



## Safeguarding Policy

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

### PURPOSE

GCC is committed to minimizing potential harm that may inadvertently result from its operational activities. This Safeguarding Policy (“Policy”) outlines the requirements for all persons engaged by or receiving funding from GCC to ensure they cause no harm to others.

### SCOPE

This Policy applies 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.

All GCC Representatives must comply with this Policy and its 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

#### ***Safeguarding***

Safeguarding establishes frameworks or measures intended to protect everyone associated with GCC, or initiatives 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
- protecting children from all harm.

### **No Harm**

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

*Harm* may 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 are pursuant to and should be read with the [“Keeping Children Safe” International Child Safeguarding Standards](#). 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

## **IN PRACTICE**

### **Safeguarding in GCC Funded Projects**

GCC and its funders and partners espouse principles of fairness, equality and respect for human dignity. Recipients of GCC funds are accountable for the conduct of their officers, directors, employees, affiliates, agents and representatives, as well as the appropriate use of funds in accordance with this Policy, any other applicable GCC policies, and the terms and conditions of their agreements with GCC. 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, making it safe for affected individuals to report incidents with assurance they will be handled sensitively and properly;
3. Implement adequate safeguarding policies, procedures and measures to protect people, including children, and ensure these are shared and understood by all representatives;
4. Establish clear procedures for handling incidents and allegations, including reporting to the relevant authorities and funding partners, with immediate notification to GCC of any such events; and

5. Provide a safe environment for all those working on GCC funded projects, with particular attention to policies and procedures to protect staff in conflict-affected areas and other hazardous environments, including adequate information and support for emergency extraction.

A breach of the above obligations may result in termination of any GCC funding agreement 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. GCC and all GCC Representatives must (i) take all reasonable steps to prevent SEAH of any person linked to GCC-funded work and (ii) respond appropriately when reports of SEAH arise.

GCC Representatives 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 and the [Keeping Children Safe Standards](#). Their policies must require reporting of suspicions or concerns related to violations of these Guidelines.

All GCC Representatives must adhere to the [A Common Approach to Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment | CAPSEAH](#) and the following principles:

1. SEAH constitutes gross misconduct and is grounds for termination of employment and/or termination of the relevant services or funding agreement, and potential prosecution under applicable criminal, civil or military law.
2. Acts of SEAH are an abuse of power and undermine the integrity and impact of GCC funded work.
3. 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 local age of consent. Mistaken belief regarding age is not a defense.
4. 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.
5. Sexual relationships involving improper use of rank or position or power imbalances are prohibited, particularly between those providing humanitarian assistance and beneficiaries.

6. Sexual harassment of co-workers (whether in the same organization or not) or people in communities receiving assistance or protection is prohibited.
7. Concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation must be reported through established 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.
8. All workers must create and maintain an environment which prevents SEAH. Managers have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment.

GCC Representatives must take a "survivor-centered approach" when responding to alleged violations, ensuring the survivor's dignity, experiences, considerations, needs, and resiliencies are central to the process. When a child is involved, a "best interest of the child determination" must be made considering the best possible outcome for a vulnerable child who has been exposed to violence, abuse, exploitation, or neglect.

### ***Prevention of Human Trafficking***

The following acts are expressly prohibited:

1. Trafficking in persons (as defined in the [Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime | OHCHR](#) , supplementing the *UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*);
2. Procurement of a commercial sex acts
3. Use of forced labour
4. Acts that directly support or advance trafficking in persons, including:
  - Destroying, concealing, confiscating, or otherwise denying access to identity or immigration documents;
  - Failing to provide return transportation or pay for return transportation costs upon the end of employment if requested by the employee;
  - Using materially false or fraudulent pretenses in employment solicitation or offers;
  - Charging employees recruitment fees; or
  - Providing or arranging housing that fails to meet the host country safety standards.

### **KEY 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](#)

## REPORTING UNDER THE GUIDELINES

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 investigate, stop harm occurring, 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 Policy to its funders, subject to not compromising the safety, security, privacy and due process rights of any concerned persons.

Any person who becomes aware of, observes or experiences a violation of this Policy 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](mailto:generalcounsel@grandchallenges.ca)).

GCC Representatives are required to report suspicions or concerns about violations under these Policy 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:help@befree.org). The Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline is found here: [Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline](#) at 1-833-900-1010.

Policy Type	Board Policy (external)
<b>Policy Owner</b>	Fawad Akbari (Senior Director, Humanitarian Innovation/Program Optimization)
<b>Approved By</b>	Fawad Akbari (Senior Director, Humanitarian Innovation/Program Optimization), Maddy Toca (General Counsel) & Karlee Silver (CEO)
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