

Code of Conduct Policy

Policy no: 006

Version 3

Approved on: 11 July 2024

Approved by: Health Equity Matters Board

1. Purpose

Health Equity Matters is committed to maintaining the highest levels of ethical conduct and professional behaviour.

This Policy, together with Health Equity Matters policies and procedures, and terms and conditions (outlined in staff employment contracts, consultancy contracts and volunteer contracts) provides a framework that articulates expected behavioural standards and supports Health Equity Matters to implement, monitor and enforce these behavioural standards.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Health Equity Matters Personnel, including Board and Committee members, staff employed in Australia and by the AFAO Foundation, volunteers, contractors and consultants.

Health Equity Matters Personnel are required to comply with this policy during work hours, when representing or acting on behalf of Health Equity Matters and at work-related events and social functions.

3. Policy Statement

Health Equity Matters is committed to fostering an open, transparent, ethical and professional workplace culture, guided by its values, and in line with its strategic plan and policies. Health Equity Matters' values are the core principles and beliefs on which the organisation is founded. They inform and guide the behaviours, relationships, actions and decisions of Health Equity Matters Personnel, and are outlined below.

We create success together

- We value individual thinking and collaborate to achieve stronger outcomes.
- We follow the needs of our members and partners and lead on shaping collective solutions.
- We are honest, transparent, and have no tolerance for hidden agendas or politics.

Equality is non-negotiable

- We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Australians and respect communities' traditions, views and ways of life.
- We respect the dignity of all people and value diversity.
- We protect and promote the human rights of all communities and remove social and cultural barriers that hold back justice and health.

Push for better

- We are goal driven and oriented towards action, with a 'can do' spirit.
- We pivot where relevant, challenge prevailing assumptions, and champion better approaches.
- We are resourceful and resilient and find a way through setbacks.

Thoughtful

- We take care in every aspect of our work with strong attention to detail.
- We take time to gather and analyse a diverse range of data and make informed decisions with a clear understanding of their impact.
- We treat all stakeholders and each other with respect, understanding and consideration.

Health Equity Matters' Code of Conduct distils these values and key policy commitments into a set of core behaviours that Health Equity Matters Personnel are required to adhere to and which are outlined in Annex 1 of this Policy. Health Equity Matters Personnel must adhere to Health Equity Matters policies and procedures, including key policies listed in Section 8 of this Policy.

Health Equity Matters Personnel must read and sign the Health Equity Matters Code of Conduct on commencement with Health Equity Matters, and whenever the Policy is updated.

4. Breach of Code of Conduct

Health Equity Matters Personnel must behave in a manner that is consistent with the standards and expectations outlined in this Policy. Failure to comply with these standards and expectations may result in disciplinary action, including suspension of or reduced duties where actions need to be investigated. Breaches of the Policy that are substantiated may result in termination of employment, consultancy contract, or ability to volunteer with Health Equity Matters.

If any Health Equity Matters Personnel suspect that a breach of the Policy has occurred, they should raise their concerns informally in the first instance with their manager, or another member of the Management Team. In accordance with the Complaints and Whistleblower Policy, protections for whistleblowers will apply to disclosures regarding a serious breach of the Code of Conduct.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Who	Responsibility
Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate an ethical and professional workplace culture. • Approve this policy and any updates.
CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively and regularly review workplace culture, work to address any issues, and foster an ethical and professional workplace culture. • Lead by example and model the behaviours in the Code of Conduct. • Ensure policy is regularly reviewed, at least every three years.
Business Operations and Finance Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee the Code of Conduct and reinforce compliance requirements with staff.

Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model the behaviours in the Code of Conduct, reinforce the need for these behaviours with staff, and support staff compliance. • Identify/resolve workforce behaviours that are inconsistent with the Code.
Health Equity Matters Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhere to this Code of Conduct and recommit to it when updated.

