

Conflicts-of-Interest and Confidentiality Statement for Proposal Reviewers for ORSP

You may be designated by an *ORSP Administrator* as an *ORSP Proposal Reviewer* to review proposals developed by another UM/associated individual or team (*Investigators*). This statement lays out expectations concerning Confidentiality, as well as identifying Conflicts of Interest, associated with such reviews. For some types of ORSP-managed programs, UM individuals may be required to have signed the Certification on the last page.

This document was adapted from, and liberally uses language from, an NSF Conflicts-of-Interest and Confidentiality document, located here: <https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/forms/nsf1230p.pdf>.

Purpose of Reviews

Depending on the context and program, UM individuals may be designated to perform proposal reviews for a variety of purposes, including the following non-exclusive list:

- 1) To score or rate the proposal, relative to a given standard or specification, or relative to a set of other proposals competing for limited resources or opportunities (see *Competitive Reviews* below);
- 2) To identify, within the limits of your experience and expertise, perceived proposal strengths or weakness, in either the proposed activity, how it is communicated, or both;
- 3) To make specific, helpful, actionable suggestions for proposal improvement;
- 4) To identify opportunities for collaboration or synergy;
- 5) To inform a letter of support, endorsement, collaboration, or commitment;
- 6) To provide an official approval or perspective related to the reviewer's role within the institution, relative to the proposed activities;
- 7) To provide a diverse perspective.

Competitive and Non-Competitive Reviews

For purposes of this document, *Competitive Reviews* refer to those cases where the primary purpose of the review is to help determine the best allocation of limited resources, including but not exclusive to limited funding, or limited institutional "slots" to submit external proposals. The identity of *Competitive Reviewers* is generally NOT known by the *Investigator(s)*.

In contrast, a *Non-Competitive Review* is one that is NOT to be considered in making resource allocation decisions, but where the **primary** purpose is to help improve the proposal. The identity of *Non-Competitive Reviewers* IS often known by the *Investigator(s)*.

Civility in Review

While candid feedback helps evaluate and ultimately improve proposals, even constructive criticism can be difficult to receive. In the spirit of the UM Creed¹, please take the extra time to be specific, respectful, and tactful in the critiques you provide to *Investigators* and *ORSP Administrators*.

¹ UM Creed: <https://policies.olemiss.edu/ShowDetails.jsp?istatPara=1&policyObjidPara=11082292>

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No Use of Insider Information

If your designation as an *ORSP Proposal Reviewer* gives you access to information not generally available to other members of the University of Mississippi community, you must neither use that information for your benefit nor make it available for the personal benefit of any other individual or organization.

Your Obligation to Maintain the Confidentiality of Proposals and Applicants

ORSP receives proposals in confidence and protects the confidentiality of their contents from those not involved with the proposal, or who do not have a legitimate institutional need to know the contents. For this reason, you must not copy, quote, or otherwise use or disclose to anyone, including your graduate students or post-doctoral or research associates, any material from any proposal you are asked by an *ORSP Administrator* to review. You shall keep any such proposal, and the information therein confidential, properly stored and maintained, and you shall destroy said proposal and information once the review is completed and returned.

If you are conducting a *Non-Competitive Review* of a proposal at the direct or indirect request of an *Investigator*, please obtain permission from that *Investigator* before disclosing either contents of the proposal, or the name of the *Investigator*, to other entities.

Confidentiality of Competitive Review Process, Reviewer Names, and Proposer Information

As mentioned, certain ORSP programs—such as seed grants competitions, limited submissions down-select competitions, and graduate and undergraduate student grant competitions, among others—involve competitions for limited internal resources. ORSP keeps the identity of *Competitive Reviewers* confidential to the maximum extent possible, except that we routinely share them with the proposing *Investigator(s)*, without your name or identifying information.

Please respect the confidentiality of all *Investigators* in such competitions, as well as the confidentiality of other *Reviewers*. Do not disclose their identities, the relative assessments or rankings of proposals, or other details about the review of competitive proposals.

Conflicts of Interest

As an *ORSP Proposal Reviewer* for some types of internal or external competitions, you may be assigned a proposal where you have a potential conflict of interest, or where a reasonable third party might perceive you to have a conflict of interest, in serving as a *Reviewer*. As these conflicts emerge, please bring them to the immediate attention of the appropriate *ORSP Administrator*, who will determine next steps. If the conflict is considered judged to be significant or not easily managed, or if you do not wish to review an application for any reason (stated or unstated), then that application will be removed from your to-review list.

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Examples of Conflicts of Interest in Competitive Reviews

The following list is intended to be illustrative of, but not an exhaustive collection of, the types of conflicts of interest that may exist between a *Reviewer* and an *Investigator* in a *Competitive Review* situation. **Note:** not all examples are conflicts for every proposal review type, and some conflicts may be manageable, once disclosed.

- 1) Current supervisory relationship between investigator and reviewer
- 2) Collaboration (within the last 48 months) between investigator and reviewer
- 3) Current or past advisory relationship between investigator and reviewer
- 4) Current or past mentor relationship between investigator and reviewer
- 5) Known family relationship (spouse, child, sibling, parent, grandparent, etc.)
- 6) Current business or professional partnership between investigator and reviewer
- 7) Close personal friendship between investigator and reviewer
- 8) Investigator and Reviewer are competitors for resources related to this proposal
- 9) History of grievance between the investigator and reviewer
- 10) Other

YOUR CERTIFICATION

Your Potential Conflicts

I understand that I must notify the appropriate *ORSP Administrator* if a Conflict of Interest exists or arises during my service as an *ORSP Reviewer*. I further understand while this Certification does not have an expiration date, ORSP may periodically require a refresh.

Maintaining the Confidentiality of Others

I will not divulge or use any confidential information, described above, that I may become aware of during my service.

Your Confidentiality

I understand my identity as a *Competitive Reviewer* of specific proposals will be kept confidential to the maximum extent possible, except that copies of written reviews that I submit will be made available to the *Investigator(s)* without my name and affiliation.

Reviewer's Name (Please Print): _____

Reviewer's Ink or Electric Signature:

_____ Date: _____