



Funding applications from Board members and service providers: our policy

The DNTF works in a small, connected sector. Many of the people best placed to serve on our governance structures and training panels are publishers themselves, or lead organisations close to the independent media community we support.

Our governance framework accounts for this. The DNTF Funding Policy and Conflict of Interest Policy set out clear rules on who can apply for funding, what they must disclose, and how we manage conflicts at every stage.

This page sets out our position and the safeguards we have in place.

Board members

Sitting Board members may apply for funding through the standard process, with extra safeguards attached.

Grant selection rests entirely with the independent Adjudication Committee. The Committee assesses, scores, and recommends every application. The Board's role is limited to confirming the Committee followed due process. It does not review, change, or vote on who gets funded.

When a Board member applies, the following safeguards apply:

- They disclose the application to the Board, and the Secretariat minutes it.
- A newly appointed Board member waits until the next open call before applying.
- The Board member is recused from any discussion of applications where they have a material interest, recorded in the minutes.
- A Board member who applies is also recused from ratifying that funding round.

These provisions sit in Section 6 of the DNTF Conflict of Interest Policy.

Service providers and training providers

The DNTF works with service providers and training providers who support our grantees. A provider currently engaged by the Fund can apply for grant funding, provided they meet all standard eligibility criteria and the policy's added requirements.

The following safeguards apply:

- The applicant declares the full nature and scope of their existing relationship with the DNTF when they apply. Failure to disclose this is grounds for disqualification and possible termination of the existing arrangement.
- The Adjudication Committee reviews the relationship before assessing the application, and confirms in its minutes that no Committee member has a conflict.
- If a provider wins a grant, their existing service agreement with the DNTF pauses from the date the grant agreement is signed. They cannot take on new work with the Fund for the grant period.



- Once the grant period ends, the provider is free to apply to resume or start a new arrangement, subject to our usual procurement process.

These provisions sit in Section 4.4 of the DNTF Funding Policy and Section 6A of the Conflict of Interest Policy.

Why we allow these applications

South Africa's independent media sector is small. Excluding everyone with a governance or service link to the Fund would shrink the pool of eligible publishers and work against our purpose: supporting the sector as widely as possible.

Our Conflict of Interest Policy recognises this directly. Given the senior standing of Board members in the media sector, overlaps with related organisations are expected and acceptable, provided we manage them properly. The same applies to service providers. A conflict of interest doesn't mean wrongdoing. It means we declare it and manage it.

Our approach rests on three safeguards:

- **Disclosure.** Every relevant interest gets declared in writing, recorded formally, and flagged to the Adjudication Committee.
- **Separation.** Board members and service providers play no part in funding decisions.
- **Enforcement.** Failure to disclose a conflict counts as misconduct and carries sanctions, including removal from office. The Board can set aside any funding decision tainted by an undeclared conflict.

The Adjudication Committee

All funding decisions rest with the DNTF's independent Adjudication Committee. Committee members face a stricter standard than Board members. Neither a Committee member nor their immediate family can hold a material interest in, or professional role with, a related organisation during their service and for six months after leaving. If a Committee member picks up such an interest after appointment, they must tell the Co-Chairs and resign immediately.

If recusals drop the Committee below quorum, an independent reserve panellist, appointed in advance by the Board, steps in for that item.

Questions and feedback

We welcome questions about our governance processes. We acknowledge general enquiries within five business days and respond within ten. Contact us at dntf@tshikululu.org.za.

The DNTF Funding Policy and Conflict of Interest Policy are under annual review. This page reflects current policy and will update if the review changes it. Once the review finishes, we'll re-upload these documents to the website.
