

WHISTLE BLOWING POLICY

INTRODUCTION

1. This document outlines KIN's whistle blowing policy regarding misconduct or malpractice that have an adverse impact on KIN. The guidelines stated in this policy are adapted from The Institute of Internal Auditors Singapore's 2017 *Whistle-Blowing Policy and Procedures: A Guide for Charities and Institutions of a Public Character* (see [Appendix A](#)).

POLICY DETAILS

2. Policy Objectives and Scope. KIN is committed to a high standard of high transparency, integrity, compliance, and accountability. This policy aims to provide a formal, safe and confidential means through which employees, volunteers, or members of the public could, in good faith, report any misconduct or malpractice that have an adverse impact on KIN, so that the organisation may take any relevant action.
3. Policy Coverage. This policy covers serious concerns that could have a significant impact on KIN, including:
 - a. Fraudulent activity;
 - b. Incorrect financial reporting;
 - c. Unlawful activities;
 - d. Misconduct or unethical conduct, especially such behaviour towards people with disabilities.
4. Confidentiality. KIN is committed to protect any person who reports in good faith. Disciplinary actions will also be taken against those who intimidate, retaliate, discriminate or impose adverse employment consequences on the whistle-blower. In the spirit of confidentiality, KIN allows anonymous reporting. However, if necessary or lawful circumstances dictate the disclosure of the whistle-blower's identity, KIN shall seek the whistle-blower's consent. The Audit Subcommittee shall not only ensure proper confidentiality safeguards of the filed report, it shall also maintain the confidentiality of those involved in the case to the extent possible to meet the needs of the investigation.
5. Roles and Responsibilities. The Management Committee and Audit Subcommittee oversee whistleblowing practices in KIN. Where appropriate, they may be assisted by a designated staff member to ensure that procedures are carried out in accordance with this policy, and that the policy is operating effectively.
6. Reporting Channels. If employees, volunteers, or members of the public have cause to suspect serious concerns, a report should be made using the form provided in [Annex A](#). However, where filling up the report in Annex A is not

possible, alternative modes of reporting may be arranged. All reports received will be channelled to the President of the Management Committee and to members of the Audit Subcommittee. All reports or requests for alternative modes of reporting should be sent by e-mail to president@kin.org.sg. Alternatively, the report may be lodged directly with members of the Audit Subcommittee. You will receive an acknowledgement once the report has been viewed.

7. Assessment of Concerns. Assessment of the concern is based on the nature and severity of the concern raised and the credibility of the information, including the sources. The Audit Subcommittee (or a designated staff member) shall decide whether an investigation is required to examine the issue raised. For a serious concern (e.g. alleged criminal offence), the matter will be reported to an external agency following prevailing laws and regulations.
8. Investigation. The Audit Subcommittee or the Management Committee will set-up an investigation team, comprising at least three independent members (i.e. those who are not connected to the concern reported). Where appropriate, external advice may also be sought to assist in the investigation process. The investigation process establishes the investigation objective, gathers evidence, reports on the findings and provides recommendations. On receiving the investigation report, the Management Committee or Audit Subcommittee shall decide on the severity and authenticity of the concern, and the next course of action. The whistle-blower will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation, and if appropriate, of the final outcome. When the whistle-blower is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, he/she can raise the matter with adequate explanation to the Audit Subcommittee (or designated staff member), upon which KIN will examine the concern if there are reasonable grounds. To ensure proper closure of the case, there shall be a review of the investigation report and follow-up by the Audit Subcommittee (or designated staff member), with support provided by the Management Committee.
9. Documentation. All assessment of concerns, investigation reports and decisions made by the Management Committee or Audit Subcommittee and its outcomes shall be minuted and filed.
10. Communication. A full copy of this whistle blowing policy document will be made available on KIN's website. It must be read and understood by all Management Committee and Audit Subcommittee members upon the start of office. It is also provided to KIN employees. For assistance or clarification on whistle-blowing matters, employees should approach Human Resources team or the Executive Committee.

