IRIS RSAP: Conflict of Interest Policy

Prepared 22/10/2019: J. Hays, Reviewed 08/12/2022 D. Bauer

The following outlines the approach and policy of the IRIS Resource, Scrutiny and Allocation Panel (RSAP) regarding conflicts of interest. It draws heavily on the conflict-of-interest policy typically used for STFC Panels.

1. The IRIS Delivery Board requires that members of the panel declare any interests that may conflict with the interests of the IRIS Consortium. These interests will be recorded in a register.
2. Members of the panel should declare direct or indirect pecuniary interests which members of the public may reasonably think could influence judgement.
3. As a general rule, panel members will not take part in discussions and decisions, if they have a pecuniary interest or other interest which is clear and substantial relating to the matter at hand. The test should be whether a member of the public in full knowledge of the facts might reasonably think the interest could influence the judgement of other members who are present.
4. Wherever possible, before each meeting the chair should be briefed on potential conflicts of interest that may exist relating to the agenda of the meeting.
5. Conflicts not declared before each meeting should be declared at the beginning of the meeting in advance of any discussion or decision and will be recorded in the minutes.
6. The chair will draw attention to any potential conflicts and invite the panel to agree what action to take.
7. The minutes of the meeting will record decisions about conflicts of interest.
8. Any conflict of interest that a member of the panel is or *becomes* aware of at any time during the review process must be reported to the RSAP Chair ([rsap@iris.ac.uk](mailto:rsap@iris.ac.uk)) as soon as possible and will be recorded in the register.

# Standing Conflict of Interest Policy for Resource Request Decisions

Given the breadth of the IRIS community, the nature of its representation on the RSAP, and the likelihood of oversubscription of resources, it is highly likely that there will be almost as many declared conflicts of interest as there are resource requests. It is recognized that ideally conflicted panel members would not be present during the times the corresponding request is discussed. However, asking each member of the panel to leave the meeting where they have conflicts with the request under consideration is unlikely to prove practical in conducting an efficient process. The panel accepts that a balance needs to be found between the practicalities of running the meetings and minimizing the potential for bias in the decision making.

Potential sources of bias are identified:

* A member, or their close associate, stands to benefit from a positive allocation outcome to a particular project and they seek to influence the outcome of the panel
* A member, or their close associate, stands to benefit from a negative allocation outcome to a particular project and they seek to influence the outcome of the panel
* A member by virtue of their involvement with a particular project or facility has extra information that they share with the panel to extend, enhance, or correct the evidence presented in a resource request under consideration. This may introduce an unfair advantage for those projects who have such a member present with regards to other projects who do not.

To mitigate against these sources of bias:

* The Chair and Secretary on behalf of the Delivery board will ensure that the panel membership is as broad as possible to ensure viewpoints from across the whole community are considered.
* The Chair will maintain a register of member’s affiliations and relevant interests
* The Chair will ensure that members do not contribute during the consideration of requests for which they have a conflict. This specifically includes not allowing them to correct matters of fact either in the evidence in the resource request or in the deliberations of the panel.
  + If a panel member notices a matter-of-fact error during the panel meeting, they should bring this to the attention of the Chair without stating what they believe the error is. The Chair will then decide on how to proceed.
  + Any project not present at the meeting will have the opportunity to correct any errors that come to their attention through the feedback process via email to the Chair.
* The Chair will ensure that allocation notices include sufficient feedback to represent accurately and concisely the reasons for a specific allocation of resources. This should be sufficiently detailed to allow those requesting allocations to correct matters of fact that may have incorrectly influenced the outcome.