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 **Accessibility Projects Grants: Conflict of Interest Protocol**

**Conflict of Interest between Review Committee Members and Applying Organizations:**

Before joining the Review Committee, each potential member will be asked to declare if their organization or any other organization they are involved in on an ongoing capacity is applying for an Accessibility Projects Grant (APG) that year. If the answer is yes, the degree of conflict of interest is discussed between the APG Coordinator and Executive Director (ED), and if it is too substantial they will not be invited onto the APG Committee that particular year.

Before reading through applications, Review Committee members will be given a list of applying and partner organizations, and asked to identify any conflict of interest, either personal or professional. This includes any situation in which personal, professional or financial considerations may influence a member’s decisions or affect their objectivity or fairness.[[1]](#endnote-2) When Committee members declare a conflict of interest, this is recorded by the Coordinator in the decision making database. That Committee member is then asked to excuse themselves from discussion of and decisions connected to that application. If later in the process a committee member realizes there is a conflict of interest, this same process will be followed.

**Conflict of Interest between DABC and Applying Organizations**:

One of the eligibility requirements for an APG is that an applying organization not have a real or perceived conflict of interest with Disability Alliance BC (DABC). Examples may include, but are not limited to: a formal partnership agreement with DABC such as receiving funding from or funding in partnership with DABC, and/or where a DABC staff or board member is involved in a substantive way with the applying organization’s proposed project.

Organizations are asked to declare any potential conflict of interest on their application, with the caveat that this may not disqualify them from applying for a grant, but must be discussed with the ED, in consultation with the APG Coordinator and, if needed, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction. The ED will also review all received applications at the beginning of the process to look for any potential conflicts of interest that are not declared by the applying organizations.

Each conflict of interest will be dealt with on a case by case basis. Organizations that have formal material partnerships with DABC, for example existing funding agreements, may be considered ineligible. Other less formal conflicts of interest, for example collaborations that do not include existing funding agreements or shared staff or Board members, may be mitigated through measures such as removing DABC representatives from the decision-making process.

**Please Note:** Organizations who have a potential conflict of interest with DABC and would like to know whether it will affect their eligibility before they apply are responsible for contacting the APG Coordinator at ap@dabc.ca ahead of submitting their application. Otherwise, DABC will determine eligibility during its review following the closing date of the application submission deadline.

**Protocol:**

Discussion of individual cases of conflict of interest will focus on the optics of the Review Committee potentially being seen as favouring applications that have significant connection to DABC or an application having a perceived advantage in the decision-making process. DABC will endeavor to be consistent with conflict of interest policies from the Province that state that a real conflict of interest “exists when actions could undermine or compromise the public’s confidence” in the process and a perceived conflict of interest exists where it “would appear to a reasonable person” that there could be a conflict, even if a real one hasn’t occurred.[[2]](#endnote-3)

As DABC is connected to a range of partners, particularly in the disability sector, the organization will work to find ways to address conflicts of interest without disqualifying applications whenever possible. For example, DABC staff and board members who may have positive bias towards an application may be removed from the decision-making process. However, in the case of active material conflicts of interest (e.g. and organization with an active formal partnership agreement with DABC), these will likely make such organizations ineligible to apply. In considering conflicts of interest, decisions will centre on whether the potential perception on behalf of the public that the decision-process would favour the application is likely to be more compelling than the measures taken to address the potential conflict of interest.

All conflicts of interest will then be recorded on the scoring grid so that each Review Committee member is aware. If further discussion of the conflict of interest is required by the Review Committee, this will take place on a case by case basis and the main points of the discussion will be recorded by the APG Coordinator. The ED of DABC will also play a role in these discussions as follows:

* If an agreement is not reached by the Committee members about how to address conflict of interest, the ED will make the final decision.
* If an application with conflict of interest is decided to be eligible to be reviewed, but the Review Committee decides not to fund it primarily due to concerns around conflict of interest, the ED will be notified of this in writing and given the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback.
* Ensuring that any conflict of interest has been adequately addressed in regards to applications the Review Committee is considering for funding.
1. Based on language from:(<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/practitioner-pro/bc-guidelines/gpac-handbook/gpachandbook2017.pdf>) [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. Based on language from: [How do I identify a conflict of interest as a BC Public Service employee? - Province of British Columbia (gov.bc.ca)](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/careers-myhr/about-the-bc-public-service/ethics-standards-of-conduct/what-is-a-conflict-of-interest-in-the-bc-public-service/identify-a-conflict-of-interest) [↑](#endnote-ref-3)