

RFUS Ethics and Code of Conduct

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Our Commitment

RFUS's ethical standards are grounded in our purpose to support Indigenous peoples and forest communities in their efforts to secure their lands, protect their environment, and uphold their rights, and in our vision of a world where the rights of Indigenous peoples are respected and rainforests flourish. Our conduct is guided by RFUS's values of Justice, Respect, Integrity, Learning, and Connection. These values inform how we work with colleagues, Indigenous peoples and local communities, partner organizations, donors, funders, governments, contractors, and other stakeholders.

Rainforest Foundation US (RFUS) will conduct business honestly and ethically wherever operations are maintained. RFUS strives to improve the quality of our services and operations and will maintain a reputation for honesty, fairness, respect, responsibility, integrity, trust, and sound judgment. RFUS is also dedicated to maintaining a work environment and operations that are free from harassment and discrimination

All RFUS personnel are expected to adhere to high standards of organizational and personal integrity and to act honestly, fairly, respectfully, responsibly, and in a manner consistent with their responsibilities to RFUS and the communities and partners with whom RFUS works. RFUS expects that directors, supervisors, and all RFUS personnel will not knowingly misrepresent RFUS and will not speak on behalf of RFUS unless specifically authorized. The confidentiality of proprietary information and similar confidential-sensitive information (i.e., financial records/reports, operation strategies/plans, partners and donor lists, etc.) about RFUS, its operations, or those of its partners is to be treated with discretion and only disseminated on a need-to-know basis (see 6.5 and policies relating to confidentiality and nondisclosure).

RFUS has developed this Code of Conduct to establish the ethical and behavioral standards expected of RFUS personnel in carrying out their responsibilities and representing the organization. All RFUS personnel are ambassadors of RFUS and shall conduct themselves consistently with RFUS's purpose, mission, values, and ethical standards at all times.

Scope and Application

This Code applies to RFUS employees, officers, directors, interns, volunteers, and other individuals acting on behalf of RFUS, as applicable to their role and relationship with the organization. Consultants, contractors, implementing partners, and other third parties may also be required through their agreements with RFUS to comply with this Code or with equivalent RFUS ethical, integrity, safeguarding, and conduct requirements.

Code of Conduct

- RFUS personnel shall exercise appropriate care in developing, managing, and using RFUS funds and resources and shall not engage in, facilitate, or knowingly permit fraud, corruption, misappropriation, misuse of funds, financial mismanagement, or other prohibited or unethical practices, including in connection with grants and approved funding proposals.
- RFUS personnel shall comply with applicable laws and regulations in the countries where RFUS operates and shall respect local cultures, traditions, and customs, consistent with RFUS's values, policies, and commitment to human rights.
- RFUS personnel shall respect the rights, dignity, cultures, knowledge, priorities, and self-determination of Indigenous peoples and local communities. Engagement with communities shall be conducted respectfully, without exploitation, coercion, discrimination, or abuse of power, and in accordance with applicable RFUS policies and commitments.
- RFUS personnel must exercise discretion and caution when expressing personal views on politically sensitive matters (including situations related to armed conflicts) in countries where RFUS operates, and must never divulge confidential information without authorization. This applies to official and private communications.
- RFUS personnel shall not abuse any authority, influence, position of trust, or power associated with their role at RFUS, particularly in interactions with Indigenous peoples, local communities, partners, colleagues, or other stakeholders.
- RFUS personnel shall not engage in fraud, bribery, corruption, collusion, coercion, obstruction, money laundering, financing of terrorism, or other prohibited practices. Personnel shall not offer, solicit, give, or accept gifts, favors, payments, or other benefits that could improperly influence, or reasonably appear to influence, a decision or action. Modest customary gifts or expressions of hospitality may be accepted or provided only when permitted under applicable RFUS policies and when they do not create an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest.
- RFUS personnel shall avoid situations in which personal, financial, family, professional, or other interests improperly influence, or could reasonably appear to influence, their RFUS responsibilities. Actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest must be disclosed and managed in accordance with applicable RFUS policies and procedures.
- RFUS personnel shall never engage in any exploitative relationships (sexual, emotional, financial, or employment-related) with the organization's partners, staff members, or other persons. The term 'exploitative relationships' is here defined as any abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual, financial, or any other purposes. Sexual relationships between RFUS personnel and direct beneficiaries of assistance undermine the credibility and integrity of the work of RFUS and are prohibited. RFUS is a zero-tolerance organization towards sexual exploitation and abuse. RFUS is committed to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse both within the organization and within the framework of RFUS programs and RFUS beneficiary populations.