Approved by: Management Committee

Date: 4 June 2022

WHISTLE-BLOWER REPORT FORM

WHISTLE-BLOWER'S DETAILS		
(This section may be left blank if the whistle-blower wishes to remain anonymous.)		
Name: _____		
Designation: _____		
Department/Charity: _____		
Contact Number: _____		
Email Address: _____		
Can you be contacted for more information?: Yes / No (please delete as required)		
ALLEGED PARTY'S / PARTIES' DETAILS		
(Name, Designation, Department)		
WITNESS/ES' DETAILS (IF ANY)		
(Name, Designation, Department, Contact Number, Email Address; Can the witness/es be contacted for more information?)		
CONCERN		
Describe the alleged misconduct and how you have come to know about it		
1. What misconduct happened?		
2. Who committed the misconduct?		
3. When did it happen and when did you notice it?		
4. Where did it happen?		
5. Have you approached the alleged person? If yes, what did they say?		
6. Is there any evidence of the misconduct that you can provide?		
7. Were there other people involved? If yes, who are they?		
8. Do you have any other details or information which would assist us in the investigation?		
9. Have you reported the incident internally or through any other channels? If yes, to whom have you made the report?		
DATE / SIGNATURE		
Name	Signature	Date

Please email the completed form to president@kin.org.sg, or any member of the Audit Subcommittee.

The Institute of Internal Auditors Singapore

*Whistle-Blowing Policy and Procedures:
A Guide for Charities and Institutions of a Public Character
(2017)*

Unless otherwise stated in this policy document,
KIN's Management Committee and Audit Subcommittee
should, where helpful, seek to follow
the best-practice guidelines outlined in this document.

A GUIDE FOR CHARITIES AND
INSTITUTIONS OF A PUBLIC CHARACTER



WHISTLE- BLOWING POLICY AND PROCEDURES



*The Institute of
Internal Auditors
Singapore*

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Disclaimer

The information contained in this document is provided for general/informational purposes. This document is not intended to provide definitive answers to specific individual circumstances and, as such, is only intended to be used as a guide. The Institute of Internal Auditors Singapore (IIA Singapore) accepts no responsibility for any loss which may arise from information contained in this document. This document is not a substitute for legal or any other advice. IIA Singapore does not provide such advice and makes no warranty as to any legal or other results through its publication of this document.

Introduction

Purpose and scope

In April 2017, a revised Code of Governance for Charities and Institutions of a Public Character (the “Code”) was released by the Charity Council. Under the revised Code, Singapore charities in the enhanced tier and Institutions of a Public Character (IPCs) in the enhanced and the advanced tier¹ (hereinafter referred to as the charities) should disclose in their annual reports whether they have a whistle-blowing policy for financial years beginning on or after 1st January 2018.

This requirement aims to encourage employees and other stakeholders to report concerns on misconduct or malpractice (i.e. improper, illegal or negligent behaviour) in good faith, without malice or personal benefit. Without the fear of reprisal, discrimination or adverse consequences, it enables charities to take timely and appropriate actions for any allegations, thereby propagating a culture of probity, respect and transparency.

This guide provides assistance to the charities to develop a whistle-blowing policy and procedures. A policy can be defined as a set of basic principles and associated guidelines, formulated and enforced by the governing body of a charity, to direct and limit its actions in pursuit of long-term goals. Procedures or arrangements are the specific methods employed to express policy in action in day-to-day operations of the charity.

How to use this guide?

This guide comprises three main sections:

1. A background of what is, and what is not, a whistle-blowing concern and an understanding of what a whistle-blowing process looks like.
2. Whistle-blowing policy which provides the framework to drive the whistle-blowing process and practices in a charity. It provides an overview of the key constituents of a whistle-blowing policy and why they are important. What are the key considerations for each key component when developing a whistle-blowing policy?
3. Guidance on developing a whistle-blowing policy. In essence, what are the attributes of a good policy? A sample whistle-blowing policy has been included as reference.

A whistle-blowing concern reporting form is provided on Page 17. This guide is not meant to cover all possible whistle-blowing contexts. Users should adapt and exercise judgement and discretion in the use of this guide.

¹ Charities in the enhanced tier: Gross annual receipts or a total expenditure of S\$10 million or more.
IPCs in the enhanced tier: Gross annual income or total expenditure of S\$500,000 and up to S\$10 million.
IPCs in the advanced tier: Gross annual income or total expenditure of S\$10 million or more.

Whistle-blowing

What is a whistle-blowing concern?

