

### **Conflict of Interest and Employee Ethics**

University of Wisconsin System employees are subject to ethics rules covering use of university resources, conflicts of interest and acceptance of gifts. As a general rule, an employee may not use his or her university position to gain private financial or other benefits for the employee, the employee's immediate family, or an outside organization. Here are some tips for avoiding potential ethics violations. <http://www.wisconsin.edu/gc-off/ethics-records-brochure.htm>

#### Reflections on Outside Employment

[Considerations for Outside Employment](#)

#### Other Dimensions of Conflict of Interest

1. Serving as a voluntary (paid) expert witness in a civil or criminal case. This is different from serving as a fact witness as a result of a subpoena.  
[Testimony in Court & Voluntary Legislative Testimony](#)
2. Holding an elected partisan government position.  
[Guidance on Political Campaign Activities at UW System Institutions](#)  
[Leave of Absence to Engage in Political Activity policy](#)

#### **Other Resources**

[Outside Activities Reporting State of Wisconsin and University of Wisconsin System Code of Ethics for Classified Employees: Chapter ER-MRS 24, Wis. Admin. Code](#)

[Code of Ethics for Unclassified Employees: Chapter UWS 8, Wis. Admin. Code](#)

<a href="#">Chapter E-MRS 24 Code of Ethics</a>	Wisconsin Government
<a href="#">Chapter E-MRS 24 Code of Ethics</a>	Board of Regents
<a href="#">Ethics in the Work Place</a>	The Office of the Chancellor 2008

**Examples of Conflict of Interest:** Examples that follow are not exhaustive, and are provided as illustrations where the potential for conflict of interest exists. Note the links provide additional information on handling such conflict.

1. Accepting personal compensation for any educational or professional service and concurrently charging Extension for your time, mileage or other expenses.  
[UWEX Code of Ethics 8.04 Outside Activities and Interests](#)
2. Use of one's professional expertise to provide services that compete with services provided by a unit in the university such as teaching or developing curriculum for another university. [UWEX Code of Ethics 8.05](#)
3. Any activity (paid or unpaid) that creates the perception Extension endorses the products or services of any organization or business. [Guidelines for Commercial Sponsorship](#)



## **Considerations for Outside Income Activity and Conflict of Interest**

Before pursuing outside income activity, colleagues are encouraged to review their situation with their department head/unit leader, district director or program director. Cooperative Extension colleagues serve the public good, and when colleagues fail to exercise consideration about outside employment or income activity, they may lose public trust. A conflict of interest does not exist only when interests are at odds. A conflict of interest also exists when there is a potential for interests to be at odds. These are questions to consider.

### **Relationship to Cooperative Extension Role:**

- Is this activity related to your role as a Cooperative Extension employee?
- How will this activity impact, or potentially impact, your credibility with or state audiences and partners?
- If considering consultant work in your area of expertise, have you considered how this proposed work is different from the work you do as an Extension employee?
- How will this impact your accessibility to constituents?
- Will this income activity jeopardize your position with Cooperative Extension?
- If considering work in an adjacent county, how will your employment impact your colleagues' credibility and work in that county?
- Are there partners (funding partners or otherwise) that could potentially be affected?
- Is it in the *best* interest of Cooperative Extension for you to do this activity?

### **Compensation and Use of Public Resources:**

- Is it your intention to deposit funds from outside employment into a professional development fund, managed by the district, local county extension office, program unit or take the fund personally?
- Discuss with your Program Director, Unit Leader and/or District Director if you anticipate entering into activities where you will earn \$5,000 or more. An outside activities report is required.

### **When specifically considering teaching at a UW Institution:**

- Will you use county time/resources to prepare for this course/opportunity?
- How will this affect your scheduled "typical" work week?
- If teaching a course, how closely related is the course subject to your current role/position?
- Consider overload approval for teaching on a UW Institution. Link to overload approval form: <http://www.ohr.wisc.edu/apo/overload/> )