

Vision for a Nation – Conflict of Interest Policy (incl. Gifts and Hospitality)

Version	Date	Comments
VFAN Conflict of Interest Policy v.1	13/01/2020	

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1. Introduction

For the purposes of this Policy and all VFAN policies, “Country Manager” refers to the most senior member of VFAN staff in the country office and “Finance lead” refers to the most senior member of VFAN finance staff in the country office.

A conflict of interest is defined as an actual or perceived interest by a staff member, in a transaction or arrangement that results in or has the appearance of resulting in personal gain or advantage.

The gain or advantage can arise where:

- The transaction or arrangement concerns or involves a member of the close family of a staff member, i.e. parents, children, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, spouses of all mentioned and other extended family members.
- A staff member has a direct interest, particularly financial, in a third party with whom the organisation is considering carrying out a transaction or arrangement.
- A staff member performs work for a third party with whom the organisation carries out transactions or who is perceived as a competitor.
- A staff member makes use of the organisation’s resources, such as equipment or employees, for personal purposes.
- A staff member receives a gift from a third party as a result of work carried out in the course of his/her duties.

2. Duty to Disclose

In the case of any actual or possible conflict of interest the staff member concerned must disclose the existence of the interest to the Country Manager (or the Head of Finance & Operations (HoFO) in the UK) and be given the opportunity to disclose all material facts.

3. Addressing the Conflict of Interest

The Country Manager (or HoFO in the case of the UK) should exercise such due diligence as necessary to determine whether the organisation can obtain, with reasonable effort, a more advantageous transaction or arrangement from a person or entity that would not produce a conflict of interest.

If a conflict of interest situation has arisen despite a transparent and objective selection process, such as a tender or a three-quote procedure, it may not be necessary to seek an alternative arrangement, but the person who has declared the conflict of interest must remove him/herself from the process. This action must be documented.

In the case of a staff member wishing to perform work for a third party, which potentially could lead to a conflict of interest, the Country Manager/HoFO will determine whether this is compatible with the staff member’s employment. The Country Manager/HoFO should report any conflict of interest to the CEO.

4. Example of Conflict of Interest Transactions

The most common transactions where a conflict may arise are:

4.1 Purchasing and procurement

A conflict of interest can often be avoided, but not always entirely eliminated, by the use of a multi-quote or tender procedure. In these transactions there must be a clear demonstration of the optimal benefit in terms of cost, quality and delivery to the organisation.

4.2 Recruitment

There must be processes in place to ensure that appointment is made on the basis of being the best candidate for the post and that the person/panel making the decision is free from influence and able to make an objective and independent assessment of all candidates.

5. Record Keeping

The Country Manager/HoFO and CEO must record and keep details of any disclosures of conflict of interest situations brought to his/her attention during the year. There is no specific format for this recording, but it must be consistent, open to audit and in sufficient detail to be able to produce the annual declaration - see v below.

Any issues which cannot be satisfactorily resolved by the Country Manager, and where there remains a conflict of interest affecting the transaction or arrangement, must be brought to the attention of the HoFO. His/her approval must be obtained in writing before proceeding.

6. Annual Declaration

The Country Manager must complete an annual declaration showing all potential and actual conflict of interest situations that have arisen during the year and how they were resolved. The declaration must be sent to the HoFO no later than 31st January each year. The HoFO must complete the same for the UK and Board of Trustees. An example of a completed declaration and a blank form can be found on the shared Dropbox.

7. Board of Trustees and Key Staff Declarations

Each VFAN trustee and senior management team member must complete an annual declaration of interest form. In addition, at each Board meeting, the trustees must disclose whether or not any potential conflicts have arisen since the signing of their annual declaration of interest form. The outcome will be recorded in the Board meeting minutes.

Each senior management team member has an obligation to disclose any potential conflict of interest that has arisen since their annual declaration as soon as it arises.

8. Gifts and Hospitality

The giving or receipt of a gift is not prohibited, if all the following requirements are met:

- It is not made with the intention of influencing a third party to obtain or retain business or a business advantage, or to reward the provision or retention of business or a business advantage, or in explicit or implicit exchange for favours or benefits
- It complies with local law
- It is given in the name of VFAN, not in the name of a VFAN employee
- It is appropriate in the circumstances, for example in the UK it is customary for small gifts to be given at Christmas
- It is given openly, not secretly
- Taking into account the reason for the gift, it is of an appropriate type and value and given at an appropriate time.

VFAN prohibits the offering or acceptance of gifts which exceed GBP 30 (or local equivalent) in value. Any gifts received should, where possible, be shared within VFAN to avoid the perception that a staff member is directly benefiting.

Gifts should not be offered to or accepted from government officials or representatives, politicians or political parties without the prior approval of the Country Manager or HoFO. It is unlikely that this will ever be an appropriate transaction.

The market practice of giving business gifts varies between countries and regions and what may be normal and acceptable in one region may not be in another. The test to be applied is whether in the circumstances the gift or hospitality is reasonable and justifiable. The intention behind the gift should always be considered.

9. Recording Gifts and Hospitality

The Country Manager and HoFO must record and keep details of any hospitality or gifts accepted or made which have been brought to his/her attention during the year. There is no specific format for this recording, but it must be consistent and open to audit.

You must also ensure that all expense claims relating to hospitality or gifts to third parties are submitted in accordance with VFAN's expenses policy and specifically record the reason for the expenditure.

10. Review of this Policy

This policy will be reviewed by VFAN's Senior Management Team on an annual basis, with any changes approved by the Board of Trustees, and with ownership of updates resting with the Head of Finance and Operations.

Annex A – Conflict of Interest Policy Compliance Form

I have received and been briefed on the VFAN Conflict of Interest Policy and fully understand my responsibilities to comply with the Policy.

Name	
Position within VFAN	
Signature	
Date	