



Western Economic Association International Disclosure Policy

This policy substantively follows that adopted on 5 January 2012 by the American Economic Association

WEAI urges its members and other economists to apply the following principles in scholarly journals, working papers, conference papers and presentations, op-ed pieces, newspaper and magazine columns, radio and television commentaries, as well as in testimony before federal and state legislative committees and other agencies.

Submissions to the WEAI journals must conform to the WEAI Disclosure Policy which states:

- 1) Every submitted article should state the sources of financial support for the particular research it describes. If none, that fact must be stated.
- 2) Each author of a submitted article should identify each interested party from whom he or she has received significant financial support, summing to at least \$10,000 in the past three years, in the form of consultant fees, retainers, grants and the like. The disclosure requirement also includes in-kind support, such as providing access to data. If the support in question comes with a non-disclosure obligation, that fact should be stated, along with as much information as the obligation permits. If there are no such sources of funds, that fact must be stated explicitly. An “interested” party is any individual, group, or organization that has a financial, ideological, or political stake related to the article.
- 3) Each author should disclose any paid or unpaid positions as officer, director, or board member of relevant non-profit organizations or profit-making entities. A “relevant” organization is one whose policy positions, goals, or financial interests relate to the article.
- 4) The disclosures required above apply to any close relative or partner of any author.
- 5) Each author should disclose if another party had the right to review the paper prior to its circulation.
- 6) For published articles, information on relevant potential conflicts of interest will be made available to the public.

When submitting a paper, the authors should prepare a separate page entitled “Disclosure Statement” that will be uploaded using the online submission form. If the paper involves several coauthors, each coauthor should submit a separate disclosure statement. Note: The disclosure statement should be included even if the authors have nothing to disclose; this fact must be explicitly stated. The disclosure statement will be available to referees.

For papers accepted for publication, disclosure will take two forms: If the disclosure statement is brief, it will be included in the “acknowledgments” footnote. If the disclosure statement is longer, then disclosure will have two parts: (i) a brief statement summarizing potential conflicts of interest that will be included in the “acknowledgments” footnote; (ii) a more detailed description of the activities and relationships that are the source of a potential conflict of interest. This more detailed

account will be available to the public, but only electronically, on the journal's website. The "acknowledgments" footnote will include a pointer/link to the detailed electronic version of the disclosure statement which will be archived on the journal's website.

Failure to disclose relevant information at the submission stage may result in reversal of acceptance decisions. If the paper is already published, the journal reserves the right to post a note on the journal's website and in its printed version notifying readers that the authors of the paper violated the WEAI Disclosure Policy. Violations of the Disclosure Policy will be brought to the attention of members of WEAI's Executive Board who will decide on the appropriate course of action in each case.

The WEAI believes that it is in the authors' best interest to disclose potential conflicts of interest. Disclosure is author- and paper-specific; a specific relationship may be relevant for one of an author's papers, but not for another. In cases of uncertainty regarding whether to disclose a particular relationship, a guiding principle should be the answer to the question: "Would I or my institution or a reasonable person be embarrassed if I had not disclosed this relationship and it was subsequently discovered by a journalist, colleague or university administrator?" If the answer to this question is "yes," the relationship must be disclosed. In the following, we provide some examples to help clarify the policy. Some of these examples draw on the disclosure policy of the NBER, which is similar to the WEAI's. We encourage authors to visit the NBER website (<http://www.nber.org/researchdisclosurepolicy.html>) for a list of additional examples.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

For any paper involving the collection of data on human subjects the author(s) must disclose whether they have obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval; if no IRB approval was obtained, the reason should be stated.

For example, if the authors have not obtained IRB approval because their institutions do not have IRBs, that fact must be stated. The IRB disclosure statement will be included in the "acknowledgments" footnote.

EXAMPLES:

Q: I have nothing to disclose. Do I still need to include a disclosure statement?

A: YES. The WEAI policy requires one to state explicitly that she or he does not have a conflict of interest. A disclosure statement in such a case might read:

"The author declares that (s)he has no relevant or material financial interests that relate to the research described in this paper."