To whistle-blow is to report concerns by employees or other stakeholders in good faith on misconduct or malpractice that may be detrimental to the charity and/or public interest. However, grievances of a personal nature are not a whistle-blowing concern. The definitions of these two terms and illustrations are provided in Table 1.

Grievance	Whistle-blowing concern
The concern is of an individual or personal matter (or what is not a whistle-blowing concern). This is usually handled by the respective head of department and/or the head of human resource.	The concern is about non-personal matters such as the charity, other employees, suppliers, customers and the public at large.
Examples	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms of employment. • Remuneration and performance appraisal. Allegations of unfair treatment at work. • Bullying and harassment. • Disagreements among employees; and between employees and management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to comply with legal obligations. • Threats to health or safety of employees and/or the public. • Fraud (e.g. theft, corruption, misrepresentation, bribery, kickback or embezzlement). • Abuse of power. • A deliberate attempt to cover up any of the above.

Table 1: Differences between a Grievance and Whistle-blowing Concern²

Why is whistle-blowing important?

A charity’s eco-system comprises many stakeholders, processes and a multitude of interactions among its constituents. While the Board³ and management normally have in place systems of internal controls to ensure that the people do the right thing and do the right things right, in reality, misconduct and malpractice can, and do occur.

Employees and other relevant stakeholders (e.g. customers and suppliers) are key players in this eco-system. As they are positioned at the forefront of activities in the charities, they are also well-placed to be aware of acts of misconduct and malpractice. When they whistle-blow, that is, they raise their concerns

² Adapted from NIAO. November 2014. Whistleblowing in the Public Sector – A Good Guide for Workers and Employers; and NHS Employer. March 2017. A Manager’s Guide to Raising (Whistleblowing) Concerns.

³ As defined in the Code of Governance to be “the governing body responsible for overseeing and managing a charity. It is also sometimes known as council or management committee”.

to the appropriate channels, these concerns may provide a useful warning sign of an actual or impending risk facing the charity and may enable its aversion. Therefore, the ability and willingness of these interested parties to whistle-blow is highly important.

What does a whistle-blowing process look like?

There are number of ways to raise whistle-blowing concerns – internal and external reporting channels. The internal whistle-blower (e.g. employee) can report to his/her direct supervisor, use the internal channels (e.g. reporting hotline, mail, and online form) or report to an external agency (e.g. Office of the Commissioner of Charities). Depending on the severity of the alleged concern (e.g. when the concern involves a criminal offence), the charity can refer the matter to the relevant external agency. On the other hand, the external whistle-blower can raise the concern either through the internal and/or external channels (see Diagram 1).

