



Conflict of Interest Policy

Updated May 2026

Conflict of interest refers to any situation in which ACHENA Commissioners, Support Team Members, Advisors or Committee Members stand to gain materially from their association with ACHENA. ACHENA takes the following steps to minimize potential conflict of interest, over and above what is outlined in its *Bylaws and Policies & Procedures Manual*:

- ACHENA limits, when possible, the number of *Commissioners* serving the board who concurrently represent a single accredited institution or program.
- ACHENA Commissioners, Support Team Members, Advisors or Committee Members shall remain independent of an accredited institution or program at the time of their formal recruitment and tenure. Full disclosure of any anticipated or actual conflict shall be disclosed and reflected in Executive Committee and/or Commission Board minutes.
- ACHENA Commissioners, Peer Reviewers, Site Visitors, Committee Volunteers, Advisors and/or Staff who have a conflict of interest with a specific institution / program cannot be assigned to nor participate in any written and/or verbal assessments or review processes of any accreditation-related matter, for example eligibility packet reviews, self-study report reviews, site visits, annual reports, etc. Conversely, school owners, administrators, faculty and/or student stakeholders may not be assigned nor participate.
- ACHENA Advisors are trained to act as third-party reviewers in order to reduce potential or actual conflict of interest in the accreditation decision-making process whenever possible.
- Every meeting of the Board of Commissioners and Executive Committee begins with a request for participants to declare any conflict of interest in relation to any agenda items. They must recuse themselves from the meeting while that agenda item(s) is discussed and/or voted upon. Voting members may share their concern regarding a potential conflict of interest of other voting members prior to the beginning of any discussion.
- All Commissioners, Peers Reviewers, Site Visitors, Committee Volunteers, Advisors and Support Team receive instruction in ACHENA's Code of Ethics and must sign an acknowledgement of ACHENA's Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality and Whistleblower Policy and Procedures. They annually renew these agreements and are regularly informed and updated on their fellow members' conflicts of interest. Signed statements are maintained in ACHENA's business files.

- During any assessment and review process for a specific institution/program, verbal or written communication between ACHENA and that institution / program is channeled through Commissioners, Peer Reviewer, Site Visitors, Advisors or Support members that do not have a conflict of interest with that institution/program.
- During any assessment and review process for a specific institution / program, all working documents are electronically stored in a separate location accessible only to those directly involved with that review and without a conflict of interest with that institution/program. Discussions are held only among those directly involved with that review.