their end-date, they are expected to consider jointly with the Chairs and Director how best to manage associated potential conflicts of interest.

### **Responsibility**

The implementation of these procedures depends on the good faith of the ISDC and SPIA Chairs/Members, CAS Secretariat staff and Reviewers/Evaluators, and the balanced judgment of the Chairs and Director. This policy is a 'living document' and provides the principles for sound Col management without prescriptively describing every possible instance that might give rise to a Col.

# **Annex**

## **Conflict of Interest Statements**

- Annex 1 - ISDC Chair/Member Conflict of Interest Statement
- Annex 2 - SPIA Chair/Member Conflict of Interest Statement
- Annex 3 - CAS Secretariat Staff Conflict of Interest Statement
- Annex 4 - Reviewers and Evaluators' Conflict of Interest Statement

## Annex 1

### ISDC Chair/Member Conflict of Interest Statement

1. Are you now employed by a CGIAR Center or during the last two years, have you personally been employed as the DG or Head of Research of a CGIAR Center, the Director of a research program or the CEO/DG of a significant public research institute which is a collaborator/competitor of a CGIAR Center or served as a Board Chair or Chair of a Board Science Committee of a CGIAR Center.

Yes/No

If Yes, please provide brief details:

2. During the last five years, have you personally been involved in the activities of a CGIAR Centre or a research program, as an employee, consultant, adviser, Board or Advisory Committee member (i.e. in receipt of financial remuneration beyond expenses) or in receipt of significant funding from a financial contributor to the CGIAR?

Yes/No

If Yes, please provide brief details:

3. Are you now, or during the last two years have you personally been employed by a partner organization which is either a significant collaborator with a CGIAR Center or research program, a significant competitor for donor funding or in receipt of donor funding?

Yes/No

If Yes, please provide brief details:

4. During the last five years, has a family member or someone with whom you have financial ties been involved in the activities of a CGIAR Centre or research program, as an employee, consultant, adviser, Board or Advisory Committee member (i.e. in receipt of financial remuneration beyond expenses) or as a financial contributor to the CGIAR?

Yes/No

If Yes, please provide brief details:

5. Please give details of any other activity, engagement or relationship with the CGIAR during the last ten years:

**Declaration:** I declare that the information provided on this Statement is true and complete.

**Name:**

**Signed:**

**Date:**



## **ISDC Specific Conflict of Interest Declaration**

**Name:**

**Date:**

**Summary/title of conflict of interest declared:**

**Description of conflict of interest declared:**

**Agreed action to manage conflict of interest:**

**Signed by ISDC Chair/Member:**

**Signed by Director, CGIAR Advisory Services Secretariat:**

## Annex 2

### SPIA Chair/Member Conflict of Interest Statement

6. Are you now employed by a CGIAR Center or during the last two years, have you personally been employed as the DG or Head of Research of a CGIAR Center, the Director of a research program or the CEO/DG of a significant public research institute which is a collaborator/competitor of a CGIAR Center or served as a Board Chair or Chair of a Board Science Committee of a CGIAR Center.

Yes/No

If Yes, please provide brief details:

7. During the last five years, have you personally been involved in the activities of a CGIAR Centre or a research program, as an employee, consultant, adviser, Board or Advisory Committee member (i.e. in receipt of financial remuneration beyond expenses) or in receipt of significant funding from a financial contributor to the CGIAR?

Yes/No

If Yes, please provide brief details:

8. Are you now, or during the last two years have you personally been employed by a partner organization which is either a significant collaborator with a CGIAR Center or research program, a significant competitor for donor funding or in receipt of donor funding?

Yes/No

If Yes, please provide brief details:

9. During the last five years, has a family member or someone with whom you have financial ties been involved in the activities of a CGIAR Centre or research program, as an employee, consultant, adviser, Board or Advisory Committee member (i.e. in receipt of financial remuneration beyond expenses) or as a financial contributor to the CGIAR?

Yes/No

If Yes, please provide brief details:

10. Please give details of any other activity, engagement or relationship with the CGIAR during the last ten years:

**Declaration:** I declare that the information provided on this Statement is true and complete.

**Name:**

**Signed:**

**Date:**

## **SPIA Specific Conflict of Interest Declaration**

**Name:**

**Date:**

**Summary/title of conflict of interest declared:**

**Description of conflict of interest declared:**

**Agreed action to manage conflict of interest:**

**Signed by SPIA Chair/Member:**

**Signed by Director, CGIAR Advisory Services Secretariat:**

## Annex 3

### CAS Secretariat Staff Conflict of Interest Statement

1. During the last five years, have you personally been involved in the activities of a CGIAR Center, research program or partner receiving funds for a program, as an employee, consultant, adviser, Board or Advisory Committee member (i.e. in receipt of financial remuneration beyond expenses) or as a financial contributor to the CGIAR?

Yes/No

If Yes, please provide brief details:

2. During the last five years, has a family member or someone with whom you have financial ties been involved in the activities of a CGIAR Centre, research program, or partner receiving funds from a program as an employee, consultant, adviser, Board member?

Yes/No

If Yes, please provide brief details:

3. Please give details of any other activity, engagement or relationship with the CGIAR during the last ten years:

**Declaration:** I declare that the information provided on this Statement is true and complete.

**Name:**

**Signed:**

**Date:**

## Annex 4

### Reviewers and Evaluators' Conflict of Interest Statement

1. Main employer and any other organization that provides you with remuneration (which may be named participants in the project/program/proposal you are being asked to review/evaluate)

Please provide details:

2. Are you aware whether a relative, close friend, close colleague or someone with whom you have financial ties is receiving funding from or giving advice to a project/program/proposal you are being asked to review/evaluate?

Yes/No

If Yes, please provide brief details:

3. Does any project/program/proposal you are being asked to review/evaluate cite any of your own current research?

Yes/No

If Yes, please provide brief details:

4. Does any project/program/proposal you are being asked to review/evaluate name researchers with whom you have active collaborations, recently published joint papers or are in regular email correspondence?

Yes/No

If Yes, please provide brief details:

5. Does any project/program/proposal you are being asked to review/evaluate name any of your past PhD students are active participants?

Yes/No

If Yes, please provide brief details:

**Declaration:** I declare that the information provided on this Statement is true and complete.

**Name:**

**Signed:**

**Date:**