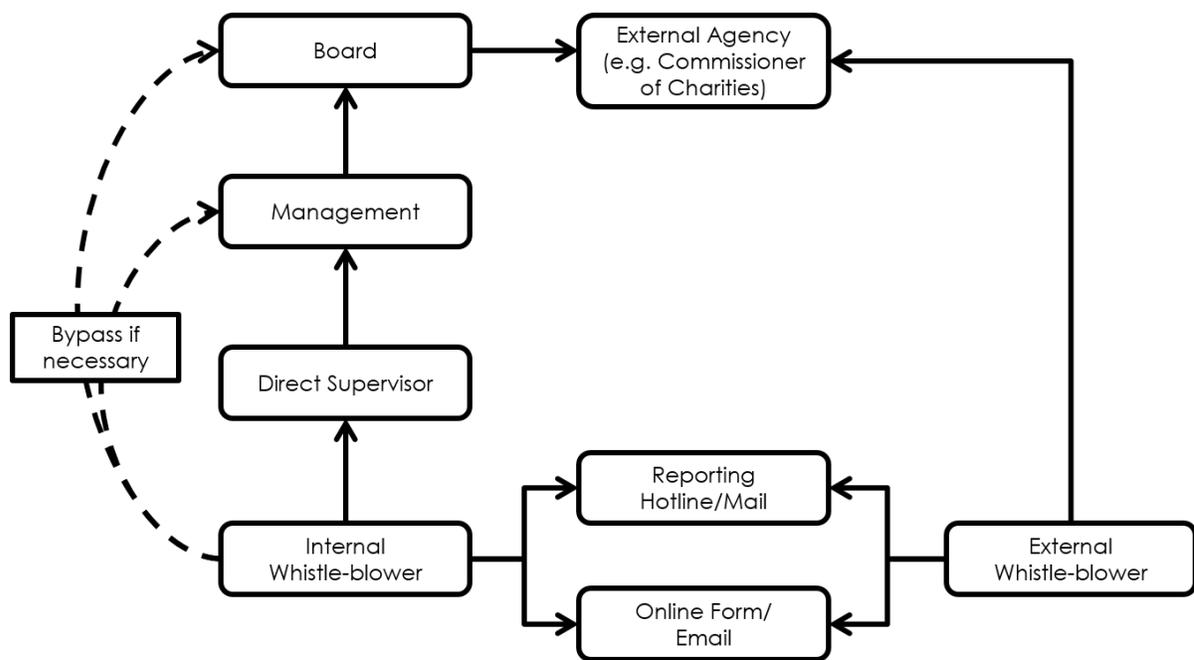


Diagram 1: Ways to Raise Concerns for Employees and Other Stakeholders

There are many whistle-blowing processes in practice. For simplicity and as shown in Diagram 2, there are four steps:

1. Initiation (i.e. raising of the concern);
2. Assessment of the concern;
3. Investigation to substantiate the concern; and
4. Measures to ensure that the recommended course of action is carried out, including proper follow-up, notification of the outcome to the whistle-blower for non-anonymous concern raised and closure of the case.

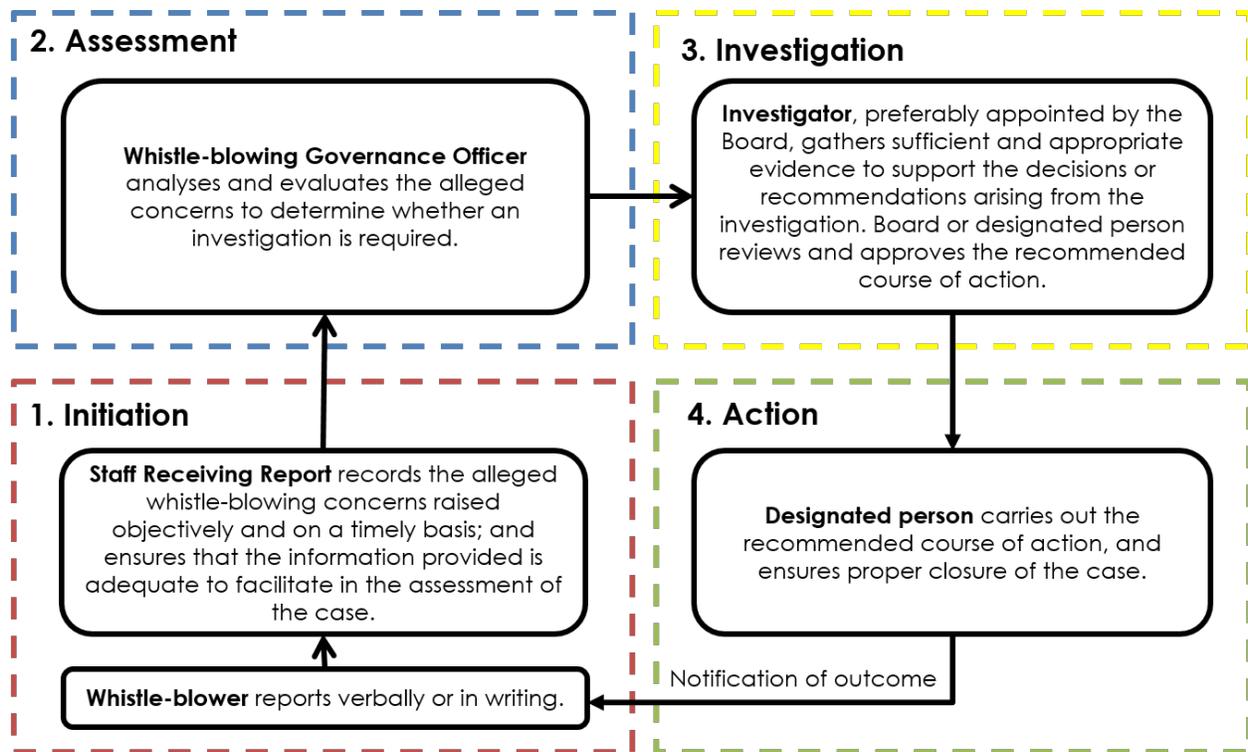


Diagram 2: Overview of a Whistle-blowing Process

Whistle-blowing policy

What is a whistle-blowing policy?

