

Guidelines for Conflict of Interest for the SAGES Research Committee Grant Reviewers

The following guidelines have been adopted from the “NIH Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality, and Non-Disclosure Rules and Information for Reviewers” to instruct SAGES Research Committee grant reviewers on conflict of interest. It is the personal responsibility of the grant reviewer to identify any possible conflict of interest situation that may impact on the review of a research grant. The SAGES Research Committee Chair and/or Co-chair may also determine that a situation involves a conflict of interest and require that a potential reviewer not be involved in the review of the grant(s) in question.

There are several bases for a conflict of interest: employment, financial benefit, personal relationships, professional relationships or other interests. If applicable, any one condition may serve to disqualify a reviewer from participating in the review of an application or proposal. A conflict of interest may be real or apparent.

The following definitions are derived from federal regulations governing the Scientific Peer Review of Research Grant Applications and Research and Development Contract Projects (42 CFR Part 52h). These guidelines are not all-inclusive, due to the variety of possible conflicts of interest. Therefore, it is important that the grant reviewer consult the SAGES Research Committee Chair and/or Co-chair when there is any concern about his/her participation in a grant review.

Definitions of Conflict of Interest

A Conflict Of Interest exists when a reviewer has an interest in a grant or cooperative agreement application or an R&D contract proposal that is likely to bias his or her evaluation of it. A reviewer who has a real conflict of interest with an application or proposal may not participate in its review.

A Real Conflict Of Interest means a reviewer or a close relative or professional associate of the reviewer has a financial or other interest in an application or proposal that is known to the reviewer and is likely to bias the reviewer's evaluation of that grant as follows:

A reviewer shall have a real conflict of interest if he/she or a close relative or professional associate of the reviewer: (1) has received or could receive a direct financial benefit of any amount deriving from an application or proposal under review; (2) has received or could receive a financial benefit from the applicant institution, or principal investigator that in the aggregate exceeds \$10,000 per year; this amount includes honoraria, fees, stock or other financial benefit, and additionally includes the current value of the reviewer's already existing stock holdings, apart from any direct financial benefit deriving from an application or proposal under review; or (3) has any other interest in the application or proposal that is likely to bias the reviewer's evaluation of that application or proposal.

Employment: A reviewer who is a salaried employee, whether full-time or part-time, of the applicant institution, or principal investigator, or is negotiating for employment, shall be considered to have a real conflict of interest with regard to a grant application from that organization or principal investigator.

Financial Benefit: See definition of Real Conflict of Interest above.

Personal Relationships (Relatives): A close relative means a parent, spouse, sibling, son or daughter or domestic partner. A conflict of interest exists if a close relative of a reviewer submits an application or proposal, or receives or could receive financial benefits from or provides financial benefits to an applicant. In such case, it will be treated as the reviewer's financial benefit.

Professional Associates: Professional associate means any colleague, scientific mentor, or student with whom the peer reviewer is currently conducting research or other significant professional activities or with whom the member has conducted such activities within three years of the date of the review. The reviewer can not participate as a primary or secondary reviewer of

a research grant for a **professional associate** and can not be present during the review of such a grant.

SAGES Research Committee Membership: When a scientific review group (ie., SAGES Research Committee) meets regularly, a relationship among the individual members exists; therefore, the group as a whole may not be objective about evaluating the work of one of its members. In such a case, the member submitting a research grant may not participate in the review process for that calendar year. In addition, a member's grant application may be reviewed by another qualified ad hoc review group as determined by the SAGES Research Committee Chair and/or Co-chair to assure that a competent and objective review is obtained

Longstanding Disagreements: A conflict of interest may exist where a potential reviewer has had longstanding scientific or personal differences with an applicant.

Multi-Site Or Multi-Component Project: An individual serving as either the principal investigator or key personnel on one component of a multi-site or multi-component project has a conflict of interest with all of the applications or proposals from all investigators or key personnel associated with the project. The individual should be considered a professional associate when evaluating applications or proposals submitted by the other participants in the project.

Waivers If no other reviewer is available with the expertise necessary to ensure a competent review, a waiver may be granted by the SAGES Research Committee Chair and/or Co-chair to allow participation in the review.