Q: The data used in my research are proprietary. They were obtained from an institution (firm, government, non-profit organization, etc.) that has requested to review the results of the study prior to their dissemination to ensure that the confidentiality of the data is not unintentionally compromised. Do I need to disclose this review requirement?

A: YES. Even if the purpose of the review is to ensure that the author does not disclose confidential information, the author should explicitly state in the disclosure statement that the data

agreement involves a request for review of the findings prior to their release.

Q: *The data used in my study are proprietary. They were obtained while I served as a consultant for a company four years ago. I have not consulted for this company since then. Do I need to disclose this consulting arrangement?*

A: YES. Given that the consulting arrangement resulted in in-kind compensation, in the form of access to the data you are using in the current paper, you must disclose the consulting relationship in your statement.

Q: *I have served as a consultant for the pharmaceutical industry on several occasions, but not within the past three years. The paper I submitted analyzes competition in the pharmaceuticals sector, but the project was not funded by a private firm, neither is it related to any consulting arrangements I currently have with firms in this industry. Should I disclose my consulting relationship with the industry?*

A: Though formally you are not obliged to disclose relationships that ended more than three years ago, good judgment would suggest disclosing financial relationships that could be construed as affecting your objectivity. In this case, many readers would likely consider the information on your consulting relationships relevant, so we would encourage you to disclose it. Specific firm names are not necessary.

Q: *I used to be employed by an oil company 10 years ago, but I have had no relationship with this company since then. My paper concerns environmental issues. Shall I disclose my prior affiliation with the company?*

A: Formally, the WEAI policy does not require disclosure of relationships beyond the horizon of three years. However, good judgment would suggest disclosing your past employment in this company, especially if your paper concerns sensitive environmental issues.

Q: *I have submitted a paper on family planning. Do I need to disclose my religious beliefs?*

A: NO. Personal beliefs do not need to be disclosed. The WEAI policy is specifically focused on disclosure of “conflicts of interest” that arise because of potential financial/material gains for the researcher.

Q: *During the past three years I have received funding from a foundation that has a pro-market ideology. My paper examines the effects of marginal tax rates on desirable outcomes, but was not funded by this foundation. Do I need to disclose the funding I have received from this foundation even though it is was not related to the current project?*

A: YES. The foundation would constitute an “interested party”; you must disclose your relationship even if the funding was not for this specific paper.

Q: *During the past three years, I have received funding from an aid agency or NGO or foundation that favors particular approaches to economic development over others. My paper is relevant to the effectiveness of one of these approaches, but was not funded by any of these institutions. Do I need to disclose the funding I have received for other projects?*

A: YES. The aid agency, NGOs, and foundations would fall into the category of having “a financial, ideological, or political stake related to the article” (based on point (2) of the WEAI policy) or a “relevant” organization having “policy positions, goals, or financial interests relate to the article” (based on point (3) of the WEAI policy).

Q: I hold stock worth more than \$10,000 in companies in a specific sector and my paper concerns issues specific to that sector. Shall I disclose my holding?

A: If the stock is held through a mutual fund or another diversified intermediary, there is no need to disclose the holding. However, if the stock is held directly or through a narrowly focused fund, we would encourage you to disclose it. Please consult the NBER website for additional examples.

Q: My spouse is a medical doctor and my paper is related to health care policy. Do I need to disclose my spouse's profession?

A: If the study's findings have no direct effect on your spouse's earnings, there is no reason for disclosure. If your spouse would be directly affected by the policy you analyze or s/he is involved in health care reform, then disclosure is necessary.

Q: My spouse is a hedge fund manager and my paper examines high frequency trading. Do I need to disclose my spouse's profession?

A: If your spouse's fund is not involved in high frequency trading, there is no need for disclosure. If, on the other hand, the fund does high frequency trading and your study's findings may generate financial benefits for those involved in high frequency trading, you must disclose your spouse's affiliation.

Q: What should I do in a case that is not specifically covered or is ambiguous?

A: The WEAI policy is still evolving and is likely to be reviewed in the future. When something is on the border, it would seem prudent to disclose it rather than not.