

COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

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Drafted by:	Governance Committee	27/04/2020
Responsible person:	Board of Directors Scheduled review date	27/04/2022

1. Introduction

Educating The Future Australia (ETF) is committed to ensuring that we accurately assess, resolve and follow up complaints in order to improve its delivery of education related programs. This policy is intended to ensure that ETF handles complaints fairly and effectively. ETF views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve procedures and management, for both the organisation and complainant.

2. Purpose

Management and handling of complaints by ETF is fair, efficient and accessible. The organisation has a respectful and productive workplace culture where donors, members and staff can raise their concerns directly. This policy, under the key principles of ETF, establishes a general complaint handling process, providing guidelines for complainants and complaint recipients. This policy acknowledges that the beneficiaries and stakeholders of ETF's programs in Timor-Leste may be in a different position than those individuals supporting or involved with the organisation in Australia. This policy takes into account the needs of the most vulnerable, including the disadvantaged and minority.

This policy aims to support the provision of the highest quality service to our donors, to increase the level of donor satisfaction with delivery of ETF's service and to enhance ETF's relationship with our donors.

3. Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all ETF activities and the following people:

- Volunteers,
- Directors,
- Contractors,
- Governing bodies,
- Donors,
- Third party organisations,



- Stakeholders,
- Beneficiaries, and
- Implementing partners.

ETF is committed to ensuring all people involved in ETF's development activities, whether representing ETF or delivering activity funded by or on behalf of ETF, are familiar with the complaints handling policy and procedures.

ETF is dedicated to ensuring all in-country partners are equipped and skilled to respond appropriately to potential complaints as per this policy.

4. Definitions

4.1 Complaint

An expression of dissatisfaction made by a donor, or member of the public about any aspect of service, such as behaviour or decisions by staff, practices, policies or procedures provided by ETF. It may also be a complaint by a member of staff relating to a range of concerns including interpersonal conflict, disagreement of service application or volunteer behaviour.

5. General Principles

ETF is committed to addressing complaints by individuals or groups as based on its nature, meaning care will be taken so the procedure fits the requirements of the complaint. ETF is committed to:

- Recognising the individuals right to make a complaint, comment or suggestion about the level and quality of service, or staff
- Encouraging the submission of complaints about service or staff
- Providing an efficient, fair and accessible mechanism for the resolution of complaints
- To monitor and prioritise complaints in a timely manner
- To thoroughly collecting and recording data of complaints, identifying improvements of service and staff
- The provision of information about ETF's complaint handling process
- Promoting a positive attitude to the commitment to resolving complaints • Regularly reviewing ETF's complaint handling process to ensure it is efficiently delivering its outcomes



6. Responsibilities

ETF and its staff are committed to be fair, effective and efficient in complaint handling. The board and governing members of ETF must promote a culture that values complaints and their effective resolution. All staff must understand and comply with the adopted complaint handling practices and when dealing with complaints must demonstrate exemplary complaint handling practices.

6.1. Educating Volunteers and Partners

ETF recognises its responsibility to educate all persons involved in ETF's development activity of the complaints handling policy and procedure as well as their right to make a complaint.

All ETF directors and volunteers will be familiarised with this policy and procedures as part of induction programs. Personnel directly involved in the complaint handling will be trained to implement it fully.

All partners and community members in Timor-Leste will be provided with a simplified version of this policy in Tetun (local language) to the School Management Committee (SMC) equip them with the information regarding how and who to file complaints with during the socialisation phase of any projects. This will be discussed in the meeting with the community and representativeness in ETF to acknowledge any amendments or cultural considerations. It will include reference to ETF's website and email to access the full version available in English. ETF's in-country volunteers will act as the frontline responder to complaints from Timor-Leste partners and community members.

7. Processes

An effective complaints handling process is modelled on the principles of confidentiality, responsibility, efficiency, responsiveness and review. This is a representation of ETF's organisational culture.

7.1 Confidentiality

All complaints will be handled privately and carefully. In accordance to ETF's Privacy Policy Section 5.4, ETF will not disclose information about the individual without their consent to other parties. ETF will handle matters discreetly, and at the discretion of the individual. ETF will protect the identity of people making complaints where practical and appropriate. Personal information that identifies individuals will only be disclosed or used by ETF as permitted under ETF's Privacy Policy, and relevant confidentiality obligations.

