

## **Conflict resolution policy**

1. **Conflict Engagement Training:** If any staff member sees a reasonable and affordable opportunity for some or all staff members to take a training on conflict resolution, that staff member should share that resource and/or bring a proposal that staff attend the training.
  
2. **Conflict Engagement Team Accountabilities:** SEOIN shall maintain a Conflict Engagement Team (CET) of at least two people that will be responsible for the following (i.e. CET's accountabilities):
  1. **Resource development and maintenance.** CET will:
    1. Maintain a list of potential mediators and other external conflict resolution resources in Google Drive.
    2. Maintain a list of conflict resolution training opportunities and inform staff of those opportunities.
  2. **Annual training.** The CET will schedule one mandatory all-staff workshop, training, or facilitated meetings on conflict and communications per year. After seeking input from all staff, the CET will have discretion over the content and facilitation of those activities, including whether to bring in outside facilitators or workshop leaders.
  3. **CET is the go-to body to kick start the conflict resolution process.** When one or both members of the CET observe or learn of an interpersonal conflict, and believe that the parties in conflict are not taking appropriate steps to resolve the matter, and that the conflict has the potential of harming the organization or moving it back in its mission, the CET will bring this to the attention of the parties involved, offer their assistance, or require the parties to follow the Conflict Resolution Process detailed below.

4. **Recusal of CET members when involved in a conflict.** If a member of the CET becomes aware that they are part of any conflict the CET is working to resolve, or if they are otherwise involved or unreasonably biased (acknowledging the small size of the organization), that member shall inform the other CET member and recuse themselves from acting as a member of the CET for purposes of working to resolve that particular conflict.
  5. **Maintaining accountability to the full staff.** The Conflict Engagement Team members hold elected positions voted on by the full vote. Elections shall take place every year or when a position becomes vacant. Members elected to the CET shall participate in a conflict resolution, transformative justice, restorative justice, and/or other training aligned with the values of SEOIN within 6 months of joining the CET. This training is not intended to prepare CET members to act as internal mediators for SEOIN, but rather to become effective stewards of the CET and our Conflict Resolution Process (see below). Any reasonable expenses for this training shall be an organizational expense.
3. **Scope of Conflict Resolution Process.** The Conflict Resolution Process below covers conflicts between coworkers who feel irritated, offended, or are generally experiencing an interpersonal or significant professional conflict with one or more other staff members. For cases of unlawful harassment, discrimination, retaliation, physical or verbal abuse, or whistleblower issues, staff should follow the complaint procedure outlined in SEOIN's harassment, whistleblower, or other specific policies.
  4. **Confidentiality.** Each member of the CET will endeavor to keep all communications between themselves/the CET and staff confidential, to the

extent practical within a small organization, and given legal and ethical consideration. CET member(s) will use their best judgment to provide the full staff with information about conflicts which have been brought to the attention of the CET member(s) at a time and in a manner designed to encourage resolution of those conflicts and serve the best interests of our co-workers.

5. **Conflict Resolution Process.** Staff members who find themselves in conflict shall:

1. **Reflect:** Reflect on whether it is possible to forgive and let go of the issue without lasting feelings of resentment, distrust, or fearing that the issue will arise again if left unaddressed.
2. **Discuss:** If it is not possible to forgive and let go of the issue, the staff member shall discuss the conflict with the staff member(s) with whom there is conflict, and attempt resolution. Staff should use the following strategies when engaging with coworker(s) about conflict:
  1. **Set parameters for the conversation.** Ask if your coworker wants to discuss the conflict, and whether they would like to speak in private or with another person present, for example. Ask your coworker when it would be an OK time to talk about a potentially sensitive matter.
  2. **Bring it up to that person as soon as reasonably possible.** In general, we encourage direct communication about conflicts with coworkers as soon as possible to move towards a resolution.
  3. **Be kind and compassionate.** Listen actively and with empathy to your coworker when they are speaking. Avoid interrupting.
  4. **Assume good intentions.** When possible, give your coworker the benefit of the doubt; assume your coworker is doing their

best, intends you no disrespect or harm, and is speaking from a place of truth for them. If you cannot enter the conversation on these terms, reach out to the CET to initiate a mediation process.

