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# *Navigating Conflict of Interest*

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**27th Annual NSPAA  
Technical Assistance Workshop  
June 6-9, 2023**

# Agenda

- GRC Overview
- COI Storytime
- What is COI?
  - Categories
  - Examples
- Share Your “Horror Stories”
- Things to Consider
- Strategies for Prevention
- Key Takeaways/Closing



# About GRC

Established in 1967 as a not-for-profit premium service of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), the Grants Resource Center (GRC) is open to primarily four-year public and private higher education institutions.

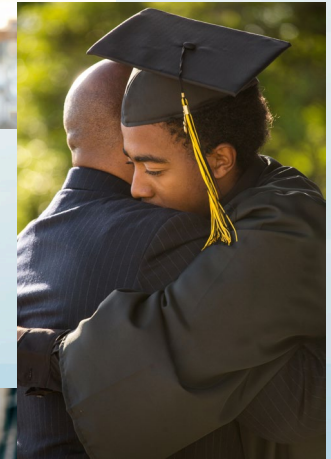
**Mission:** GRC strives to improve members' success in securing competitive grants from federal and private sponsors.

# Our Members

- Research administrators and faculty members
- Over 130 member campuses in 34 states, D.C., Guam, and Puerto Rico
- Primarily public institutions and state systems
- Separate dues structure from AASCU dues
- Member-elected advisory board

# HBCU Members

- Central State University (Ohio)
- Elizabeth City State University (N.C.)
- Fort Valley State University (Ga.)
- Grambling State University (La.)
- Harris-Stowe State University (Mo.)
- Lincoln University (Pa.)
- Mississippi Valley State University
- North Carolina Central University
- Tougaloo College (Miss.)
- University of Maryland Eastern Shore
- University of the District of Columbia
- Virginia State University
- Virginia Union University
- Winston-Salem State University (N.C.)





# Publications

## What We Publish

- ***GrantWeek*** (Mondays) e-newsletter about program details, pending legislation and federal appropriations, proposed changes to agency rules, and member spotlights
- ***Bulletin*** (Tuesdays and Fridays) synthesizes hundreds of funding alerts from Grants.gov, Federal Register, and Contract Opportunities
- ***Deadlines*** (monthly) programs with competitions closing in the next 30/60/90 days

## What We Monitor

- Grants.gov, Federal Register, Contract Opportunities, listservs, and funding agency websites
- Latest deadlines, program priorities and pending legislation
- Outcomes of proposed policy revisions
- Technical assistance workshops and agency briefings

# GrantSearch Database

Contains over **1,500 funding opportunities** that are cyclical, make multiple awards, and are national/regional in scope.

## Search Criteria Include:

- Academic Subject
- Activity
  - Curriculum Development, Fellowships, Research support, etc.
- Funding Sponsor
- Deadline Month
- Keyword(s)

## Search Profile Include:

- Funding Opportunity Description
- Links to Online Info
- Deadline Dates
- Contact Information



# Management & Funding Resources

- Agency fact sheets
- Faculty Alerts
- Funded proposal library
- Funding search form
- Limited submission funding opportunities
- Sample administrative policies
- Webinar recordings



# GRC Events

- **GRC Funding Summit** (virtual until further notice) features federal agency and foundation program officers who administer grant programs and influence funding decisions:
  - General and concurrent sessions
  - Private consultations (1:1 between participant and program officer)

**\*\*\*Next GRC Funding Summit: April 2024\*\*\***

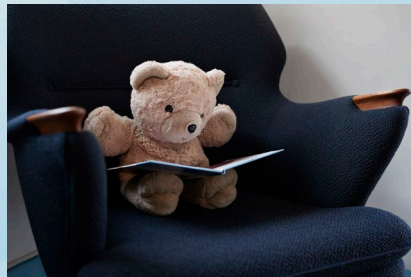
# Questions?

# COI Storytime

Once upon a time, I worked for a nationally known non-profit tasked with advancing literacy. Local grantees are required to provide new books to K-12 students at their chosen school(s).

Last year, I helped my sorority chapter write a grant to this non-profit. My chapter received \$4,000 to give new books to students at five elementary schools in our county.

**Question: Is there a conflict of interest? Why or why not?**



# Conflict of Interest (COI)—What is it?

A conflict of interest is a situation in which an individual or entity has competing responsibilities or interests (benefit and/or bias).

