

SODCO Conflict of Interest Policy

Approved by SODCO Advisory Board: 3/11/26

Latest Revision: 3/10/26

The objective of the Conflict of Interest Policy for the U.S. National Science Foundation Scientific Ocean Drilling Coordination Office (SODCO), is to minimize both real and perceived conflicts of interest while supporting the efforts of the scientific ocean drilling community and maintaining the fullest possible involvement of knowledgeable community members in providing scientific advice to the program.

Definition: A conflict of interest is a situation in which the interests (e.g., personal, familial, professional, or commercial) of a SODCO staff member, SODCO Advisory Board (SAB) member, or member of any other SODCO advisory entity (e.g., SODCO Safety and Environment Panel [SSEP]), designated alternate, or external reviewer involved in proposal or application nurturing, evaluation, or ranking, have a real or perceived impact, either positive or negative, on the recommendations or decisions of the board or program.

Implementation

To address both real and perceived conflicts of interest, SODCO staff, members of the SODCO advisory structure (e.g., SAB, SSEP), and all external reviewers will operate under the following guidelines:

- | All potential conflicts of interest will be declared at the start of every decision-making meeting and resolved by board or sub-committee consensus.
- | Primary investigators (PIs) and proponents will not participate in the parts of a meeting during which their proposal or application is discussed, evaluated, or prioritized.
- | SODCO advisory structure members who are neither PIs nor proponents may be determined to have a real or perceived conflict of interest. Such cases may exist when a SAB member comes from the same institution as, is a current collaborator on related research with, or has a close personal connection to a proponent or applicant. In these cases, the conflicted member will refrain from participating in evaluation or prioritization of a particular proposal or application, or absent themselves from part(s) of the meeting, as determined by the SAB Chair in coordination with SODCO. SODCO staff will refrain from contributing to evaluations of any proposal or application submitted by a researcher from a SODCO home institution. However, SODCO retains discretion over final recommendations and funding decisions as required by its Cooperative Agreement with the National Science Foundation (NSF). At all times SODCO will work with the SAB Chair and NSF Program Manager to avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest and to exercise its required discretion in a fair and equitable manner.