



# Smithsonian Institution

## STATEMENT OF VALUES AND CODE OF ETHICS

### INTRODUCTION

The Smithsonian Institution is a public trust whose mission is the increase and diffusion of knowledge. The Smithsonian was established by the United States Congress to carry out the fiduciary responsibility assumed by the United States in accepting the bequest of James Smithson to create the Smithsonian Institution. We are accountable to the general public as well as to the Smithsonian's multiple stakeholders in carrying out this responsibility. We recognize that the public interest is paramount.

Serving the Smithsonian is a privilege and those who work on its behalf have a responsibility to maintain the highest standards of honesty, integrity, professionalism, and loyalty to the Institution. We must ensure that our activities support the Smithsonian mission and take care to avoid conduct that would compromise the integrity of or public confidence in the Smithsonian. We acknowledge that in order to merit and preserve the public trust we must maintain a shared commitment to core values and an expectation of ethical and professional conduct in all of our activities. This Statement of Values and Code of Ethics articulates our core values and ethical standards to provide guidance for the application of these principles in pursuit of the Smithsonian's mission.

### APPLICABILITY AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This Statement of Values and Code of Ethics establishes the standards and principles for ethical conduct that apply to the Institution collectively and to all members of the Smithsonian community, which includes Regents, staff, volunteers, advisory board members, fellows, interns, research associates, affiliated individuals, and others who have been entrusted to act on behalf of or in the name of the Smithsonian. All members of the Smithsonian community are guided by these standards and principles and are expected to use their best efforts to adhere to them in conducting activities on behalf of the Smithsonian.

In June 2007 the Board of Regents, in order to reinforce the Institution's foundation of integrity and responsibility, articulated guiding principles that have informed the creation of and are carried out through this Statement of Values and Code of Ethics. These guiding principles are as follows:

***Our Operations and Activities Will Reflect Our Status as a Public Trust Administered on Behalf of the American People:***

*The Board of Regents was established by Congress to carry out the responsibilities of the United States as trustee of the Smithsonian trust. Given this unique and special status, the Smithsonian must be mindful that it is a public trust operating on*

*behalf of the American public and the United States government to carry out its mission to increase and diffuse knowledge. As such, the Smithsonian will be guided by the principles of the federal sector in the conduct of its activities whenever appropriate and consistent with its mission and trust responsibilities. In all other cases, the Institution will follow the principles and best practices for fiduciary stewardship in the nonprofit sector.*

***We Remain Committed to Following The Highest Standards of Ethical Conduct:***

*The Smithsonian Institution remains committed to following the highest standards of ethical conduct in pursuit of its mission to increase and diffuse knowledge. All individuals who have been entrusted to act on behalf of the Smithsonian — Regents, staff, researchers, fellows, interns, and volunteers — are expected to conduct their activities according to the highest professional standards, with honesty and accountability, and in the best interest of the Smithsonian. They must take care that their actions will not adversely impact the integrity of, or the public’s confidence in, the Institution, its work, or its mission.*

***We Will Conduct Our Business Within an Ethos of Transparency:***

*The Smithsonian Institution is committed to operating in a culture marked by openness, accessibility, and robust communication. All Smithsonian stakeholders should have access to appropriate and accurate information regarding the finances, operations, and activities of the Smithsonian Institution. Effective transparency also requires open and reliable communication between the Board, management, and other stakeholders to support informed decision-making. The Smithsonian is dedicated to using every reasonable method to foster the effective transparency that will support its mission to increase and diffuse knowledge.*

**PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY**

Each member of the Smithsonian community is expected to act in accordance with professional standards, as well as with honesty, integrity, openness, accountability, and a commitment to excellence. Each individual is expected to conduct Smithsonian activities in accordance with this Statement of Values and Code of Ethics, exercising sound judgment to support the Smithsonian’s mission and serving the best interests of the Smithsonian and the public.

The Smithsonian promotes a working environment that values respect, fairness, and integrity. We act in accordance with these values by treating our colleagues, the public, and others with whom we interact with dignity, civility, and respect. Members of the Smithsonian community exercise responsibility appropriate to their position and delegated authorities. We strive for excellence in all of our activities and acknowledge that we are responsible to each other, to the Smithsonian, and to the Smithsonian’s stakeholders for our actions. We are each responsible for being aware of and complying with applicable professional standards that govern our conduct, including those that relate to our particular discipline.

