

Canadian Foundation of Women's Health

Governance and Ethics Policies

The Canadian Women's Health Foundation is committed to the highest standards of governance, integrity, and ethical conduct. Our Governance and Ethics policies guide how we make decisions, manage resources, and remain accountable to the women and communities we serve across Canada.

1. Governance Framework

The Foundation is overseen by an independent Board of Directors responsible for the organization's strategic direction, financial stewardship, and overall performance. The Board:

- Approves the mission, vision, and long-term strategic plan.
- Oversees annual budgets, financial reporting, and risk management.
- Ensures compliance with all applicable Canadian laws, regulations, and charitable standards.
- Appoints, supports, and evaluates members of specific committees.

Board members are selected for their expertise, diversity of perspectives, and commitment to women's health. Directors must disclose any potential conflicts of interest and recuse themselves from related decisions. (See policy on Conflict of Interest)

2. Ethical Principles

The Foundation's activities are guided by the following core ethical principles:

- **Integrity:** We conduct our work honestly, transparently, and in good faith.
- **Respect:** We value the dignity, rights, and experiences of all women, girls, and gender-diverse people.
- **Equity:** We prioritize initiatives that reduce health disparities and address systemic barriers.
- **Accountability:** We use our resources responsibly and report clearly to donors, partners, and the public.

All staff, volunteers, and Board members are expected to uphold these principles in their daily work, decision-making, and interactions with stakeholders.

3. Conflict of Interest

The Foundation maintains a strict Conflict of Interest Policy to protect the integrity of its decisions. Board members, staff, and volunteers must:

- Disclose any real, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest.
- Refrain from using their position for personal or financial gain.
- Withdraw from any discussion or vote where a conflict exists.

Conflicts are documented and managed transparently to preserve public trust.

4. Research and Program Ethics

In supporting research and programs related to women's health, the Foundation requires that:

- All funded research complies with recognized ethical guidelines and is reviewed by an appropriate research ethics board when appropriate.
- Participant safety, confidentiality, and informed consent are always respected.
- Data is collected, stored, and reported in accordance with privacy laws and best practices.
- Knowledge is shared responsibly, without distortion or misrepresentation of results

The Foundation supports projects that are inclusive and sensitive to diverse cultural, social, and gender identities.

5. Donor Relations and Fundraising Ethics

The Foundation is committed to ethical fundraising practices, and will:

- Accept donations that align with our mission, values, and independence.
- Provide accurate, timely information about how funds are used.
- Protect donor privacy in accordance with Canadian privacy legislation.
- Acknowledge and recognize donors in ways that are truthful and appropriate.

The Foundation retains full independence over funded activities and does not allow donors or sponsors to influence research findings, clinical recommendations, or advocacy positions.

The Foundation will comply with all applicable laws including CRA requirements for registered charities.

The Foundation will not accept donations from individuals or organizations who are known to have been involved in racist policies, illegal activities or misconduct.

The Foundation retains the right to refuse donations and return donations at any time if compliance with legal or ethical principles listed arise.

6. Transparency and Accountability

To maintain public confidence, the Foundation:

- Publishes annual reports and financial statements.
- Communicates clearly about our priorities, impacts, and use of funds.
- Invites feedback from communities, partners, and beneficiaries.
- Responds to concerns or complaints through a defined, fair process.

Regular internal and external reviews help ensure that governance and ethical standards are met and improved over time.

7. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Our governance and ethics practices are rooted in a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. We strive to:

- Reflect Canada's diversity in our Board, leadership, and staff.
- Challenge bias and discrimination in health systems and within our own organization

This commitment supports more responsive, culturally safe, and effective initiatives for women's health.

8. Whistleblower Protection

The Foundation encourages the good-faith reporting of any suspected wrongdoing, including fraud, harassment, discrimination, conflicts of interest, or breaches of policy. Our Whistleblower Policy ensures that:

- Individuals can raise concerns confidentially through designated reporting channels.
- All reports are taken seriously, investigated promptly, and handled impartially.
- No one who reports a concern in good faith will face retaliation, reprisal, or adverse treatment.
- Corrective actions are taken where misconduct is substantiated.

This policy supports a culture of transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

9. Policy review

The Governance and Ethics Policy will be reviewed by the Foundation's Board of Directors every three years, or sooner if required.