6. Related Policies and Documents

Policy	Title and Hyperlink
011	Anti-Fraud and Financial Wrongdoing Policy
038	Communications Policy
042	Complaints Handling and Whistleblowing Policy
045	Conflict of Interest Policy
040	Counter-Terrorism and Financial Wrongdoing Policy
007	EEO, Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Policy
030	Environmental Management Policy
002	Governance Policy
032	Human Rights, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
035	Development and Non-Development Policy
012	Privacy Policy
041	Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct
016	Social Media Policy
005	Work Health and Safety Policy

7. Policy History

Date of update	Version	Key changes	Endorsed by	Approved by	Next review
11 July 2024	3	Updated to remove conflict of interest sections and transfer in an inaugural Conflict of Interest Policy and remove appended Declarations of Interest form. Also updated to integrate actions identified in the Management Response to the Legal Compliance Review of Corporate Policies, May 2024 by Corrs Chambers Westgarth.	Management Team	Health Equity Matters Board	July 2027

22 June 2023	2	Updated to remove overlap with new Safeguarding Policy, tighten scope, separate declarations of interest statements into an appended form, and include a set of expected behaviours.	Finance and Audit Committee	Health Equity Matters Board	June 2026
29 April 2021	1	Establishment of inaugural Code of Conduct Policy	Management Team	Health Equity Matters Board	April 2023

ANNEX 1

Health Equity Matters Code of Conduct

I acknowledge that I have read and understood Health Equity Matters' [Code of Conduct Policy](#) and agree to abide by that Code at all times.

I agree that while performing my duties with Health Equity Matters, I must:

1. uphold the integrity and good reputation of Health Equity Matters and ensure that my professional and personal conduct is consistent with Health Equity Matters values, policies, Codes of Conduct, and relevant laws and regulations.
2. be mindful that I hold a privileged position of power as a result of my engagement with Health Equity Matters and not abuse this position of power and trust at any time, including with communities and other stakeholders.
3. comply with any lawful and reasonable direction and respect the decisions and authority of Health Equity Matters managers, CEO and Board.
4. promote community-led approaches, key population communities' rights, voice and priorities and avoid welfare, evangelical and partisan approaches in all advocacy and programming activities.
5. respect all people's rights, contribute to a working environment characterised by mutual respect, integrity, dignity and non-discrimination, and challenge any forms of sexual exploitation, abuse, harassment, discrimination, and conduct that creates a hostile working environment, including bullying and victimisation.
6. promptly report any suspected form of misconduct to Health Equity Matters line management.
7. inform Health Equity Matters of any criminal convictions or charges I have, where Health Equity Matters may have a legitimate interest.
8. not work under the influence of alcohol or use, or be in possession of, illegal substances when working on Health Equity activities.
9. promote the principles and practice of gender equality, disability and social inclusion.
10. demonstrate appropriate care of Health Equity Matters funds, to protect them from fraud, terrorism financing, and ensure that funds are appropriately accounted for and used only for authorised purposes.
11. perform my duties in the best interests of Health Equity Matters and conduct my professional and private life in a manner that avoids or minimises possible conflicts of interest, in accordance with the [Conflict of Interest Policy](#).
12. declare any current personal interests which may impact on the work of Health Equity Matters when they arise.
13. disclose, or decline any gifts, which may be perceived to impact my integrity and impartiality.
14. as an employee, not engage in any employment or provide any services to any person or entity other than Health Equity Matters without prior written consent.
15. protect and avoid any unnecessary risk to the health, safety, security and welfare of myself and others, and when working on international programs, adhere to local security management guidelines.
16. use my discretion when handling sensitive or confidential information and not disclose personal or other information unless it has specifically been classified as public.
17. seek authorisation before communicating externally in Health Equity Matters' name and avoid any unintended detrimental repercussions for Health Equity Matters, in accordance with the [Communications Policy](#).
18. avoid downloading material that is inappropriate including using the internet or e-mail to access or distribute material which would be regarded as being offensive or constituting the use of these for menace or harassment. Accessing adult or child pornography using Health Equity Matters equipment is strictly forbidden and will lead to disciplinary action including termination of employment or ability to volunteer on Health Equity Matters programs.
19. use my best endeavours to protect the natural environment and work in a sustainable way in line with the [Environmental Management Policy](#).

20. adhere to the [Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct](#). I will therefore not have sexual relations with children (defined as under 18 years old) or with partners and individuals benefitting from Health Equity Matters program, will not engage in fraternisation, and I will ensure that children and adults are represented in a dignified and respectful manner (i.e. adequately clothed and depicted in a manner which is not vulnerable, submissive or sexually suggestive) in all photographs, films, videos and other digital images that I take or use.
21. collect, store and use information and images from members, partners and community members in a way that respects their dignity, values, history, religions, language and culture, is authentic to the context, and in line with the terms of their documented and informed consent.

Commitment to living the Health Equity Matters Code of Conduct

I have read and understood the Code and will uphold it to the best of my ability.