

STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT

Policy Number	4.2
Purpose	Guidance to staff to assist them in carrying out their duties and responsibilities and defines the standards of professional conduct which RBS expects of its staff.
Audience	Management and Staff
Reviewed	Annually

OTHER KEY DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCES

Document Name / Reference	File Path / Hyperlink
RFCS Programme Deed of Grant	B:\Key Documents\Deeds of Grants\2011-15\Signed copy DofG 2011-15.pdf
3.3 Communications Policy & Media Protocol	S:\Policies and Procedures\3. Management Policies and Procedures\3.3 Communications Policy.docx
4.3 Confidentiality Policy	S:\Policies and Procedures\4. Operational Policies and Procedures\4.3 Confidentiality Policy.docx
4.4 Privacy Policy	S:\Policies and Procedures\4. Operational Policies and Procedures\4.4 Privacy Policy.docx
4.7 Motor Vehicle Usage Policy	S:\Policies and Procedures\4. Operational Policies and Procedures\4.7 Motor Vehicle Usage Policy.docx
8.2 Information Technology Resource Usage Policy	S:\Policies and Procedures\8. Information Technology\8.2 Personal Usage of IT Resources Policy.docx

VERSION HISTORY

Created and approved	25 August 2008
Amended and approved	16 December 2010
Reviewed	November 2013
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Reviewed	November 2015
Reviewed	November 2016
Amended and Approved	July 2017

OBJECTIVE

This code of conduct (code) has been adopted by the Board of Rural Business Support (RBS) to provide employees with guidelines on appropriate conduct. The code embodies the commitment of employees to act honestly and exercise a high degree of care, diligence and professionalism in the discharge of their responsibilities. The code requires employees to undertake their activities in a manner which ensures public confidence in the administration of RBS and the Rural Financial Counselling Programme.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RBS EMPLOYEES

The Code of Conduct requires that an employee must:

- behave honestly and with integrity in the course of employment with RBS;
- act with care and diligence in the course of employment with RBS;
- not engage in any conduct, in the course of work or otherwise, which reflects that the employee is not a fit and proper person to work in his or her position of employment or which, in the opinion of RBS, may adversely affect the reputation and standing of RBS or negatively impact upon RBS's business and commercial arrangements;
- not engage in any conduct that may breach RBS' obligations under the Deed of Funding with the Department of Agriculture;
- when acting in the course of employment with RBS, treat everyone with respect and courtesy, and without harassment;
- comply with all Australian laws at all times;
- comply with any lawful and reasonable direction given by the management of RBS who has authority to give the direction;
- maintain appropriate confidentiality about dealings as an employee of RBS with any manager, staff member, board member or client;
- disclose, and take reasonable steps to avoid, any conflict of interest (real or apparent) in connection with employment with RBS;
- use RBS resources in a proper manner;
- not provide false or misleading information in response to a request for information that is made for official purposes in connection with the employee's employment with RBS;
- not make improper use of:
 - a. inside information, or
 - b. the employee's duties, status, power or authority, in order to gain, or seek to gain, a benefit or advantage for the employee or for any other person;
- at all times behave in a way that upholds the values of RBS and the integrity and good reputation of the Service; and
- comply with any other conduct requirement that is prescribed by the RBS Policies and Procedures Manual.

EMPLOYEES TO OBSERVE THE CODE

All employees are to be aware of the content of the code and to observe it when undertaking activities on behalf of RBS.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is responsible for ensuring compliance with this code.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE CODE TO THE LAW AND THE DEED OF GRANT

Nothing in this Code overrides or diminishes any obligations under federal and state or territory law. In interpreting the Code, the fullest effect should be given to the spirit of the Deed of Grant. If any provisions of this Code are inconsistent with the Deed of Grant, the Deed of Grant prevails.

LAWFUL AND APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

When providing the Services or performing duties in connection with the Rural Financial Counselling Service, employees must:

- comply with all applicable Australian laws
- conduct themselves while representing the Rural Financial Counselling Service in an appropriate manner.

