

Volunteer Activities

Q. I want to perform volunteer work for a civic organization in my neighborhood. Is that a conflict of interest?

A. It's great that you want to help, but you must follow certain rules regarding possible conflicts of interests:

- ✓ The not-for-profit may not do business with your City agency or be supervised or regulated by your City agency, unless you have obtained approval (see below).
- ✓ All of the volunteer work must be done on your own time.
- ✓ You may not use any City letterhead, supplies, equipment, or personnel for your volunteer work.
- ✓ You may not take part in any business the not-for-profit has with the City.
- ✓ You may not be compensated in any way for your volunteer work. If you are compensated, that probably means you have a position with the not-for-profit, in which case you may need a **waiver** from the Board. See our "[Moonlighting](#)" leaflet.
- ✓ You may not use confidential City information nor may you use your City position to benefit your not-for-profit.

Q. The City agency I work for often has dealings with the organization I want to volunteer for. Is this a conflict of interest?

A. It could be. In such a case you must get prior approval from your agency head indicating that your volunteer work promotes the interests of the City.

Q. Do these same rules apply if all I do is read to a child for a literacy project that does business with my agency?

A. All of the rules apply, except one. If you do not have any policymaking or administrative responsibility at the not-for-profit organization and do not deal with the organization in your City job, then you do not have to get your agency head's approval to do your volunteer work.

Q. What if I'm offered a salary for my volunteer work?

A. Full-time City employees are generally prohibited from working for firms doing business with the City. In such a case you would need to get written approval from your agency head, and submit it to the Conflicts of Interest Board, which will consider whether to grant you a waiver.

Q. I have been asked to serve on the board of directors of a large not-for-profit organization. Is this a problem?

A. Serving on the board of directors is permissible. However, unless you get a waiver from the Conflicts Board, you may not be involved in business dealings between the non-profit and the City, including any discussions about that business at either your City agency or at the non-profit. The other rules listed above also apply.

Q. My not-for-profit organization is involved in fund-raising, which is an important issue. May I take part in these types of activities?

A. For most public servants, fund-raising for non-profits is permissible, as long as the activity is done on your own time, and you do not use your official position to assist the fund-raising efforts. ***Examples of prohibited use of position include asking a subordinate for a contribution, or asking for a contribution from a person or firm with whom you deal in your City job.*** Again, no public servant may use his or her position to obtain any privilege, financial or otherwise, for any not-for-profit with which the public servant has a position.

Q. I know I can't City time or resources for an outside job, but is it ever possible to use them for volunteer work?

A. Your agency may apply in writing to the Conflicts of Interest Board for permission to use limited amounts of City time, resources, and personnel (but not letterhead) for certain not-for-profit activities. Please call the Board for legal advice if you are interested.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, CONTACT
NEW YORK CITY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST BOARD
2 LAFAYETTE STREET, SUITE 1010
NEW YORK, NY 10007
212-442-1400 (TDD 212-442-1443)
OR VISIT THE BOARD'S WEB SITE AT
<http://nyc.gov/ethics>

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