Conflict of Interest Policy (2011)

Canadian Association of Geographers

Preamble

The objective of this policy is to clarify the Canadian Association of Geographer's expectations for staff, officers, executive members and editors who may become involved in situations, which cause, or could potentially cause, a conflict of interest and/or a conflict of commitment. It is impossible to detail all the possible eventualities giving rise to a conflict of interest or commitment, however the following policy and procedures are intended to provide guidance in order that the vast majority of perceived, potential or actual conflicts of interest/commitment are recognized and either avoided or dealt with fairly and expeditiously through appropriate disclosure and management. Early disclosure of a potential or actual conflict of interest or conflict of commitment is key to successful resolution of the matter.

Policy

An actual or apparent conflict of interest arises when staff, officers, executive members or editors are placed in a situation where their personal interest, financial or other, or that of an immediate Family member or of a person with whom there exists, or has recently existed an intimate, personal relationship, conflicts, or appears to conflict, with his or her responsibility to the Association or with the interests of the Association. This includes situations which may arise where the staff, officers, executive members or editors are in a position to influence directly or indirectly Association business or other decisions in ways that would lead to a gain/benefit for the staff, officers, executive members or editors or immediate Family member.

A conflict of commitment arises when a staff, officers, executive members or editors external activities or commitments, paid or unpaid, interfere with his or her ability to meet responsibilities to the Association.

For the purposes of this Policy, "immediate Family member" means a spouse, partner, parent, child or sibling.

Staff, officers, executive members or editors are expected to avoid actual or potential conflicts of interest or commitment. If they are called upon to make an arm's length decision or evaluation but feel unable to make an unbiased decision, they should inform those responsible and remove themselves from that aspect of the decision making. Conflict of interest must not be used to avoid the difficult evaluative decisions that are part of our profession.

Staff, officers, executive members or editors are expected to disclose immediately upon discovery, and to resolve subsequently with the Association, actual or potential conflicts of interest/commitment arising from the activities in which they are engaged.

Procedures for Disclosure and Management of Conflicts of Interest and Commitment

Staff, officers, executive members or editors have an obligation to provide full written disclosure of all relevant information, as soon as he/she could reasonably be aware that a conflict may exist, to the President (and in the case of the President, to either the Vice-President or the Past President of the Association). The existence of the actual or potential conflict of interest/commitment does not necessarily preclude the involvement of the individual in the situation where the conflict has arisen or may arise, however, it does mean that the conflict should be formally declared by staff, officers, executive members or editors in writing and resolved in conjunction with the President before any action or decision is taken. Such resolution may include prohibition of the staff, officers, executive members or editors' activities with respect to the matter. It is recognized that in some situations there may be legitimate doubt as to whether a conflict of interest/commitment exists, in which case, discussion with the President may clarify the issue and/or lead to a solution. The President should consult with the Vice-President or the Past President of the Association where the conflict or potential conflict is unusual, substantial or complex.

The President, in consultation with the concerned individual and other appropriate Association officials shall determine whether a conflict exists or may appear to exist and determine the way to avoid or deal with the matter. The resolution of the matter shall be made in writing.

Examples of Conflict of Interest/Commitment

There are many situations that may lead to a conflict of interest or conflict of commitment. The examples listed below, while not a comprehensive list, illustrate situations which may lead to a conflict of interest or a conflict of commitment and that should be avoided or if not possible to avoid, disclosed and managed.

Examples of Conflict of Interest

1. Authorizing, influencing, or participating in the purchase of equipment, materials, services or real property using Association funds, or with funds administered by the Association, from a source in which the staff, officers, executive members or editors a member of his or her immediate Family or a person with whom there exists, or has recently existed, an intimate personal relationship, has a financial interest.

2. Accepting gifts, benefits or favours from individuals or firms with which the Association does business, with the exception of minor gifts as token courtesies.

3. Using Association resources (including equipment, supplies, services or facilities) for the staff member's personal benefit or the benefit of the staff member's immediate Family or a person with whom there exists or has recently existed an intimate, personal relationship without the prior approval of the Association. Costs for such equipment, supplies, services or facilities shall be borne by the staff member at prevailing rates set by the Association, unless the Association agrees in writing, to waive all or part of such costs.

4. Participating in the appointment, hiring, promotion, supervision or evaluation of a person with whom the staff, officers, executive members or editors has a marital or familial relationship, or with whom there exists or has recently existed an intimate, personal relationship.

5. Using for personal gain, or other unauthorized purpose, information acquired as a result of the staff, officers, executive members or editors Association activities which is not available to the general public; such information might include, for example, knowledge of forthcoming developments requiring contractor or consultant selection or bulk purchases.

6. Using for personal gain, intellectual property acquired or developed using Association resources; by way of example, such intellectual property includes software tools or programs, or specialized pieces of equipment developed in the course of employment.

Confidentiality

All information, reports and resolutions disclosed and determined in accordance with this policy will be held in confidence by the President (or other authorized Association officials).

Failure to Disclose

Failure to disclose a potential or existing conflict of interest or commitment may result in disciplinary action being taken, up to and including termination of appointment.

Distribution and Notification

This policy shall be distributed to each staff, officers, executive members or editors staff member upon its approval.

Effective Date

This policy is effective June 4, 2011. Existing situations of conflict of interest or commitment that have not been disclosed or documented are subject to the terms of this policy and should be declared promptly.