

Wyoming INBRE's mission is to help Wyoming build its biomedical research and education infrastructure. To facilitate this mission, it is critical that we create supportive research and training environments and facilitate communication/collaborations among participants. Wyoming INBRE is led by R. Scott Seville, Ph.D., Professor of Zoology and Physiology at the University of Wyoming, who serves as the Principal Investigator (PI) and as Director of the Administrative Core. Wyoming INBRE is governed and overseen by a Steering Committee (SC) that includes Program Leaders at each participating institution and the External Advisory Committee (EAC) that consists of individuals with scientific, INBRE, and/or federal grant expertise.

**This policy does not supersede any individual's institutional conflict resolution policy.**

The SC and EAC communicate regularly and develop strategies and policies that follow NIH guidelines, rules, and regulations. The EAC oversees program activities, reviews applications for research projects, and evaluates the progress and professional development of individual faculty investigators and collaborative teams. The EAC is responsible for formal resolution of disputes relating to research projects, research collaborations, publications, and other related issues. The SC, comprised of primarily community college faculty and administrators, oversees network and undergraduate program activities is responsible for the formal resolution of disputes relating to network relations, communications, and recognition of contributions to collaborative projects. This policy applies to all investigators, mentors, post-doctoral fellows, graduate/undergraduate students, and staff supported by Wyoming INBRE.

The Wyoming INBRE program provides funding for developmental, pilot, and other research and education projects within the State, following the agency specified requirements and expectations of the award mechanism ([PAR-18-262](#)), and described in detail in the Wyoming INBRE proposals and internal funding opportunity announcements. All funded research/education awards are subject to annual progress evaluation, and renewal/continuation of awards is dependent on EAC/SC approval. Policies and procedures that avoid any real or perceived conflicts of interest are in place to protect all parties. The best practice is to prevent conflicts or to prevent escalation of disagreements to conflicts.

#### **I. RECOMMENDED BEHAVIORS TO REDUCE DISAGREEMENTS AND PREVENT CONFLICTS:**

- Routine communication between partners.
- Clear articulation of each partner's role and expected contributions to the project.
- Understanding and respecting the role of the collaborator at his/her home institution and how this may impact their ability to contribute to the project.
- Immediate attention to misunderstandings/lack of clarity on any issue with the research/program goals and objectives.
- Revisiting the proposal to review what was proposed. The proposal should be used to guide the communication between parties.
- Situations where conflicts or disagreements could arise might involve:
  - Authorship on manuscripts, patents, or other intellectual property claims.

- Expectations of who is responsible for project activities or experimental results.
- Expectations of who is responsible for project reports or presentations.
- Allocation of funding and details of project budgeting.

To prevent these types of misunderstandings from developing and escalating please, using the original proposal as a guide, maintain open communication with all parties and negotiate fair distribution of credit and effort during the evolution of the project and before work is completed.

## II. RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS

We define conflict as **a disagreement where the parties involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests, or concerns**. Wyoming INBRE encourages the active resolution of conflicts in order to maintain and promote a fair and productive environment for all participants. Participants are encouraged to maintain and utilize open communications to promote and maintain a civil and humane resolution of any and all conflicts. The Wyoming INBRE program encourages the resolution of conflict at the earliest opportunity, or the lowest step in whatever dispute resolution process is used. Both formal procedures and informal conflict resolution mechanisms are provided. Participants are encouraged to use informal resolution whenever appropriate. Together, the resources listed below are intended to provide fair, thoughtful, and effective means to manage and/or resolve conflict situations.

## III. INFORMAL RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS

We recognize that resolving a conflict requires integrity on the part of all parties involved. It is critical that the involved parties honestly and clearly articulate needs and listen to alternative/adversarial perspectives. They should also critically look at one's own role in the dispute, and approach others with a sense of empathy, openness, and respect for their perspective. In cases where disagreements occur between investigators at the same institution, the SC Member/Institutional Project Leader may contribute to the informal resolution process. The following general suggestions may help to informally resolve conflicts with co-workers, collaborators, and/or students constructively and respectfully.

**A. Treat the other person with respect:** Although respecting the other person during a conflict is challenging, one must try. Words of disrespect block communication.

**B. Confront the problem:** Identify a time and place to discuss the conflict with the other person. The best time is when the parties are not arguing or angry. The place should be comfortable and at a neutral site.

**C. Define the conflict:** The conflict should be described in clear, concrete terms. Specificity of the "who, what, when, where, and why" of the situation should occur. Identify the problems for discussion, without focusing on the individuals. Behaviors, feelings, consequences, and desired changes should be discussed.

**D. Communicate understanding:** Listen carefully to understand the other person's feelings, needs, and perspective. The parties should be encouraged to step back and try to imagine how the other person sees things. After discussing the issues, the parties should explain how they see the problem after discussion. After consideration discuss any changes in how the parties feel about the issues.

**E. Explore alternative solutions:** Alternative solutions should be identified and considered. The consequences of each solution for each individual should be examined.

**F. Agree on the most workable solution:** A solution that all parties involved can understand and can live with should be adopted. Win-win solutions are most appropriate. Commitment to resolving the conflict is required.

**G. Evaluate after time:** Over an agreed period of time the parties should evaluate how well the solution is working. Adjustment of the resolution should occur if and when necessary.

#### **IV. FORMAL RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS**

When informal conflict resolution is ineffective, formal mechanisms to resolution may be required. These steps will be used to formally resolve conflicts.

**A. Program Director/ SC Chair.** The PI/PD will be the first point of contact in the formal conflict resolution process. Written statements describing the conflict issues will be collected from all participants. The PI will suggest possible strategies for resolution.

**B. Steering/External Advisory Committee.** Conflicts that cannot be resolved through the PI will be referred to the SC or the EAC depending on the nature of the conflict. The committee will consider the documentation, discuss the issues with the participants either separately or jointly, and may initiate other inquiries or request additional information to facilitate comprehension of the situation. The SC/EAC will discuss the issues with the participants either separately or jointly and will make a recommendation for resolution. The SC/EAC recommendation will be considered binding for the participants involved in the conflict.

**This document was adopted, in-part, from the Idaho and New Mexico INBRE Programs.**