- Contractual or legal obligations
- Loyalty and relationships to family and friends
- Money
- Inside knowledge
- Reputation and status
- Professional duties
- Business interests



**Conflicts of interest often have legal consequences.**



# COI Categories

- **Financial Interests:** Putting personal financial interests over the interests of the organization
- **Professional Interests:** Awarding jobs, promotions, or more based on preference rather than qualifications
- **Personal Interests:** Prioritizing loyalty to friends and family when making professional decisions (nepotism)
- **Contractual Interests:** Partaking in contractual work on behalf of a direct competitor



# COI Examples

- Accepting gratuities or special favors from companies doing business or sponsoring one's research
- Performing evaluative research for a company in which the investigator has a financial interest
- Serving as a peer reviewer on a grant in which your institution has applied
- Accepting a paid consultancy with a company having an interest in your research
- Providing privileged access to information developed with university or independent sponsorship to another entity in which you have a financial interest
- Directly influencing the negotiation of contracts, including research contracts or licensing contracts, between the university and a company in which you have a financial interest
- Holding office or membership on a board or committee of an entity supporting your university research



# Something to think about...

Conflicts of interest can be real

Conflicts of interest can appear real

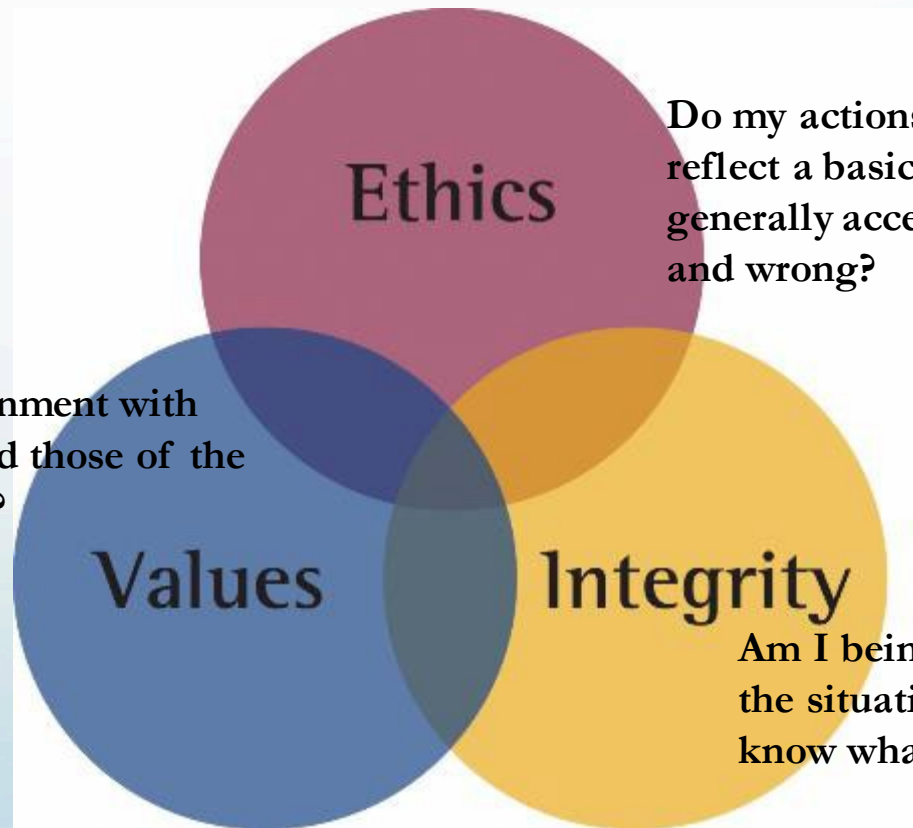


# Share your COI “horror stories”



# Things to Consider...

Are my actions in alignment with my personal values and those of the institution I represent?



Do my actions feel right? Do they reflect a basic understanding of generally accepted standards of right and wrong?

Am I being honest about all facets of the situation? Do the right people know what's going on?

# Strategies to Prevent COI



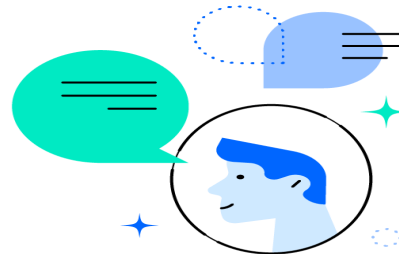
## 1 Draft a Conflict of Interest Clause

Make clear organizational policies dealing with conflicts of interest.