## **COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAWS**

All Smithsonian activities will be conducted in compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and international conventions. Members of the Smithsonian community are expected to become familiar with and comply with the laws and regulations that apply to their areas of responsibility.

## **COMPLIANCE WITH SMITHSONIAN POLICIES, DIRECTIVES, AND PROCEDURES**

All Smithsonian activities will be conducted in accordance with established policies, directives, and procedures, which are designed to set standards for acceptable practices and activities. Members of the Smithsonian community are expected to conduct their activities in conformance with applicable policies, directives, and procedures and accordingly have an obligation to become familiar with those that apply to their areas of responsibility.

## **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

All members of the Smithsonian community have a duty to act in the best interest of the Smithsonian rather than in furtherance of their personal interest or for private gain. We must avoid apparent or actual conflicts of interest and ensure that potential conflicts of interest are disclosed and managed in accordance with applicable guidelines, directives, and standards of conduct.

## **GOVERNANCE**

The Board of Regents is the governing authority for the Smithsonian and has the ultimate authority and responsibility for ensuring that Smithsonian resources, programs, and activities support the Smithsonian mission. The Board of Regents is responsible for establishing the strategic direction of the Institution, providing guidance on and oversight of Smithsonian policies and operations, ensuring that Smithsonian resources are responsibly and prudently managed in compliance with legal and ethical requirements, and regularly assessing the effectiveness of Smithsonian programs.

Regents are expected to understand their governance responsibilities and to devote the time and attention necessary to fulfill them. The Board of Regents takes action as a body through the collective judgment of its members. Individual Regents do not represent the Board, except as may be authorized by the Board.

Regents respect and maintain the confidentiality of non-public information provided to them in connection with their service as Regents. This principle does not preclude disclosure of information that is properly in the public domain, or information that should be released in fulfilling the Institution's accountability to the public.

The Board of Regents is responsible for the appointment and retention of the Smithsonian Secretary, who is the chief executive officer of the Institution. The Board of Regents provides leadership and direction to the Secretary, regularly assesses his or her performance, and ensures that the Secretary's compensation is fair and reasonable. The Board and the Secretary will maintain open communication and engage in a constructive partnership to achieve the Smithsonian's mission, each understanding and respecting the respective role of the other in

the governance and management of the Smithsonian. The Secretary and appropriate staff ensure that the Board of Regents is provided with timely, accurate, and complete information to enable the Regents to fulfill their responsibilities.

The management and staff of the Smithsonian (other than the Office of Inspector General and Office of the Board of Regents) serve under the direction and control of the Secretary in accordance with specific authorities delegated by the Secretary or specified in the Bylaws of the Board of Regents. Managers and supervisors are expected to lead by example, establishing and following a high standard of ethics and accountability to be adhered to at all levels of their organizations.

Smithsonian advisory boards are established by the Board of Regents or by statute to provide advice and assistance to the Board and the Secretary. Advisory boards exercise the duties and responsibilities delegated to them in applicable laws or bylaws approved by the Board of Regents.

### **RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP**

The Smithsonian ensures that its resources, including financial assets, collections, facilities and other physical property, intellectual property, and human resources, are protected, maintained, developed, and managed prudently and responsibly in support of the Smithsonian mission and the public trust. Policies and practices to ensure compliance with these principles, as well as consistency with professional standards and best practices for responsible stewardship and internal control, are established, disseminated, kept current, and consistently applied at all levels of the organization. Accurate and complete records are maintained to support reliable financial reporting and to ensure accountability and positive control of the Smithsonian's physical and financial assets.

### **COLLECTIONS**

The Smithsonian develops, maintains, preserves, studies, exhibits, and interprets collections of art, artifacts, natural specimens, living animals and plants, images, archival and library materials, and audiovisual and digital media of unparalleled scope, depth, and quality. Stewardship of Smithsonian collections entails the highest public trust and carries with it the responsibility to provide prudent and responsible management, documentation, preservation, and use of the collections for the benefit of the public. The Smithsonian conducts these activities in accordance with professional standards and practices and ensures that legal requirements are observed and compliance is documented. Policies and practices to ensure compliance with these principles and consistency with professional standards and best practices for responsible collections stewardship are established, clearly articulated, disseminated, kept current, and consistently applied.

