

Conflict of Interest

What you should know

Most volunteers have numerous professional and personal affiliations. In fact, many individuals are asked to volunteer because of their leadership, knowledge or affiliations. It is natural that some affiliations will cross paths but often that is not problematic. Most conflicts fall somewhere between inconsequential and unacceptable. Conflicts of interest, real or perceived, could damage the function and reputation of ASCP. It is important to take a proactive approach to managing them, which ASCP does through its Conflict of Interest (COI) Policy.

ASCP volunteers are required to read and sign the COI policy. Volunteers are expected to disclose potential conflicts of interest in the COI statement. In addition, at any meeting, should a volunteer first discover an issue as to which they may have a COI, they should advise the Chair promptly. Often, recusal from deliberations and refraining from any related voting will be sufficient to resolve the COI.

Volunteers should act in the best interest of ASCP by

- Understanding ASCP's mission, purpose, goals and policies,
- Serving in your leadership position willingly and enthusiastically,
- Preparing for meetings,
- Maintaining the confidentiality of non-public business or deliberative information shared in meetings,
- Following trends in the field and keeping informed,
- Bringing goodwill and a sense of humor to discussions, and
- Serving as an ASCP Ambassador.

Avoid Conflicts

- The Duty of Loyalty encompasses the duty to avoid conflicts of interest and to provide allegiance to ASCP mission.
- Conflicts exist when loyalties are divided between ASCP interests and other interests of the volunteer.
- Both the fact and appearance of a conflict should be identified and avoided.
- A conflict may exist when you deliberate on an issue while, at same time, having professional, business or volunteer responsibilities for other organizations that could predispose or bias your resolution of the issue.
- Sometimes disclosing the conflict and refraining from participating in discussions concerning an issue will be sufficient to neutralize the conflict.
- For continuing, visible, serious or pervasive conflicts, withdrawal from the volunteer position or other adjustments may be warranted.
- Consider the mission and goals of ASCP before you offer to engage in activities for competing societies.

What are Examples of Potential Conflicts of Interest?

Possible conflicts of interest are numerous and varied, can be direct or indirect, and are not always financially based. Always be mindful of the potential for conflicts and disclose them as soon as you discover them or as they arise. If you have questions, please consult with your Chair, staff liaison or ASCP legal counsel. Examples include:

- *When ASCP engages in a business transaction or takes a position that will benefit an entity with which you or your family member has an employment, ownership, research/grant or consulting arrangement.*
 - Example: You have an interest in a lab data aggregation firm which seeks to provide services to the ASCP registry.
 - Example: Your spouse is a lawyer who seeks to provide IP services for ASCP.
- *When you also serve on the Board of, or as a volunteer for, an organization that may be in indirect or even direct competition with ASCP for funding, prestige, staff or board members.*
 - Example: You have been asked to serve on the board or committee of another medical society serving the pathology and laboratory medicine fields.
 - Example: You have been asked to lead a program for another medical society that is like or will compete with a program offered or to be offered by ASCP.
 - Example: You propose to speak at a competing society's Annual Meeting without proposing the same to ASCP first.
 - Example: You have been asked to serve on the editorial board for another pathology or laboratory medicine journal or publication.
 - Example: You are aware of an RFP or grant opportunity which would be of interest to your employer (or your spouse's employer) or another organization with which you are affiliated and ASCP.

- *Any time you have a direct or indirect interest, financial or otherwise, in the outcome of any transaction or matter involving ASCP.*
- *The potential for a conflict of interest may be pronounced for ASCP Officers and Directors. By virtue of their position, it can be perceived that ASCP Officers and Directors speak for or on behalf of ASCP. Therefore, ASCP Officers and Directors should review service opportunities for other societies with ASCP's Director – Governance for potential conflicts before proposing or accepting them.*

What Safeguards Does ASCP Take?

- On an annual basis, ASCP will ask you to sign a Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement.
- ASCP will ask you to provide information concerning relationships which may affect your duty of loyalty.
- Conflicts can be tricky to identify and predict – be complete in your disclosure.
- The existence of a potential conflict is not a reflection on your integrity – it ensures bias-free governance.
- Disclose potential conflicts as they arise, even if this occurs during the course of a meeting.
- Disclosure may be all that is necessary for minor conflicts.
- As a conflict becomes more serious, recusal during deliberations and, in certain instances, resignation from a volunteer position may be warranted.
- ASCP's Executive Committee, with advice from the Chief Executive and Legal Officers, is responsible for reviewing and managing conflicts of interest.