

4MOST OMBUDSPERSONS GUIDELINES

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The 4MOST Consortium has three Ombudspersons who are available to members of the 4MOST Project. The role of the Ombudspersons is to provide informal, confidential, nonjudgmental, impartial, and independent advice and arrange mediation for 4MOST members for the purposes of dispute resolution. Confidentiality is a privilege of the Ombudspersons and the only circumstances that there may be an exception to confidentiality is if the Ombudsperson is concerned by an imminent risk of serious harm, or if required by law in the applicable jurisdiction to anonymously report credible evidence of fraud or abuse. As such, communications with an Ombudsperson do not constitute formal notice to 4MOST or the individual's institute. If the individual would like to start formal proceedings, the Ombudsperson can provide guidance on the 4MOST complaints process and referrals for institutional processes. The 4MOST process for formal complaints is outlined in the 4MOST Code of Conduct.

There are three 4MOST Ombudspersons to provide a choice of whom to speak with, and to ensure that there is at least one Ombudsperson available at Collaboration meetings. The Ombudspersons are available to 4MOST members who are experiencing conflicts or disputes as part of their 4MOST activities. The Ombudspersons will work together with the members who consult them to identify options for managing and resolving disputes and conflicts. This includes providing advice and support, referring individuals to appropriate resources, organizing informal mediation, and ensuring that the 4MOST Principal Investigator is made aware of any systemic issues in the collaboration.

The 4MOST Executive Board (EXB) appoints the Ombudspersons for a term of 3 years, with the option of renewal. Due consideration will be given to the diversity of the candidates. The 4MOST Ombudspersons will be full members of 4MOST, with a strong understanding of the organizational structure of the collaboration. They will not hold any other leadership positions within the collaboration and will report only to the 4MOST PI. They must familiarize themselves with the extensive materials available from the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) available on their website: <https://www.ombudsassociation.org>. They should participate in the Foundations of Organizational Ombudsman Practice Course (or equivalent) offered by the International Ombudsman Association, if the course is available and 4MOST has sufficient funding. 4MOST has chosen to adopt the role and function of the Ombudsperson as expressed by the International Ombudsman Association (with some additions and edits for gender neutrality): <https://www.ombudsassociation.org/what-is-an-organizational-ombuds>

THE ORGANIZATIONAL OMBUDSPERSON—ROLE AND FUNCTION

The primary duties of an organizational ombudsperson are (1) to work with individuals and groups in an organization to explore and assist them in determining options to help resolve conflicts, problematic issues or concerns, and (2) to bring systemic concerns to the attention of the organization for resolution. An organizational ombudsperson operates in a manner to preserve the confidentiality of those seeking services, maintains a neutral/impartial position with respect to the concerns raised, works at an informal level of the organizational system, and is independent of

formal organizational structures. Successfully fulfilling that primary function in a manner consistent with the IOA Standards of Practice requires a number of activities on the part of the ombudsperson while precluding others.

Activities and functions most frequently undertaken by an ombudsperson include, but are not limited to:

- Listens and understands issues while remaining neutral with respect to the facts. The ombudsperson doesn't listen to judge or to decide who is right or wrong. The ombudsperson listens to understand the issue from the perspective of the individual. This is a critical step in developing options for resolution.
- Assists in reframing issues and developing and helping individuals evaluate options. This helps individuals identify the interests of various parties to the issues and helps focus efforts on potential options to meet those interests.
- Guides or coaches individuals to deal directly with other parties, including the use of formal resolution resources of the organization. An ombudsperson often seeks to help individuals improve their skill and their confidence in giving voice to their concerns directly.
- Refers individuals to appropriate resolution resources. An ombudsperson may refer individuals to one or more formal organizational resources that can potentially resolve the issue.
- Assists in surfacing issues to formal resolution channels. When an individual is unable or unwilling to surface a concern directly, the ombudsperson can assist by helping give voice to the concern and/or creating an awareness of the issue among appropriate decision-makers in the organization.
- Facilitates informal resolution processes. An ombudsperson may help to resolve issues between parties through various types of informal mediation.
- Identifies new issues and opportunities for systemic change for the organization. The unique positioning of the ombudsperson serves to provide unfiltered information that can produce insight to issues and resolutions. The ombudsperson is a source of detection and early warning of new issues and a source of suggestions of systemic change to improve existing processes.

What an ombudsperson does not do:

Because of the informal, neutral, confidential and independent positioning of an ombudsperson in an organization, they typically do not undertake the following roles or activities:

- Participate in formal investigations or play any role in a formal issue resolution process.
- Serve in any other organizational role that would compromise the neutrality of the ombudsperson role.
- Receive notice for the organization.
- Make binding decisions or mandate policies.
- Create or maintain records or reports for the organization.
- Provide representation or legal advice.

Matters that are related to Good Scientific Practice – like overlap in science projects, authorship and work acknowledgement issues, Survey membership problems – shall be dealt with by the SPB and/or SCB in first instance and only by an Ombudsperson when considered a personal and not a scientific conflict.

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