



## **Conflict of Interest Policy**

*Approved by the Coordinating Committee – September 2008*

The Halifax Initiative recognizes that well-informed, responsible governance is jeopardized in situations where real, perceived or potential conflict of interest influences decision-making. The purpose of this policy, which applies to Halifax Initiative staff and members of the Halifax Initiative Coordinating Committee, is to promote institutional decision-making that is free of influence from interests that conflict with those of the coalition.

The Conflict of Interest policy, and the organization's compliance with the policy, will be reviewed every two years. Halifax Initiative staff will prepare an assessment for review by the Coordinating Committee.

Revisions will be made to the policy as deemed necessary.

### **1.0 Definition of Conflict of Interest**

- 1.1 A real, perceived or potential conflict of interest can arise when a person able to influence a decision, whether by official vote or by persuasion, is liable to gain:
- a) some personal advantage from the outcome of the decision; and/or
  - b) some advantage for a third party or an organization with which the person is directly involved.

Examples might include:

- decisions being made regarding the awarding of employment contracts to Coordinating Committee members, or to their family members or close professional associates, or the family members or close professional associates of staff; or
- receipt of gifts by a Coordinating Committee member or staff member perceived to be able to influence a decision (a careful assessment is required to distinguish gifts and favours which represent goodwill and friendship from those designed to create an indebtedness on the part of the receiver).

### **2.0 Addressing Conflict of Interest**

- 2.1 Instances of actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest should be promptly declared

by the individual in question. The nature of the situation should be disclosed to staff and the members of the Coordinating Committee.

- 2.2 Steps should be taken to ensure that the capacity to influence a decision in which there is a potential conflict of interest is addressed. This is most easily accomplished when the person with the declared conflict excuses him or herself from the decision-making process.

However, given that Halifax Initiative staff and Coordinating Committee members apply a consensus-based approach to institutional decision-making, it may be appropriate, desirable and justifiable in some cases for a person with a declared conflict to participate in a decision-making process. The determination as to whether a person with a declared conflict should be required to remove him or herself from the decision-making process will be made by consensus. A person with a declared conflict of interest may not block the consensus of the group should he or she be asked to remove him or herself from the decision-making process. However, a person with a declared conflict may decide to remove him or herself without the consensus of the group.

- 2.3 The Coordinating Committee will address real conflicts of interest that are discovered after a decision has been made. A variety of serious measures, such as the cancellation of a contract or the revocation of a hiring decision, may be considered on case-by-case basis in such situations.
- 2.4 The specific means by which a conflict of interest situation is addressed will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting where it is discussed.

### **3.0 Dispute Resolution**

- 3.1 The Coordinating Committee will address situations where there is a difference of opinion regarding conflict of interest. An example includes a perceived conflict of interest situation where the individual in question does not agree that they are in a conflict of interest. In such circumstances, the Coordinating Committee will take steps to resolve the dispute and must consider the use of third party advice.

### **4.0 Intentional Breaches**

- 4.1 The Coordinating Committee will address situations where members of staff or the Coordinating Committee intentionally breach this policy. A number of serious measures, such as the dismissal of staff and the termination of Committee membership, will be considered on a case-by-case basis in such situations and must consider the use of third parties in reaching a decision.