### **EXHIBITIONS, EDUCATION, AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

To carry out its mission to increase and diffuse knowledge, the Smithsonian engages in and supports a vast array of exhibitions and educational and public programs in science, art, history, and culture. The Smithsonian conducts these activities in accordance with professional standards and practices and ensures that accuracy and intellectual integrity are the foundation

for all exhibitions and educational and public programs produced in its name or under its auspices. The Smithsonian retains control over and responsibility for the contents of its exhibitions and educational and public programs. We acknowledge and address diverse values, opinions, traditions, and concerns and ensure that our activities are open and widely accessible. Policies and practices to ensure compliance with these principles and consistency with professional standards and best practices are established, clearly articulated, disseminated, kept current, and consistently applied.

## **RESEARCH**

To carry out its mission to increase and diffuse knowledge the Smithsonian engages in and supports original research in science, art, history, and culture. The Smithsonian conducts these activities in accordance with professional standards and practices and ensures that accuracy and intellectual integrity are the foundation for all research produced in its name or under its auspices. Accurate, valid, and reliable research data, records, and results are created, retained, and disseminated as appropriate. Individuals who participate in or collaborate on a research project or publication, as well as underlying sources and references, are appropriately acknowledged in accordance with professional practices. Publication of research results is subject to appropriate peer review. Policies and practices to ensure compliance with these principles and consistency with professional standards and best practices are established, clearly articulated, disseminated, kept current, and consistently applied.

## **OUTSIDE FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

The Smithsonian seeks and relies on donations, grants, and contracts to provide vital support to successfully achieve its mission. Donations, grants, and contracts may be received from individuals, foundations, corporations, and grant-making organizations. The Smithsonian adheres to professional standards and best practices in seeking and accepting support from these sources to ensure that fund-raising activities support the Smithsonian mission and protect the Smithsonian's reputation, integrity, and independence, while regarding donors and sponsors with the highest level of respect and establishing relationships characterized by forthrightness and honesty.

The Smithsonian provides truthful and relevant information in soliciting outside financial support. We respect the interests and privacy concerns of donors and sponsors, and maintain confidentiality as appropriate and legally permissible. We provide responsible stewardship and recognition of contributions and ensure that they are used in accordance with the agreed terms and conditions. Policies and practices to ensure compliance with these principles and consistency with professional standards and best practices are established, clearly articulated, disseminated, kept current, and consistently applied.

## **REVENUE-GENERATING ACTIVITIES**

The Smithsonian engages in revenue-generating activities that create unrestricted financial resources to support its mission. To ensure that these activities support the Smithsonian mission and protect the Smithsonian's reputation, integrity, and independence, the Smithsonian adheres to professional standards and best practices in conducting its revenue-generating activities. Smithsonian revenue-generating activities must be consistent with the

Smithsonian mission, culture, governance, and status as a trust instrumentality of the United States and a tax-exempt organization. Policies and practices to ensure compliance with these principles and consistency with professional standards and best practices are established, clearly articulated, disseminated, kept current, and consistently applied.

## **TRANSPARENCY AND DISCLOSURE**

The Smithsonian provides accurate and comprehensive information about its finances, operations, and activities to the public, Congress, and other stakeholders and responds in a timely manner to reasonable requests for information. We engage in open and reliable communication between and among the Board of Regents, management, and other stakeholders to support informed decision-making.

Smithsonian information will be disclosed in accordance with established policies and procedures. Members of the Smithsonian community who have access to information that may be considered confidential, private, or proprietary are expected to be familiar with and to comply with applicable laws, policies, directives, and agreements pertaining to access, use, protection, and disclosure of such information.

## **INCLUSIVENESS AND DIVERSITY**

The Smithsonian values and promotes inclusiveness and diversity in all of its activities, including employment practices, board and volunteer recruitment, and programs. The Smithsonian is enriched and its effectiveness enhanced when the Smithsonian community and the constituents we serve are composed of diverse individuals with varied backgrounds, experience, and points of view.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

While the Board of Regents retains the ultimate responsibility for requiring and overseeing compliance with this Statement of Values and Code of Ethics, each Regent, employee, volunteer, and other member of the Smithsonian community to whom it applies has a personal responsibility to comply with this Statement. The Secretary will ensure that the Statement is widely disseminated to Regents, staff, volunteers, advisory board members, and other members of the Smithsonian community, as well as to the public and interested stakeholders. The Secretary will ensure that appropriate policies and directives providing necessary guidance are in place and kept current. The Secretary, in consultation with the General Counsel, will establish an internal Ethics Advisory Board to provide advice to the Secretary and Board of Regents on compliance with this Statement of Values and Code of Ethics.