7.2 Responsibility

The responsibility for the management and handling of complaints lies with ETF. It is ETF's obligation to respond and address complaints made to, or about ETF, regarding our services or

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staff, fairly and efficiently. This requires the provision of adequate support and direction to staff who are directly responsible for handling complaints. ETF is committed to including training on complaints handling in the initial induction session for new directors and volunteers, as well as yearly refresher training sessions. This training will equip directors and volunteers with the knowledge and skills to understand and implement ETF's complaints handling policy and procedures. Furthermore, ETF is responsible for encouraging staff to assist those responsible for handling complaints in order to resolve the issue promptly. ETF is responsible for recognising errors in service, or misbehaviour of staff, following complaints. ETF is responsible for identifying areas of improvement, and providing recommendations to reduce risk of (a repeated complaint). ETF accepts responsibility for misservice and mismanagement and following complaints, will strive to improve its procedures.

7.3 Efficiency

ETF is committed to efficiently assessing, resolving and following up complaints. This requires ETF to regularly review reports of complaint trends and issues arising from donors, members of the public, or staff. As such, ETF will provide adequate resources to ensure complaints are received and addressed accordingly. ETF also understands the value in providing a fair and accessible complaint procedure to donors, members of the public, and staff. ETF promotes the commitment to the resolution of complaints, and aims to conclude matters in a timely manner.

7.4 Responsiveness

ETF will ensure the complaint process is dealt with quickly and efficiently. ETF is committed to treating complainants with courtesy and striving to resolve complaints at the first point of contact. The timeline for all complaints is as follows:

- The complaint will be acknowledged to the individual submitting the complaint within 5 business days of being lodged. The complainant will be informed their complaint has been received and will be given all necessary information throughout the complaints handling process.
- The complaint and issue will be raised with ETF's Managing Director and/or Directors within 5 business days of being acknowledged. The complainant will be informed of any

delays.

- ETF will aim to resolve the case within 30 days of the complaint being acknowledged.

7.5 Escalation of Serious Incidents

ETF recognises not all complaints require the same level of investigation or priority. ETF is committed to identifying and addressing complaints of a serious nature in an appropriate and timely manner. In order to ensure this ETF implements a triage system for escalating serious incidents. Using this system assists with determining the priority of the complaint and how and who should respond.

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The receiver of the complaint will undergo the triage assessment process in consultation with a Director of ETF. This will be triaged in accordance with the Risk Matrix, and/or sought advice from the Finance, Risk and Audit Committee as to the nature of the complaint if it is not clear. If both volunteers believe the complaint is of a serious nature it should be escalated immediately to ETF's directors.

As part of this assessment, ETF will ensure to communicate with the complainant to clarify the details of the complaint and the outcome they are seeking.

7.5.1 Factors to Consider in Triage System

- The seriousness of the issues raised
- The complexity of the complaint
- Any need for urgent action, for example where there are health or safety concerns for any person
- Whether the complaint raises systemic issues, and the impact on the person and broader community
- The potential for the complaint to escalate
- Whether the complaint is about a director or volunteer, and needs to be handled by an independent, impartial person
- Whether the complaint involves other organisations

7.6 Referral Process for Complaints Outside of Policy Scope

ETF recognises that not all complaints fall within the scope of this policy or ETF's responsibilities. In this case, ETF is committed to informing the complainant as soon as possible and refer them to other agencies, organisations or government departments that may be able to assist.

7.7 Support for Survivors

ETF recognises the importance of supporting survivors throughout and after the complaints handling process. ETF is committed to providing appropriate assistance and referrals to external support organisations. This support can include medical, social, legal and financial assistance or referrals to such services.

8. Review

This policy shall be disseminated through an appropriate directive to all internal ETF stakeholders and necessary persons.

It does not form part of any contract of engagement and may be amended, replaced or revoked by ETF at any time in its absolute discretion.

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This policy will be reviewed every two years.



Complaints Handling Procedures

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Responsible person:	Mr Adam Hegedus Scheduled review date	27/04/2022

1. Complaints Procedure

1.1 Written Complaints

Written complaints may be sent to the official ETF address as specified on ETF's website or to an official email.

- Contact for Australian volunteers will be through this email address:
people@educatingthefuture.org
- Contact for Timor-Leste volunteer will be through this email address:
timorleste@educatingthefuture.org

The complainant may be asked to provide any required information that was not submitted with the written complaint. Therefore it is encouraged to attach relevant documents and materials to support the complaint, where applicable.

1.2 Verbal Complaints

Verbal complaints may be made by phone to the Managing Director on +614 32 994 885. Complaints can also be made in person directly to any ETF directors or volunteers. This includes in Timor-Leste to volunteers via accessible communication channels, used by members and stakeholders of communities ETF supports.