2

## Encourage Transparency

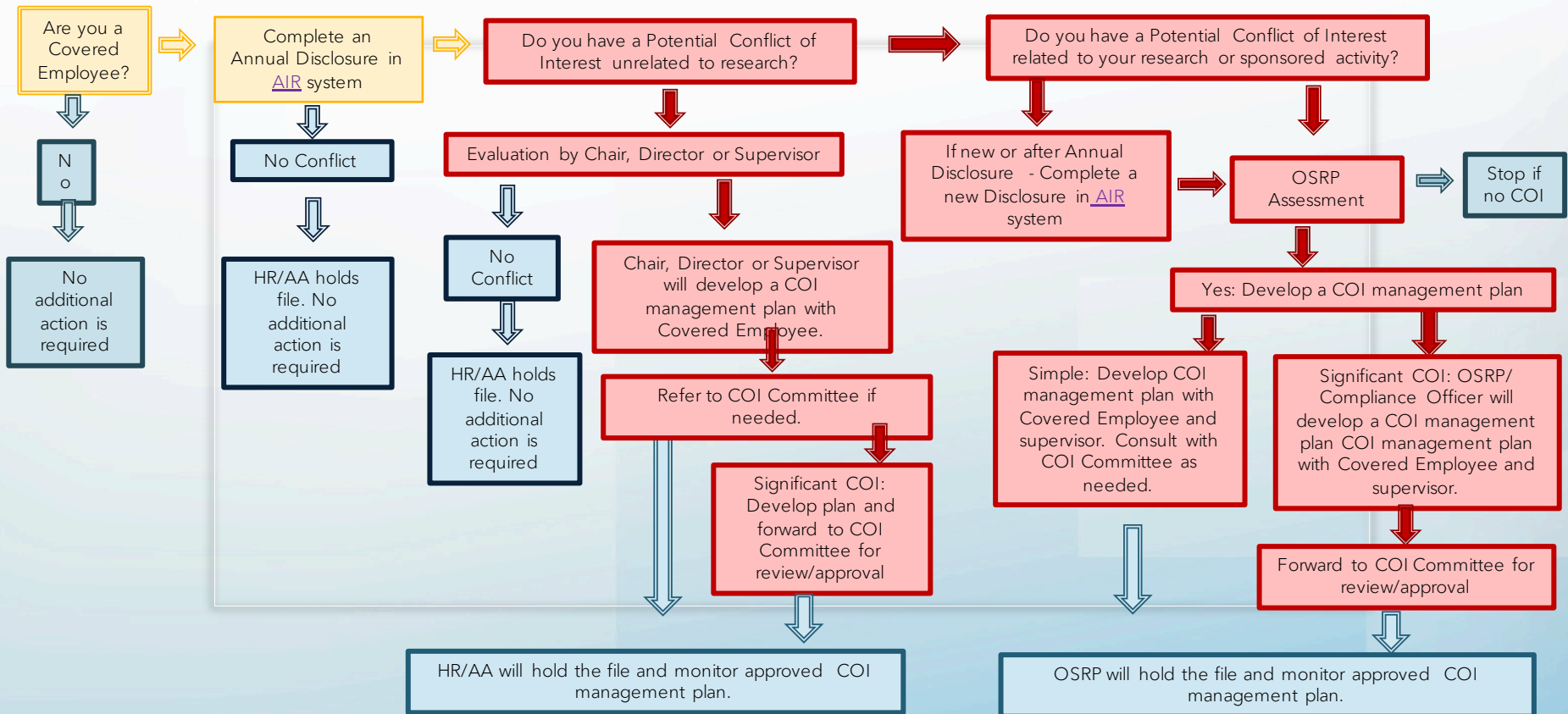
Empower employees to speak up about potential conflicts of interest.



## 3 Resolve the Existing Conflict

Put a stop to conflicting behaviors and ensure that policy is followed.

### Conflict of Interest Decision Tree





# Key Takeaways

- Become an “expert” at recognizing potential COIs
- Develop policies and procedures so that everyone is on the “same page”
- Address potential COIs early and often
- Document, Document, Document
- REPORT (bka CYA)



# Questions?

# GRC Staff

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**Thank You!**