

Safeguarding Guidelines

Grand Challenges Canada (“GCC”) supports work that is conducted in accordance with humanitarian principles and international human rights laws.

PURPOSE

It is GCC’s responsibility to minimize the harm it may be doing inadvertently as a result of its operational activities. These Safeguarding Guidelines (“Guidelines”) outline the expectations of GCC towards any person engaged by or who receives funding from GCC to carry out work either through their own innovation project or on behalf of GCC, such that they cause no harm to others.

SCOPE

These Guidelines apply to all GCC representatives (“GCC Representatives”), including:

- all GCC employees (contract and permanent),
- students paid by GCC,
- GCC officers and directors,
- members of GCC’s governance bodies,
- any volunteers working with GCC,
- all innovators supported by GCC, and their sub-grantees or sub-contractors (whether funded by a grant, contract, sub-grant, loan or otherwise)
- consultants and service providers to GCC, and
- any other third parties who act as representatives of GCC.

It is expected that all GCC Representatives will comply with these Guidelines and their principles.

VISION

GCC is committed to safeguarding, which means that it promotes respectful relations with all persons and takes reasonable measures to prevent harm within its organization and for those affected by its work.

PRINCIPLES

Through these Guidelines, we require that all activities and programs by and/or funded through GCC be conducted in accordance with the following principles:

Safeguarding

Safeguarding means establishing frameworks or measures that are intended to protect everyone who is associated in one way or another with GCC, or an initiative conducted or funded by GCC, through:

- upholding humanitarian principles;



- focusing on compliance with international human rights law;
- protecting people from harm, exploitation, sexual violence and abuse;
- protecting people's well-being and safety; and
- protecting children from all harm.

No Harm

The principle of “*no harm*” should be applied in all facets of GCC’s and GCC Representatives’ activities.

Harm maybe be caused in various ways depending on context and culture but includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation, neglect and negligent treatment, emotional abuse, and commercial exploitation.

Keeping Children Safe

These Guidelines should be read with the “*Keeping Children Safe*” *International Child Safeguarding Standards* available at: [KCS-ICS-Standards-EN-2024.pdf](#). All GCC Representatives should be familiar with these standards and adhere to the following principles:

- All children have equal rights to protection from harm
- Everybody has a responsibility to support the protection of children
- Organizations have a duty of care to children with whom they work, are in contact with, or who are affected by their work and operations
- If organizations work with partners they have a responsibility to help partners meet the minimum requirements on protection
- All actions on child safeguarding are taken in the best interests of the child, which are paramount

Resources

GCC Representatives may consult the following additional resources to ensure compliance with these Guidelines:

Inter-Agency Standing Committee’s Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, as amended, available at <https://psea.interagencystandingcommittee.org/update/iasc-six-core-principles>

A Common Approach to Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment | CAPSEAH at: [Home | CAPSEAH](#)

“*Keeping Children Safe*” *International Child Safeguarding Standards* available at: [KCS-ICS-Standards-EN-2024.pdf](#)

Committee on the Rights of the Child and associated conventions: [Committee on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR](#)

Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others: [Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others | OHCHR](#)

Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children: [Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women](#)

[and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime | OHCHR](#)

IN PRACTICE

Safeguarding in GCC Funded Projects

GCC and its funders and partners, which include a variety of governments, all espouse principles of fairness, equality and a respect for human dignity. Recipients of GCC funds acknowledge that they are at all times accountable for the conduct of any of their officers, directors, employees, affiliates, agents and representatives, as well as the appropriate use of any funds advanced under their funding agreement, in accordance with these Guidelines. This accountability extends to any adverse effects of expenditure that have an undesired or unexpected result upon end users, including any adverse gender related impacts. As such, recipients of GCC funds will adhere to the following:

1. Provide a safe and trusted environment which safeguards anyone who the funding recipient has contact with, such as end users, staff and volunteers;
2. Set an organisational culture that prioritises safeguarding, so that is safe for those affected to come forward, and to report incidents and concerns with the assurance they will be handled sensitively and properly;
3. Have adequate safeguarding policies, procedures and measures to protect people, including children, and these are shared and understood by the funding recipient's officers, directors, employees, affiliates, agents and representatives;
4. Have absolute clarity as to how incidents and allegations will be handled should they arise, including reporting to the relevant authorities, such as the national authorities, and to funding partners including a requirement to immediately report any such incidents and allegations to GCC; and
5. Provide a safe environment for all those working on any GCC funded project, with particular care to have policies and procedures in place to protect them while travelling to and working in conflict affected areas and other hazardous environments, including without limitation the provision of adequate information and support to extract such persons in case of terrorism, environmental crises, and other emergencies.

Any breach of the above obligations may result in termination of any agreement under which GCC funds are advanced, at the sole discretion of GCC.

Suppression of Sexual Exploitation

GCC has a zero tolerance for sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment (SEAH) and inaction to prevent, report, or respond to SEAH. This means that GCC and all GCC Representatives will (i) take all reasonable steps to prevent SEAH of any person linked to the

delivery of work by GCC Representatives and funded by GCC and (ii) respond appropriately when reports of SEAH arise.