2. Complaint Handling Procedure

The receiving and management of complaints by the public and donors made to ETF or about ETF, regarding service, or volunteer conduct, follow the processes outlined in this policy, as well as, the following procedures.

2.1 Complaints Handling

- All complaints received by phone, email or in person must be recorded by ETF upon receipt.

- If the complaint is in relation to sexual exploitation, abuse or violence in accordance to ETF's Safeguarding & Prevention of Sexual Exploitation & Abuse (PSEA) Policy.
- ETF will, wherever possible, resolve the complaint at first point of contact but when unable to will immediately refer the complaint to a relevant member of ETF with authority to resolve the complaint.
- ETF will endeavour to resolve the complaint in its capacity, and will inform the complainant with updates of information as it comes available.

2.2 Procedures Regarding Complainant

- ETF must agree with the complainant the form the response will take (written, or oral).
- ETF must offer the option of anonymity.
- ETF must record the facts of the complaint;
 - The complainants name (if applicable), address and email or telephone number. ○ The relationship of the complainant to ETF (i.e donor, member of the public, ETF staff, mailing list member).
- ETF must inform the complainant of the complaints handling procedure and ETF's commitment to its principles. **As part of this obligation, ETF must inform the complainant of their right to raise a complaint externally with ACFID, should they be unsatisfied with ETF's internal complaint resolution.**

2.2 Internal Complaints

In the event of internal complaints by ETF staff, this will be referred to ETF's Leadership Team and must adhere to the policies and procedures as outlined. ETF will offer mediation and strive to conclude the issue efficiently and timely.

2.3 Procedure Principles

- ETF values accountability in response to complaints.
- ETF embodies respect and honesty.
- ETF will investigate the complaint of service and staff.

2.4. Confidential Documented Investigation Procedure

ETF is committed to ensure all complaints that undergo investigation are documented accurately, whilst maintaining the value of confidentiality. ETF will ensure an organisational record is kept of all misconduct complaints, noting the ability to de-identify complaints at request of the complainant or survivor.



3. Complaint Resolution Procedure

3.1 Frontline Complaint Resolution

ETF aims to resolve all complaints within this level on the front line. In all areas possible ETF will ensure that all staff will be adequately trained when responding to complaints.

3.2 Board Level Complaint Resolution

Where resolution of complaints cannot be achieved within level 1, ETF may decide to escalate the complaint to ETF's leadership team and board of directors. This level of complaint will provide for the following internal mechanisms; assessment and investigation of the complaint and any decisions made in regards to the complaint and then the facilitated resolution.

3.3 External Level Complaint Resolution

Where a person making a complaint is not satisfied with the outcome of their review, they will be advised of their ability to make a complaint or seek support from ACNC for an external review of the decision made by the directors of ETF.

If a complainant believes ETF has breached the ACFID Code of Conduct and has not satisfactorily resolved his/her complaint the complainant can be advised to report the complaint to ACFID. For information on how to contact ACFID and the avenues for making a complaint, the website has up-to-date information. Specifically, the contact details can be found here: <https://acfid.asn.au/content/how-make-complaint>.

Broadly, the external process is as follows:

1. **Step 1: Raise a complaint with the ETF internally;** Complaints are first raised with ETF internally. It is helpful to write a complaint letter/email as an initial record of engagement with our internal complaints handler.
2. **Step 2: Lodge a complaint with the ACFID Committee;** If you are not satisfied with the response, you can lodge a complaint with the Committee. In order to better manage

and potentially investigate any complaint, a written outline of the complaint and subsequent communication is preferred. If this is not possible, please talk to the **ACFID** Code Secretariat.

3. **Step 3: Submit the complaint.** Complaints against a signatory organisation under the ACFID Code of Conduct should:
 - a. include the complainant's name and contact details;
 - b. set out the basis of the complaint;
 - c. outline which aspects of the Code of Conduct you believe have been breached;
 - d. outline the outcome that you are seeking;
 - e. include all available supporting information.

The complainant will be asked to provide any required information that was not submitted. Any complaints that cannot meet the above criteria may be dismissed. Information about the complaint will be made available to the ACFID member.

Complaints should be marked 'confidential' and sent to either:

Email: Chair, ACFID Code of Conduct Committee at code@acfid.asn.au

Post: Chair, ACFID Code of Conduct Committee c/- ACFID, Private Bag 3, Deakin ACT 2600

4. Overview

- All complaints will be handled by ETF
- All complaints will be resolved, if not at first point of contact, in a timely manner
- All complaints will be recorded, following procedure and a complaints report will be compiled annually

Signed by:

Adam Alexander Hegedus

Managing Director

23/06/2020 (v3)

