

## Code of Conduct for the Granting Process

### Introduction

The Dutch Kidney Foundation (Nierstichting Nederland) attaches value to confidentiality, integrity and independence during the assessment of grant proposals, the decision making regarding the awarding of grants and the monitoring of projects. This code of conduct, hereafter to be referred to as the '**Code of Conduct**', provides a framework of definitions and rules for the conduct of all persons involved in the assessment, decision making and/or monitoring regarding Dutch Kidney Foundation grants with the objective of guaranteeing confidentiality and the prevention of (the appearance) of conflict of interest.

### General definition of terms

In this code of conduct the following definitions are used:

- **Conflict of interest:** a situation in which a Person Involved has multiple interests as a result of which his integrity regarding assessment, decision making and/or monitoring is at issue.
- **Person Involved:** all persons involved in the assessment, decision making and/or monitoring regarding Dutch Kidney Foundation grants, and regarding grants of other organizations if and where the Dutch Kidney Foundation has a responsibility regarding the aforementioned processes of these grants. Hereafter to be referred to as '**Persons Involved**'. Persons Involved include: members of (scientific) advisory boards and advisory committees, Dutch and foreign reviewers and patient-evaluators.
- **Secrecy:** the process of not making something known to third parties.
- **Project:** an activity demarcated in time or a coherent series of activities with a pre-defined objective and a pre-defined budget, to which the Code of Conduct applies. Hereafter to be referred to as '**Project**'.

### Conflict of interest and possible conflict of interest

The Dutch Kidney Foundation considers the following situations during the process of assessment, decision making and/or monitoring as *conflict of Interest* of a Person Involved

- The Person Involved is a member of the project group of a Project, for example in the function of project leader, researcher, staff member, advisor, patients' representative or otherwise.
- The Person Involved works at the same institution as at least *one* of the members of the project group. Universities and University Medical Centres (UMCs) are considered to be separate institutions.
- The Person Involved has a family relationship with the project leader of a Project (blood relatives up to and including the third degree, including relationship by marriage).
- The Person Involved has business interests in at least one of the organizations that are partner in a Project.

The Dutch Kidney Foundation considers the following situations during the process of assessment, decision making and/or monitoring as *possible conflict of interest* of a Person Involved. The list below is not exclusive, it is not impossible that there are situations of possible conflict of interest which have not been listed.

- The Person Involved works closely together, with the project leader of a Project, or has done so in the 3 years prior to the moment of assessment or decision making.
- There is a relationship, or there has been a relationship in the 3 years prior to the relevant situation of assessment or decision making, between the Person Involved and the project leader of a Project, for example:
  - a personal relationship, for example a friendship, or a situation of conflict;
  - a professional relationship, for example between promotor and doctoral candidate;
  - a negative professional relationship, for example direct competitor, or a situation of conflict;
  - a care relationship, for example as a patient or care provider.

### **Rules of Conduct in case of Conflict of Interest**

The Dutch Kidney Foundation applies the following Rules of Conduct in case of conflict of interest.

- A Person Involved is obliged to immediately report *conflict of interest* to the Dutch Kidney Foundation.
- A Person Involved is obliged to immediately report *possible conflict of interest* to the Dutch Kidney Foundation if in the opinion of the Person Involved a specific situation gives rise to such action.
- Relevant reporting by a Person Involved is done as follows:
  - A patient-evaluator reports to the Dutch Kidney Patients Association, which subsequently immediately reports to the relevant program manager of the Dutch Kidney Foundation.
  - In all other cases a Person Involved reports to the relevant Program manager of the Dutch Kidney Foundation.
- After a report of conflict of interest or possible conflict of interest the relevant Program manager decides if there indeed is a case of conflict of interest. For this purpose the Dutch Kidney Foundation might seek advice from the chairman and/or vice-chairmen of a (scientific) advisory board or advisory committee.
- If the Dutch Kidney Foundation establishes conflict of interest, then the Person Involved is excluded from any involvement in the assessment of or decision making regarding the project in question.
- If the Dutch Kidney Foundation establishes conflict of interest at a point of time after it has presented the Person Involved with a project for assessment or decision making, then the Person Involved is immediately excluded from any further procedures of assessment of or decision making regarding the project in question. The Dutch Kidney Foundation will take appropriate measures to prevent possible influence of the conflict of interest on the assessment and decision making.
- In case of conflict of interest regarding a project proposal which has been submitted in a call for proposals, the Person Involved is not excluded from the assessment of other project proposals in that same call.

### **Rules of Conduct for Secrecy**

The Dutch Kidney Foundation applies the following Rules of Conduct with regard to secrecy.

- A Person Involved is obliged, both during the assessment, decision making and/or monitoring process as well as afterwards, to maintain strict secrecy with regard to all information, documents and/or other products that the Dutch Kidney Foundation offers him or her for the purpose of such process.
- The Person Involved is not allowed to keep in his/her possession information, documents and/or other products that the Dutch Kidney Foundation offers him or her for the purpose of the assessment, decision making and/or monitoring, longer than this is required for the execution of the task.
- A Person Involved is also obliged to maintain strict secrecy with regard to all documents and other products which he or she produces or has produced for the assessment, decision making and/or monitoring.
- For secrecy a period applies of ten years after the end of the relevant assessment- or decision making process.

### **Applying the Code of Conduct**

- On appointment or prior to the first request for assessment Persons Involved sign the statement Regarding the Code of Conduct for the Granting Process, by which they commit themselves to the Code of Conduct.
- As an exception to the previous clause, Dutch and foreign reviewers declare to be informed of the Code of Conduct through the review form and to commit themselves to the Code of Conduct. In the first request for review the Dutch Kidney Foundation refers to the Code of Conduct and states the obligation to comply.
- Observers present during a meeting which is part of the assessment or decision making process must comply with the Code of Conduct. The Dutch Kidney Foundation, the Dutch Kidney Patients Association or the project leader will inform the observer of the Code of Conduct prior to the meeting.
- The Work Regulations (version 9.0, dated 12-01-2017) and the Code of Conduct (dated 17-10-2017) of the Dutch Kidney Foundation state rules and regulations regarding secrecy and the prevention of the (appearance) of conflict of interest with which employees of the Dutch Kidney Foundation must comply.

**Dutch Kidney Foundation policy with regard to the Code of Conduct**

The Code of Conduct and the ethical behaviour of Persons Involved in the spirit of the Code of Conduct are the basis for a careful process of assessment and monitoring of projects and a sound process of awarding of grants. In addition the Dutch Kidney Foundation has drawn up *Transparent and Interactive Grant Policies* and specific procedures for each call for proposals. The assessment of grant proposals takes place within different bodies and at different levels (for example Dutch and foreign reviewers, patient-evaluators, the Scientific Board or the *International Scientific Advisory Board* and the Program Committee).

The Dutch Kidney Foundation strives for an open culture in which people can make each other aware of a situation of (possible) conflict of interest. The Dutch Kidney Foundation applies the Code of Conduct in order to prevent situations in which there is a violation of the obligation of secrecy or a conflict of interest. However, the Dutch Kidney Foundation can not rule out such a situation.