For example, it is inappropriate for employees to:

- seek an improper inducement to act in a particular manner in relation to the Rural Financial Counselling Service's business activities
- take advantage of their position to improperly influence other employees in the performance of the Services for the purpose of securing a private benefit for themselves or third parties
- use their duties, status, power or authority, in order to gain or seek to gain a benefit or advantage for themselves or any other person.

DUTY TO ACT IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

Employees must at all times ensure they put their public duty before any private interest. In discharging their responsibilities, employees shall take all relevant information into consideration and must not take any irrelevant information or opinions into consideration. In the discharge of their obligations, employees must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the information upon which decisions or actions are based is factually correct and that all relevant information has been obtained. The employees should treat each matter on its merits, having full regard to RBS's obligations under its deed of grant

DEFINITION – CONFLICT OF INTEREST

A conflict of interest occurs when the private interest of an employee could possibly clash with the obligations to act with honesty and integrity in the discharge of their public duty.

WHEN A CONFLICT OF INTEREST MAY ARISE

A conflict of interest may arise when a matter under consideration involves a private interest of an employee and there could be a **perception** that the private interest could influence the employee. The conflict of interest could include also the private interest of a relative or a person in close association with the employee (an Associate – see definitions below).

DEFINITION – FAMILY ASSOCIATES OF EMPLOYEES

A family associate of an employee includes the following categories of relationships:

- Spouse, including de-facto relations;
- Children, including stepchildren and adopted children;
- Parents, including parents in law;

- Siblings, including step siblings, and
- Aunts, Uncles and Cousins.

DEFINITION – BUSINESS ASSOCIATES OF EMPLOYEES

A business associate of an employee refers to any formal relationship which may exist, or will exist between the member or employees and other third parties. It includes but is not limited to partnerships, directors of a private company or any other legal entity which is undertaking, or considering undertaking, a business or commercial activity and involves the employee.

HOW TO DEAL WITH A CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Employees must declare, and take reasonable steps to avoid, any conflict of interest (real or perceived) in connection with their employment with RBS.

An employee must ensure that their private interest does not influence their decisions or actions. Decisions and actions relating to RBS matters on the part of the employee must be made in the interests of the Service. The interests of the Service are taken to include the obligations stated in the deed of grant.

DEFINITION – PECUNIARY INTERESTS

A pecuniary interest is an interest that an employee has in a matter because of a reasonable likelihood or expectation of appreciable financial gain or loss to the person or another person with whom the person is associated. The interest must be of a financial nature and it is a reasonable expectation that the financial interest could be altered in an appreciable way as the result of any decision or action that RBS may make in regard to the matter. The value of the interest is not a consideration for determining if a pecuniary interest exists. It is the responsibility of the employee to ensure that they observe the requirement to make a declaration of a pecuniary interest.

NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Where the interest is non-pecuniary, the employee must ensure that it does not influence them in discharge of their obligations.

DECLARING PECUNIARY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

An employee who has a pecuniary interest to declare must notify the CEO and refrain from participating in the decision making process. The employee must not be involved in the handling of a matter in which they have a pecuniary interest and shall be required to remove themselves from meetings to discuss an item where a pecuniary interest has been declared.

Notification is to be made as soon as the conflict occurs and must not be delayed.

GIFTS AND BENEFITS

An employee should not seek nor accept a gift or a benefit arising from their involvement with RBS from a client or other parties. If, after every endeavour, it is not possible to refuse a gift or benefit, the acceptance must be notified to the CEO who will determine what to do with the gift or benefit.

Token gifts of small value incorporating a commercial logo are not to be considered as gifts for the purpose of the code.

DEALING WITH BUSINESS INTERESTS OF SERVICE CLIENTS

Particular attention has to be given to dealing with the business interests of the service's clients. Employees are required to exercise good judgment in dealing with the business interests of the service. Employees should not take advantage of their position to deal with a business interest of a client.

