MetaDocencia Conflict of Interest Policy

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Overview

This document provides guidelines to identify, prevent, and address conflicts that arise or may arise between the personal interests of any person who contributes to MetaDocencia and the interests of the organization. This policy should help to clarify the role assumed by the person when engaging in public or private conversations. More generally, this can be taken as a set of guidelines for establishing interactions with integrity while respecting individual autonomy and well-being, following MetaDocencia's [core values](#).

In a nutshell

- Conflicts of interest (COI), whether real, potential, or perceived, may go against MetaDocencia's best interests.

- This policy helps MetaDocencia team members to be transparent about previous and ongoing engagements that may be seen as conflicts of interest.

- This policy also gives general guidelines on how we deal with conflicts of interest while keeping enough flexibility to allow addressing every case on a one-by-one basis.

An example

Imagine that MetaDocencia is openly hiring for a position and many people apply from different countries and communities. The selection team is composed of people with different levels of responsibility in MetaDocencia. To increase awareness of any COI and help avoid biases in the selection process, certain steps are taken:

1. The selection team members review the applications and disclose in writing if they know an applicant, which space they shared, and in what hierarchical relationship they interacted.

2. Selection team members with potential COIs voluntarily abstain from participating in the process. MetaDocencia team members and, especially those in the Community Guidelines team, are invited to review the cases and recommend who should abstain.

3. The Community Guidelines team receives a request to review a perceived COI in the selection process. It applies the expected [procedures (in Spanish)](#) for the resolution of this

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type of conflict and decides to engage with the Advisory Committee (AC), which provides recommendations on a case-by-case basis, to address this issue. The AC decides no COI was present.

4. The selection process continues as expected. Once it is completed, the new team member completes the COI disclosure form as part of their onboarding.

Background and approach

All persons who contribute to MetaDocencia (MD), including those in the Executive Team, the Advisory Committee, the coordinating team, the working groups, external collaborators, and others eventually involved in MetaDocencia activities, also interact with other organizations, institutions, or persons while representing MD. MD team members engaging in these conversations may have overlapping interests with MetaDocencia's mission and vision, which could bias or compromise their autonomy to contribute to our community. In the spirit of our [Community Guidelines](#), MD team members are expected to use their good judgment to prevent or disclose situations that create a real, potential, or perceived conflict of interest.

A **real** conflict of interest exists when an MD team member's loyalties or actions are divided between the organization's interests and those of another organization, institution, or person. A **potential** conflict of interest exists if certain circumstances make it foreseeable that a conflict may arise in the future. A **perceived** conflict of interest is present when a person may reasonably perceive the risk of a conflict occurring.

While these conflicts cannot be completely eliminated, disclosing them in an open and transparent way helps build trust at individual and community levels, establish accountability, and understand the potential external influences in decision-making that could interfere with an independent and reliable engagement with the MD community. All MD Team members are invited to collect, communicate, and address real, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest following the guidelines expressed in this policy.

Examples of Relevant Conflicting Situations

Conflicts of interest are particularly prone to occur when it comes to making funding and resourcing recommendations or when working with external partners such as funding bodies, other communities, supporting organizations, and current or potential employers.

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The following list represents situations where conflicts of interest may arise. It does not attempt to provide a complete enumeration of conflicting situations but a wide illustration of situations to which this policy applies, which should call our attention to prevent biased decisions towards these interests at the expense of MD's interest. These situations include:

- Engaging in personal, financial, or employment activities that go against MD's values and interests.

- Using confidential information for personal advantage to MD's detriment.

- Hiding valuable, non-confidential information to MD's detriment.

- Soliciting or accepting gifts, loans, commissions, favors, or other compensation from those who engage with MD, except the casual gifts of minimal value consistent with accepted business practice.

General procedure

MetaDocencia is committed to actively follow this policy to prevent conflicts of interest. To that end, we keep a close account of processes in which these conflicting situations are more likely to arise, such as:

- The onboarding of collaborators, including externals;

- The recognition of contributions and participation in events on behalf of MD;

- The establishment and development of collaborations with communities and persons.

In alignment with our Community Guidelines and recognizing integrity as one of our core values, we rely on the commitment of MD team members to anticipate the occurrence of an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest, to make sure a conflict of interest does not interfere with their duties, and/or to implement restorative actions in response, including the opportunity to explain if and how a perceived conflict of interest is not real. The following sections will further elaborate on the working principles that are implemented at each stage.

Preparing for COI

The team in charge of our Community Guidelines is also responsible for updating this document, in accordance with MetaDocencia's internal procedures. Additionally, it must

provide support on onboarding, recognition of contributions, collaborations, etc. to identify and/or follow up with potential conflicts of interest by specifically assessing each case.

Members of the Executive team of MetaDocencia will keep an updated report on which organizations MetaDocencia is collaborating with, or looking to collaborate with. This document should be reviewed by any MD team member during their onboarding process and each time a major contract amendment is signed, to assist them in disclosing their conflicts of interest.

Disclosure of COI

While conflicts of interest cannot be completely avoided, disclosing them openly for the rest of the MD team builds trust and supports accountability and transparency in decision-making. An online form is provided that can be considered as a 'Declaration of Conflicts of Interest' of a person in relation to their invited/elected roles in MetaDocencia.

When joining MetaDocencia, each MD team member or external collaborator must disclose their conflicts of interest in writing. If their employment situation, role in a collaboration, joint project, or participation in other communities change, it is the person's responsibility to submit an updated version of the form to keep their declaration updated.

The public version of the conflicts of interest disclosure form can be completed a the following link: Link to Google Form

An editable version for easier development is available at: MetaDocencia - COI Form

Publication of COI

All responses to the conflicts of interest disclosure form are publicly visible by anyone. They are collected in the following document: MetaDocencia - COI Form (Responses)

Acting on COI

A request to address a conflict of interest arises when an MD team member identifies a certain activity or relationship that constitutes or may constitute a conflict of interest, and decides to contact members of the MD Executive team or Community Guidelines team about it.

The Community Guidelines team acts as the first point of contact. It should be notified of real, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest by email to pdc@metadocencia.org.

In the event that any other team member is informed of a conflict of interest, they should notify the Community Guidelines team for its treatment.

If an actual conflict of interest is determined to exist, MetaDocencia may respond as it considers appropriate for the case, based upon the circumstances. In general, the Community Guidelines team will address the issue according to its usual [procedures (defined in Spanish)](#), following a restorative logic that allows to take remedial steps towards an equitable resolution and subsequent learning so that the situation is not repeated.

The Community Guidelines team will always notify the Advisory Committee Chair (ACC) about the situation upon becoming aware and could seek the ACC's support on how to handle it. If the ACC is involved in the conflict of interest, the Community Guidelines team will notify the other person in the Executive Team. If this is not appropriate, then any other Advisory Committee member will be notified.

If it is decided that the situation should be discussed in the Advisory Committee, an extraordinary meeting will be convened to deliberate on it as soon as possible, in accordance with MetaDocencia's governance values and principles. The meeting will be open to all MD team members and the resolution will be communicated to the whole team.

References

MetaDocencia is thankful to the persons and organizations that authored the following resources, which served as inspiration for this document:

- CS&S Employee Handbook, page 3: Link to handbook
- Invest in Open Infrastructure Conflict of Interest Declaration + Policy: Link
- Invest in Open Infrastructure Conflict of Interest Background: Link
- OLS key members: Declaration of Conflict of Interest: Link to Google Form

About this document

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