



Grants and child's play

The story

Bill works with a large state government agency and part of his work involves assessing grant applications and making recommendations to the executive on who should receive government grant funding.

A recent round of grant applications, which were open to child care centres, has just closed. As Bill reads through the applications he notices one from a child care centre that he knows of. They specialise in caring for children with intellectual and learning disabilities and they have applied for a grant to purchase specialised outdoor play equipment for the children.

Bill is aware of the centre because his nephew's daughter, who has an intellectual disability, attends the centre three days per week. His nephew has been 'glowing' about how good the centre is and how vital it is for their daughter.

There are 23 applications but only one centre can be recommended for a grant. This application appears to be equally as impressive as two of the leading applications.

Later, Bill sends his evaluation report to the executive. He recommends the child care centre (described above) as the only centre deserving of the grant. Bill does not disclose the conflict of interest in the situation.

Questions

- ▼ What are the ethical issues around this situation?
- ▼ What part of the ethical framework failed?
- ▼ What steps could Bill have taken?
- ▼ What strategies could be implemented to prevent this in the future?

The information used in this scenario is not factual – we created it for education and discussion. Any likeness to actual persons or events is coincidental.

Questions – Facilitator copy

- ▼ What are the ethical issues around this situation?
 - ▽ Conflict of interest.
 - ▽ Misuse of authority.
- ▼ What part of the ethical framework failed?
 - ▽ Bill did not behave with honesty and integrity.
 - ▽ Bill made improper use of power or authority to gain a gift, benefit or advantage for an associate.
 - ▽ Bill took a risk and may adversely affect the integrity and good reputation of the State Service.
- ▼ What steps could Bill have taken?
 - ▽ Bill could have:
 - disclosed his conflict of interest in the matter and then assess the applications on merit; or
 - removed himself from the process and asked management to appoint another officer to assess the applications.
- ▼ What strategies could be implemented to prevent this in the future?
 - ▽ Clearly documented procedures for assessing grants.
 - ▽ Regular management and/or external audit of decision processes and decisions made.
 - ▽ Use a panel approval process for assessing grant applications. Integrate disclosure of interests and conflicts of interest in panel procedures.
 - ▽ Have a second-level of authorisation for evaluation of reports – before they are sent to the executive.
 - ▽ Code of Conduct that is well known and accessible to staff.
 - ▽ Clear conflict of interest policy with procedures to guide staff on how the policy applies to their work.
 - ▽ Ensure that application procedures and appeal procedures are well publicised for stakeholders



The Commission can help

We are available to provide support and assistance with identifying, reporting, investigating, managing and preventing misconduct: prevention@integrity.tas.gov.au or 1300 720 289.

For more Misconduct Prevention resources go to www.integrity.tas.gov.au/resources