

## **Conflicts of Interest Policy**

### **Scope**

This policy covers all divisions of Interchange Outer East Incorporated (IOE) and applies to all employees and volunteers, appointed representatives and any persons directly or indirectly linked to IOE (family, friends, other organisations employees and volunteers), regardless of location.

This document provides a framework for identifying and resolving situations where conflicts of interest exist, or might be perceived to exist.

IOE has been approved as a registered plan management and service coordination provider and as a registered provider of a wide range of other support services under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

IOE is aware of the potential for real or perceived conflict of interest in performing all of these roles for an individual.

### **Conflicts of Interest Identification**

A conflict of interest occurs when a person's / agency personal interests conflict with their responsibility to act in the best interests of the participant.

A conflict of interest may be actual, potential or perceived and may be financial or non-financial.

Situations of particular concern (although not an exhaustive list) include where IOE or an employee:

- Is likely to make a financial gain, or avoid a loss, at the expense of the participant ;
- Has a financial or other incentive to favour the interests of another participant or group of participants over the interests of the participant;
- Has the possibility of creating an appearance of improper conduct that might impair confidence in, or the reputation of, IOE.

These situations present the risk that a person will make a decision based on, or affected by, these influences, rather than in the best interests of the participant and must be managed accordingly.

### **Potential Conflicts of Interest**

The following are examples of potential conflicts that may arise as a result of IOE conducting its business:

- IOE may make client recommendations regarding services offered by IOE over and above those offered by other organisations without showing evidence of the balance between the client's best
- Interests and those of the business;
- Financial interests

- Personal and family relationships between employees/volunteers
- Decisions regarding appointment, promotions or other decisions relating to employees
- Acceptance of gifts or benefits eg. monies, vouchers, meals, accommodation

## **Conflicts of Interest Policy and Procedures Statement**

This policy addresses these issues by using the following statements, actions and commitments:

1. IOE plan management and support coordination activities and other support services have well defined and separate administrative outlines, procedures and work instructions for IOE staff to follow.
2. IOE staff will act in the best interests of participants to ensure they are informed, empowered and able to maximise choice and control.
3. IOE staff are instructed to always inform NDIS participants that:
  - IOE offers plan management, support coordination, as well as a wide range of other supports under the NDIS, as do multiple other local providers.
  - The participant in the NDIS always has the choice to use either IOE or other service providers in relation to plan management, support coordination and/or other supports.
  - IOE staff are to purposely make NDIS participants aware there are many other registered plan managers under the NDIS and they are listed on the NDIS website.
  - There may, and often will be, other service providers who offer identical or similar supports to IOE and that it is always the choice of the NDIS participant which service provider they choose.
  - Even if a person chooses to use IOE as their plan manager or support coordinator they do not have to use any IOE direct supports or programs and can choose to change their plan manager and service coordinator at any time..
  - IOE will offer supports to NDIS participant's regardless of whether they self-manage their plan, use the NDIA, use IOE plan management or any another registered plan manager.
  - Where it is obvious that IOE is unable to meet a participant's need, IOE will provide information on other services that may be more suitable and encourage and support them to engage in services outside of IOE.
  - The conflict of interest policy will be provided at the time of engagement to ensure participants have information in order to maximise choice and control.
4. IOE staff will notify their supervisor of any conflicts as they arise. Conflicts will be documented in the conflict of interest register. The register records the conflict, who is involved, actions taken and who made the decision.
5. Participants are able and encourage to raise complaints using our grievance procedure or completing the feedback form available on the IOE website.

6. IOE staff will, under no circumstances accept any offer of money, gifts, services, commissions or benefits that would cause them to act in a manner against the interests of the participant.
7. IOE staff are required to adhere to the Interchange Outer East Code of Conduct and Ethics, to avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest, and to record and report any which may be identified.
8. IOE recognises the need to protect its reputation by maintaining ethical standards, fairness and integrity in all its dealings.
9. All individuals associated with IOE will avoid situations where a potential conflict of interest may arise.
10. In accordance with IOE values and applicable laws, regulations and principles, IOE will manage conflicts of interest fairly.

IOE has established this conflict of interest policy which sets out the procedures and controls which will help it identify and appropriately deal with conflicts of interest - actual, apparent and potential.

## **Conflicts of Interest Procedure**

### **Conflicts Management**

IOE has established procedures which are designed to identify and manage conflicts of interests. These include a number of organisational and administrative arrangements to safeguard the interests of clients and minimise the potential for conflicts to arise.

Examples of IOE's arrangements for managing conflicts include (but are not limited to):

- Disclosing any known or perceived conflicts directly with participants. Openly discussing the potential impact.
- Providing the participant with choice and appropriate information on services available to them outside of Interchange Outer East.
- Regularly assessing participant's use of services with IOE, providing information on alternative services when participants request it.
- When the participant or IOE representative feels IOE services are inadequate to support the persons goals, of poor quality or IOE are unable to provide the service requested support will be provided to engage with alternative agencies and services.
- The provision of training to board members and employees of IOE on conflicts of interest management.

### **Procedures**

Employees/volunteers who become aware of a conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest must ensure the following procedures are adhered to:

1. Employee/volunteer to discuss conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest with manager/supervisor.

2. Employee/volunteers who are uncertain whether or not they are placed in a situation where a potential or actual conflict of interest exists should seek advice from their manager/supervisor.

3. Manager/supervisor, on consideration of all relevant information, may determine:

- i) the potential for a conflict of interest of the employee/volunteer is remote and requires no further action other than record the fact that the matter has been reviewed; or
- ii) the employee/volunteer's situation presents a conflict of interest and that conflict must be resolved.

4. Actions determined to resolve or eliminate the conflict of interest are to be implemented immediately. These actions include:

- Acknowledging the identified conflict with the participant/participant group and, agreeing on an appropriate action;
  - a. disqualify the employee/volunteer from the process to which the conflict relates; or
  - b. reorganise the duties of the employee/volunteer so as to remove the conflict of interest; or
  - c. put in place additional processes to avoid the conflict of interest happening again

Regardless of the outcome all known or perceived conflicts of interest are to be registered internally and discussed openly with the participant.

### **Staff Involvement in External Activities**

IOE encourages and supports staff members becoming involved in community activities and volunteer work in their personal lives. However, it is possible that staff members may undertake volunteer or professional roles outside the organisation that give rise to a conflict of interest, or a perception of conflict (e.g. staff undertaking consultancy work for member organisations or government agencies).

As a result, IOE expects that all staff members declare their involvement in external activities related to the work of IOE when they are employed, and discuss and plan with their supervisor how any potential conflicts of interest can be managed. Staff members taking on additional (new) work outside of IOE are required to inform their manager/supervisor.

### **Breaches of this policy**

A breach of this policy is grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Ignorance of these procedures will not generally be accepted as an excuse for non-compliance.