



Quiz: Conflict of interest

One of the most common issues public sector employees deal with is conflict of interest. Take a look through the scenario below and see what you think.

1. What should Susan do?

Susan is a new manager at a state service department. This is Susan's second job in the state service. Soon after she starts in her new role a vacancy arises in her team. Susan is keen to ensure she gets the best candidate in the role. After the role is advertised, she contacts Monique - her former deputy from her previous job - and encourages her to apply, which she does. Susan is asked to chair the recruitment panel. Susan has been Monique's referee in the past and expects that Monique will ask her to be her referee again.

What should Susan do at this point?

- (a) Susan does not benefit financially if Monique gets the job. Therefore, there is no conflict of interest. Susan can stay on the panel.
- (b) Susan's conflict of interest means that it's untenable for her to remain on the panel and she should seek out someone else to take her position.
- (c) Susan has a conflict of interest. She should declare this to the other panel members, stay on the panel and agree on a management strategy with them.
- (d) No action is required. Having worked with a person before does not amount to a potential conflict of interest.

Choose your answer and consider the feedback on the next page.

Feedback

- (a) Susan and Monique share a past professional association and Susan has previously been Monique's referee. This means Susan may have difficulty putting aside her previous experience working with Monique. Therefore, there is a conflict of interest that should be declared and managed.
- (b) There is a conflict of interest - Susan's view of Monique will likely be influenced by her past experiences of working with her. The conflict should be declared and managed.
- (c) There is a conflict of interest. Susan can remain on the panel provided she declares the conflict and agrees on a management strategy with her fellow panel members.**
- (d) A past professional association is a potential conflict of interest. Susan may be influenced by her previous experiences with Monique. Susan needs to declare and manage this potential conflict. Read below for details on how she could manage the conflict of interest.

Remember, there's nothing wrong with having a conflict of interest, but it's important to identify, declare and manage them. We have a lot of resources on our website to help you work out what to do: [Home – Integrity Commission](#)

Best practice

Susan should declare the conflict and work with her fellow panel members to determine a suitable management strategy. This could include ensuring that other panel members provide their assessments of candidates before Susan; providing her assessment of all candidates to other panel members prior to short-listing; submitting a written referee report prior to shortlisting which is not considered by other panel members until after shortlisting.

Given Susan is the Chair of the panel, she should ensure that the proposed management of the conflict is approved by her supervisor or recruiting manager.

The Integrity Commission's 6 Rs for managing conflicts of interest is a useful reference for dealing with similar situations. You can find these on [this worksheet on identifying and managing conflicts of interest](#).



The Commission can help

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

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