USE OF RBS RESOURCES

Employees shall use the service's resources effectively and economically in the course of their duties, and must not use them for private purposes without prior authorisation of the CEO.

Further information can be obtained from the Service's Information Technology Resource Usage Policy and Motor Vehicle Policy.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION

All information obtained by an employee or volunteer of RBS is the property of the service and must remain under the control of the service. Information of a confidential nature must be protected by employees.

Further information on the collection, usage, confidentiality and security of personal information of clients is obtained in the Service's Confidentiality and Privacy policies.

PROTECTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

Employees must protect Personal Information in accordance with the obligations under the Deed of Grant. In particular, employees must:

- take all reasonable measures to ensure that Personal Information is protected against loss, unauthorised access, use, modification or disclosure
- comply with, and at all times act in a manner consistent with, the Information Privacy Principles (IPPs) and National Privacy Principles (NPPs) set out in the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth)
- not make Personal Information available to third parties, other than in accordance with the IPPs.

Further information on the collection, usage, confidentiality and security of personal information of clients is obtained in the Service's Confidentiality and Privacy policies.

RELATIONSHIP WITH FELLOW EMPLOYEES

Employees shall acknowledge and respect the views of fellow staff members (including management) and not act towards them in a discriminatory manner. Employees shall extend respect and courtesy to fellow employees and ensure compliance with anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies of the organisation.

EMPLOYEES' RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (BOARD)

Employees are expected to protect the interests of RBS and its public image by ensuring that their conduct does not raise questions in the public's eyes about the policies and procedures adopted by the management committee. It is expected that all employees provide their full support to the board, just as it is expected that the board will

provide its full support of employees. This is not to say that there is no room for disagreement, however, it is expected that staff air their concerns in an appropriate forum, through the CEO.

Relationships with members of the management committee shall be conducted in an appropriate manner and with respect and courtesy.

RELATIONSHIP WITH MEDIA

An employee shall not issue any statements concerning the adopted policies and procedures of RBS to the media unless authorized by the CEO.

As a general rule, the CEO is to make all statements to the media as the official representative of the Service. Refer to the communications policy and media protocol for further information.

EQUITABLE TREATMENT OF CLIENTS

Employees shall treat members of the community fairly and equitably and with respect and sensitivity in the discharge of their duties. They shall refrain from any form of conduct in the performance of their duties which may cause embarrassment or give rise to the appearance of improper conduct or partial performance of their public duties.

SECONDARY EMPLOYMENT OF EMPLOYEES

An employee of RBS must not place themselves in a position that could generate a potential conflict of interest with their employment with the service. An employee must not engage in secondary employment or contract work outside the service that relates to the business of the service or that might conflict with the employee's duties to the service.

NOTIFICATION OF SECONDARY EMPLOYMENT

The CEO must be advised in writing and permission sought before commencing the secondary employment. The obligation to notify and request permission is not dependent on the value, remuneration or duration of the secondary employment. Notification is for all secondary work.

APPROVAL FOR SECONDARY EMPLOYMENT MAY NOT BE GRANTED

The CEO may prohibit an employee from engaging in secondary employment or contract work outside RBS that relates to the business of the service, or that might conflict with the employee's duties. An employee must not engage in private employment or contract work outside of the service if prohibited from doing so by the CEO. Permission for secondary employment shall not be withheld by the CEO if it can be satisfied that the primary employment will not be adversely affected.

The employee has a right of appeal to the board if they disagree with the CEO's decision, but the appeal must be made following the Service's grievance procedures.

PROVISION OF SERVICES TO EMPLOYEES AND ASSOCIATES

Employees and their associates should not be disadvantaged in their individual access to RBS. Employees who may be entitled to access the Service should seek the approval of the CEO and consider any implications or

possible conflicts of interest. Services to employees may only be made on the employee's own time (ie. Whilst on leave or on a scheduled day off.)

OBLIGATION TO COOPERATE

Employees are to cooperate to the fullest extent to enable the Service to meet its obligations under the Deed of Funding with the Department of Agriculture, and other Government departments from time to time.