- RFUS personnel shall not accept, solicit, or engage in the "buying" of or profiting from sexual services.
- RFUS personnel must not engage in any practice that constitutes trafficking in persons or slavery.
- RFUS personnel shall not drive or work under the influence of alcohol or drugs, engage in excessive consumption of alcohol, or use any illegal drug while on duty. If staff need to take a prescribed medication that may alter the level of awareness, prevent them from performing certain activities, or put the lives of staff at risk, they should first consult with the People and Culture Department.
- RFUS personnel shall not make use of, or at any time be in possession of, any weapons except for a knife as a regular travel kit.
- RFUS personnel shall not acquire, buy, or export artifacts, cultural goods, or natural history specimens that violate the laws of the country visited and shall likewise refrain from importing or crossing any border with such goods into/out of either the U.S., Peru or any country visited. RFUS personnel are expected to comply with applicable laws and RFUS requirements governing cultural property, artifacts, and natural history specimens.
- In delicate cases, RFUS personnel shall refrain from issuing statements to the press or other agencies of public information, or from submitting articles or other material for publication, without prior approval from the Executive Director.
- RFUS personnel shall take photographs, video, audio, or other recordings respectfully and in accordance with applicable RFUS consent, safeguarding, communications, and data-protection requirements. Appropriate consent shall be obtained from identifiable persons being portrayed, and personnel shall consult relevant partner organizations or community representatives where appropriate.
- Whenever possible, RFUS personnel shall avoid being alone with minors unless their parents or an adult from the community is present. RFUS personnel shall never be alone with minors without the presence of their parents or an adult from the community in isolated or private spaces. If this occurs for any reason beyond the individual's control, the individual must promptly report it through the applicable safeguarding reporting channel or to their immediate supervisor or the People and Culture Department. If the supervisor or another normal recipient is involved or conflicted, the report may be submitted through another RFUS grievance, whistleblower, or safeguarding channel. Immediate safety concerns should be reported without delay.

Reporting Violations

RFUS personnel are expected to promptly report suspected violations of this Code. RFUS also encourages partners, community members, contractors, and other stakeholders to raise concerns regarding suspected misconduct connected with RFUS activities through an appropriate RFUS reporting channel.

A report may be submitted to the employee's supervisor, the People and Culture Department, the Finance and Administration Department, the Executive Director, or through RFUS's designated grievance or whistleblower reporting channels, including complaints@rainforestus.org.

RFUS personnel may use the channel they reasonably believe is safest and most appropriate. RFUS personnel are not required to report through their supervisor or the Executive Director, particularly when that person may be involved in the matter or when using that channel could create a conflict of interest or fear of retaliation.

RFUS will screen and route reports according to their nature. Routine workplace or operational matters may be addressed by the appropriate management function. Allegations of fraud, corruption, serious misconduct, retaliation, significant conflicts of interest, misuse of funds, or other matters within the mandate of the Independent Investigation Function will be referred to the Independent Investigation Function for independent assessment and determination of the appropriate investigative response under applicable RFUS procedures.

The person or function assigned to assess or investigate a report will be selected in light of the nature, seriousness, complexity, and potential conflicts associated with the matter. RFUS may use appropriately independent internal capacity or qualified external assistance where necessary and proportionate. No person who is implicated in a report or has a material conflict of interest may control its assessment or investigation.

RFUS prohibits retaliation against any person who, in good faith, raises a concern, reports suspected misconduct, participates in an investigation, or otherwise supports an RFUS integrity, grievance, safeguarding, or accountability process. Information will be handled discreetly and shared only with persons who have a legitimate need to know, subject to applicable law and the requirements of a fair and effective process.

Accountability

RFUS is committed to addressing suspected violations of this Code fairly, promptly, and through processes appropriate to the nature and seriousness of the concern. Substantiated violations may result in corrective, disciplinary, contractual, or other appropriate action, consistent with applicable RFUS policies, contractual arrangements, and law.