As such all GCC Representatives and workers engaging in GCC supported or funded work, including but not limited to, humanitarian relief operations, indirectly or directly, will adhere to the “A Common Approach to Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment | CAPSEAH” and the following principles in carrying out such work:

1. SEAH by workers constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment and/or termination of the relevant services or funding agreement, and potential prosecution under criminal, civil or military law. SEAH is misconduct and can constitute gross misconduct depending on its severity. Acts of SEAH are an abuse of power and undermine the integrity and impact of GCC funded work.
2. Actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions, is prohibited. Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defence.
3. Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including demands for sex, sexual favours or other forms of abusive, humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour is prohibited. This includes exchange of any assistance or protection that is due to people (particularly, beneficiaries) or communities.
4. Any sexual relationship, in particular but not limited to between those providing humanitarian assistance and protection and a person benefitting from such humanitarian assistance and protection, that involves improper use of rank or position or any abuse of power and power imbalances, is prohibited. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of humanitarian aid work.
5. Sexual harassment of co-workers (whether in the same organization or not) or people in communities receiving assistance or protection, is prohibited.
6. Where a GCC Representative develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, they must report such concerns via GCC’s established reporting mechanisms. For GCC employees, any concerns or suspicions must be reported in accordance with the process established under GCC’s Code of Conduct & Anti-Harassment Policy. Please refer to “Reporting under the Guidelines” below.
7. All workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents SEAH and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment.

GCC Representatives or any other person provided access or contact with end users, are prohibited from engaging in any exploitation, sexual abuse, child abuse, and child neglect of any person, supporting or advancing these actions, or intentionally ignoring or failing to act upon allegations of these actions. Recipients of GCC funds must have policies that are consistent

with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, as amended, available at <https://psea.interagencystandingcommittee.org/update/iasc-six-core-principles> and the Keeping Children Safe Standards, available at <https://www.keepingchildrensafe.global/accountability/>. Their policies must require reporting of suspicions or concerns related to violations of these Guidelines.

GCC Representatives should take a “survivor-centered approach” for responding to alleged violations of the prohibitions. Such an approach must ensure the survivor’s dignity, experiences, considerations, needs, and resiliencies are placed at the center of the process and when a child is involved, take a “best interest of the child determination” for responding to alleged violations of the prohibitions. This determination considers the best possible outcome for a vulnerable child who has been exposed to violence, abuse, exploitation, or neglect.

Suppression of the Traffic in Persons

The following acts are expressly prohibited by any GCC Representative or any of their representatives:

1. Trafficking in persons (as defined in the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children*, supplementing the *UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*);
2. Procurement of a commercial sex act;
3. Use of forced labor;
4. Acts that directly support or advance trafficking in persons, including the following acts:
 - i. Destroying, concealing, confiscating, or otherwise denying an employee access to that employee's identity or immigration documents;
 - ii. Failing to provide return transportation or pay for return transportation costs to an employee to the country from which the employee was recruited upon the end of employment if requested by the employee, unless: a) exempted from the requirement to provide or pay for such return transportation by GCC or its funder(s), as applicable; or b) the employee is a victim of human trafficking seeking victim services or legal redress in the country of employment or a witness in a human trafficking enforcement action;
 - iii. Soliciting a person for the purpose of employment, or offering employment, by means of materially false or fraudulent pretenses, representations, or promises regarding that employment;
 - iv. Charging employees recruitment fees; or
 - v. Providing or arranging housing that fails to meet the host country housing and safety standards.

COMPLIANCE PLAN

GCC has developed and maintains a safeguarding compliance plan, which includes a plan for the suppression of sexual exploitation and the trafficking in persons, that details risk analysis and mitigation measures that will be implemented to prevent the prohibited activities and address the requirements in these Guidelines. All GCC employees are required to undergo an

awareness program to educate them about these Guidelines and GCC's safeguarding compliance plan.

REPORTING UNDER THE GUIDELINES

Any person who becomes aware of, observes or experiences suspicions or concerns related to violations of these Guidelines by a GCC Representative, and/or as part of an initiative funded by GCC, is asked to immediately advise their GCC contact and/or GCC's General Counsel (generalcounsel@grandchallenges.ca).

GCC has zero tolerance for retaliation against victim-survivors or whistleblowers. Reporting is strongly encouraged and should not be penalized by funding recipients and other GCC Representatives. Assistance and investigations will prioritise the rights, safety, needs, wellbeing and dignity of victim-survivors. GCC will strive to help victim-survivors who report an incident to access support, regardless of whether they participate in an investigation.

When GCC becomes aware of reasonable suspicions, or complaints of SEAH, GCC will take reasonable, swift and appropriate action to stop harm occurring, investigate and report to relevant authorities (for criminal matters), as appropriate and when safe to do so, after considering the wishes of the survivor. Please note that GCC may have a duty to report concerns raised under this Guideline to its funder(s)¹, subject to not compromising the safety, security, privacy and due process rights of any concerned persons.

GCC Representatives are required to report suspicions or concerns about violations under these Guidelines immediately to the supervisor (if a GCC employee) or their GCC contact, or as otherwise below. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action (if a GCC employee) or termination of your agreement with GCC.

GCC further encourages immediate reporting of all suspicions and concerns to all applicable authorities.

If you are unsure of who to contact, please email info@grandchallenges.ca for additional assistance or refer to Grand Challenges Canada's [Code of Conduct and Anti-Harassment Policy](#).

For confidential whistleblowing, please contact GCC's General Counsel at GeneralCounsel@grandchallenges.ca.

Complainants may also access the Global Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-844-888-FREE and its e-mail address at help@befree.org. The Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline is found here: [Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline](#) at 1-833-900-1010.

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¹ For example, allegations of SEAH may be reported to the United Kingdom's safeguarding unit at: ODAsafeguardingconcerns@dhsc.gov.uk for incidents related to their grant.