5. **Enter the conversation with curiosity.** Ask how your coworker experienced the interaction or event, and what your coworker's intent was (that is, ask rather than accuse or impose your version on them). Using "I" statements, tell your coworker how you were impacted by their words, actions, or behavior, and ask them what they experienced or perceived.
6. **Be solution-oriented rather than simply critical.** Instead of arguing over who's right, work together, as comrades and colleagues, to solve the problem.

3. **Seek Support from the Conflict Engagement Team.** At any stage in a conflict, particularly in the early stages, staff members are encouraged to ask one or both CET members for support. And, at any stage in a conflict, the CET member(s) may require the parties in conflict to engage in a mediation process to reach a resolution. Mediation may be handled internally when appropriate, or through external consulting services. When handled internally, staff members engaging in the conflict resolution process shall keep notes on relevant conversations, meetings, and communications, as well as any other pertinent documentation in the CET files which are accessible only to CET members (or, when one CET member is involved in the conflict, only to the member taking this documentation).

#### 4. **Mediation**

##### 1. **Internal mediation**

1. *In situations where a CET member is involved in the conflict, external mediation is encouraged to ensure the*

other CET member is not burnt out or left feeling isolated in the conflict resolution process. The member may still engage in internal mediation if they are comfortable and if involved parties consent.

2. *If the CET determines that it will be productive*, the CET will call the people in conflict to a meeting (in person if possible) to discuss the conflict at hand and attempt to diffuse it. The CET and parties in conflict may collaboratively develop an action plan that outlines the next most promising steps for the parties to resolve the conflict. In developing the action plan, the CET and parties in conflict will consider, but are not limited to, the steps outlined in this Conflict Resolution Process.
    - a. The notes, agreements, and/or action plan from this meeting shall be put in writing with specified dates by which each person agrees to complete the identified next steps.
  3. If the meeting with the CET and parties in conflict does not result in an action plan, or the CET determines that such a meeting is not the best next step toward resolving the conflict, the CET may forego this meeting and seek the support of professional conflict resolution services.
2. **Professional Conflict Resolution Services:** The CET may, at any time, utilize external professional services (“external consultant”) to provide advice and direct support on interpersonal conflicts. External consultants may also be used at the request of any involved party, at any point in the process. The CET shall ensure the external consultant is provided with appropriate compensation if the consultant charges for their

services. A proposal to the full staff is not required to utilize funds budgeted for such a process. The CET may request additional funds from contingency if the resolution exhausts the budget for such services, though a proposal is required to utilize additional funds.

1. If the external consultant advises that the parties engage in mediation, professional coaching, or some other activity, all parties in conflict shall participate in good faith and use their best efforts to resolve the conflict until the budget has been exhausted or the conflict resolved.
2. When the determination is made to utilize an external consultant, the CET shall make the full staff aware that an interpersonal conflict exists, identify the parties involved, inform the staff that external consulting services are being sought, and disclose the agreed upon budget for the consultant's engagement.
3. If any party to a conflict rejects or otherwise fails to follow the consultant's advice or engage in the prescribed activities, and if the conflict remains unresolved, the CET will create appropriate documentation for the staff member's personnel file and the conflict engagement process moves to the next step: processing the conflict via the full staff.

**5. Processing Conflict via the full staff:**

1. If the conflict remains unresolved after the above process has been exhausted, then one or both CET members, or any person involved in the unresolved conflict, shall bring a discussion item to the full staff in order to collectively construct an agreement to resolve the conflict. The discussion item shall provide a

summary of the conflict (seeking input from the parties involved), a summary of the steps taken to resolve the conflict (including CET's involvement, any external services that were offered or provided, and any prescribed actions, and whether and to what extent the prescribed actions were followed by each party to the conflict), the funds expended on resolving the conflict, and any suggestions the involved parties and/or the CET have for appropriate next steps to resolve the conflict.

2. If either (a) the discussion among the full staff does not result in an agreement on a way forward to resolve the conflict, or (b) an agreement made during the full staff discussion is implemented and the conflict still remains unresolved, the CET shall bring a Proposal to the full staff to seek input on conflict resolution or engagement from the Board of Directors.