

Conflict of Interest Policy for Board of Scientific Advisors Applying for Funding

1. Purpose and Scope

This policy describes how the Neuroendocrine Tumor Research Foundation (NETRF) manages conflicts of interest (COI) when members of the Board of Scientific Advisors (BOSA), including the Chair, Vice Chair, and Chair Emeritus, apply for NETRF funding.

The goal is to:

- Preserve the scientific quality and integrity of the review process.
- Protect the real and perceived fairness of funding decisions.
- Allow NETRF to continue to engage high-caliber scientists, including as BOSA leaders.

This policy applies to all NETRF funding mechanisms (e.g., pilot awards, mentored research awards, investigator awards, accelerator awards).

Definitions:

BOSA

A group of scientific and clinical experts who provide independent advice on strategy, priorities, and grant review, but do not vote on the final funding slate.

Chair

The primary leader of the BOSA who sets meeting agendas, facilitates discussions, and serves as the main scientific advisor to staff and leadership.

Vice Chair

The secondary leader who supports the Chair can run meetings in the Chair's absence and share responsibility for guiding BOSA activities.

Chair Emeritus

A former BOSA Chair appointed to an advisory role who provides continuity, institutional memory, and high-level input, especially when current leadership is conflicted.

2. Eligibility of BOSA Members for Funding

1. BOSA members, including the Chair, Vice Chair, and Chair Emeritus, are eligible to apply for all NETRF funding mechanisms.
2. BOSA membership, leadership, or Chair Emeritus status does not provide any advantage in review or funding decisions.

3. Definition of Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest exists when a BOSA member's personal, professional, or financial interests could reasonably be perceived as influencing funding decisions. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Being a PI, co-PI, or key personnel on an application.
- Having a close professional relationship with an applicant (e.g., recent mentor/mentee, collaborator with shared publications or grants within the last 3 years, same lab/department with supervisory relationship).
- Financial interests that could be affected by the outcome.

These COI rules apply to all BOSA members, including the Chair, Vice Chair, and Chair Emeritus.

4. General COI Rules for BOSA Members

1. Recusal from Review

- A BOSA member may not serve as a reviewer for:
 - Any application on which they are PI, co-PI, or key personnel.
 - Any application where they have a professional or financial COI as defined above.
- For mechanisms where a BOSA member is applying and the applicant pool is small or overlapping, NETRF may restrict that BOSA member from reviewing any applications in that specific mechanism (e.g. accelerator award) for that cycle.

2. Recusal from Discussion

- Conflicted BOSA members must leave the review call for agenda items involving:
 - Their own application.
 - Applications with which they have a COI.
- The recusal will be recorded in meeting minutes, including the specific agenda items.

3. Access to Information

- Conflicted BOSA members will not have access to non-public review materials (e.g., full reviewer critiques, scores, or ranking discussions) for the mechanism in which they are an applicant, beyond what is provided to all applicants after decisions are finalized.
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5. Review of Applications from BOSA Members

1. External Review of BOSA Applications

- All applications from BOSA members, including the Chair, Vice Chair, and Chair Emeritus, will be evaluated by external reviewers who are not BOSA members and have no relevant conflicts of interest with the applicant.

- External reviewers will use the same criteria and scoring system applied to all applicants.
- 2. **Optional Additional Independent Review**
 - To provide additional independence in particularly sensitive cases — for example, when the applicant is the BOSA Chair or Vice Chair, or when staff determines that extra attention is warranted — NETRF may, at its discretion, convene a small external review group composed entirely of non-conflicted reviewers who are not current BOSA members.
 - This group's role is to synthesize the external reviews and provide a non-binding recommendation to staff. It may meet during the main review call (after conflicted BOSA members have left) or on a separate call.
- 3. **Recusal During Discussions**
 - During any meeting or call where a BOSA member's application is discussed, any BOSA member, including the Chair, Vice Chair, and Chair Emeritus, who has a conflict of interest must recuse themselves and leave the discussion, and is expected to err on the side of recusal when in doubt. Recusals will be documented in the meeting minutes.
- 4. **No Preferential Handling**
 - Equal standards: all applications from BOSA members, including the Chair, Vice Chair, and Chair Emeritus, follow the same deadlines, criteria, scoring standards, and decision timelines as non-BOSA applications.

6. Role of BOSA and Leadership in Funding Decisions

1. The BOSA provides scientific review and input but does not vote on or formally approve the final funding slate.
2. The Chair and Vice Chair may not participate in any formal or informal discussion regarding:
 - The relative ranking or funding line decisions for any mechanism in which they have submitted an application.
 - The relative ranking or funding decisions for applications with a COI.
3. For any funding mechanism in which the Chair or Vice Chair has submitted an application or has a COI:
 - NETRF will not seek or consider their input on the final funding slate for that mechanism.
 - NETRF may instead consult:
 - Non-conflicted BOSA members, and/or
 - The Chair Emeritus, provided they have no relevant COI and are not an applicant in that mechanism, and/or
 - Other external advisors.

7. Chair Emeritus Role in COI Situations

1. The Chair Emeritus is a former BOSA Chair designated by NETRF to serve in an advisory capacity.
 2. The Chair Emeritus may:
 - Provide NETRF with strategic and scientific input on the proposed funding slate only when non-conflicted and not an applicant in the relevant mechanism.
 - Serve as a consistent source of institutional memory and portfolio-level perspective when current leadership is conflicted.
 3. The Chair Emeritus is subject to the same COI, recusal, and disclosure requirements as other BOSA members.
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8. Documentation and Transparency

1. All BOSA members, including the Chair and Vice Chair, must:
 - Complete an annual COI disclosure.
 - Identify grant applications with potential COI before the review process begins.
 2. Meeting minutes will document:
 - The agenda items and timepoints of recusal.
 - Which members recused themselves.
 3. NETRF will maintain a brief public statement on its website summarizing:
 - That BOSA members, including leadership, may apply for funding.
 - The safeguards in place (external review, recusal, independent consultation by staff).
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9. Oversight and Review of This Policy

1. The NETRF Chief Scientific Officer is responsible for implementing and monitoring this policy.
 2. When needed, NETRF will review this policy and its implementation, including:
 - The frequency of BOSA-member applications.
 - Any concerns raised by applicants, reviewers, or other stakeholders about COI.
 3. The policy may be updated as needed to maintain the integrity and perceived fairness of NETRF's funding process.
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