The Board articulates its direction and intent on whistle-blowing through the whistle-blowing policy. It is designed to provide a clear tone of commitment to employees and other stakeholders that whistle-blowing concerns are important to sound governance and that they are taken seriously by the charity. They are encouraged to raise their concerns with an assurance of confidentiality and protection in the policy. It articulates how the whistle-blowing process handles concerns from the initiation of the concern to the closure of the case. Last, but not least, the policy includes a framework of accountability and responsibility, competency, monitoring and review to ensure the design and operational effectiveness of the whistle-blowing processes and practices in the charity.

Why is a whistle-blowing policy important?

A formal policy provides clarity and transparency on the whistle-blowing process as well as the framework to enhance its effectiveness. It keeps employees and other stakeholders on “the same page” as the Board in relation to its appetite on misconduct or malpractice. The desired outcome is to develop and embed a culture of openness in the reporting of misconduct or malpractice.

What are the key components of a whistle-blowing policy?

The decision on the contents and details of a policy to suit the needs of the charity requires judgement. Seven key components are commonly included in the policy:

Component	Purpose
1. Policy objectives	Set the tone and what it aims to achieve
2. Policy scope	Stakeholders covered in the policy
3. Roles & responsibilities	Structure of accountability and responsibility
4. Confidentiality & protection	Underpinning ethos of whistle-blowing practice
5. Whistle-blowing process	Key steps in the whistle-blowing process
6. Communications & training	Update and equip with proper competencies
7. Monitor & review	Ensure the whistle-blowing practice is relevant and effective

Each key component has its purpose and needs contents (i.e. the information to be included). This guide articulates the specific information to be considered and includes illustrations⁴ on how they are expounded in a policy.⁵

Component 1: Policy Objectives



What to include?		
Define whistle-blowing concern	Importance of whistle-blowing	Objectives of the policy
Illustration		
<p>To whistle-blow is to report concerns by employees or other stakeholders in good faith on misconduct or malpractice that may be detrimental to the charity and/or public interest. Whistle-blowing is an essential part of sound governance.</p> <p>The policy addresses the Board’s commitment to proper ethical behaviour where employees and other stakeholders are encouraged to report concerns without fear of reprisal or unfair treatment.</p> <p>The objectives of the policy are⁶:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a formal process to raise and handle whistle-blowing concerns and a framework to support the process. • To encourage employees and other stakeholders to report improper, unethical and inappropriate behaviour. • To provide assurance that all reports will be properly addressed, treated with confidentiality and there are adequate whistle-blower safeguards from reprisal in any form. • To promote and develop a culture of accountability, integrity and transparency. 		

⁴ The components, elements or information to be included within each component and illustrations are not meant to be exhaustive. Charities must adapt, exclude or include additional components and/or elements, where appropriate, to suit its contents and needs.

⁵ Adapted from The Hong Kong Institute of Chartered Secretaries. December 2010. Whistleblowing Toolkit.

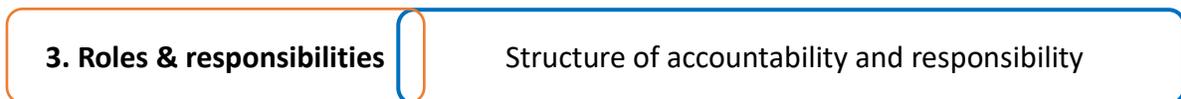
⁶ Adapted from FBN Holdings. 2016. FBN Holdings – Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure.

Component 2: Policy Scope



What to include?	
Extent of policy coverage	
Illustration	
This policy is designed to enable employees and other relevant stakeholders to report any alleged concerns in good faith on misconduct or malpractice.	

Component 3: Roles & Responsibilities



What to include?	
Whistle-blowing structure	Roles and responsibilities
Illustration	
The Board oversees whistle-blowing practices in the charity. This oversight responsibility requires the establishment of a whistle-blowing policy that is relevant to the context of the charity.	
The Board is usually assisted by a staff in charge (or Whistle-blowing Governance Officer) of the whistle-blowing process who ensures that the procedures are carried out in accordance with the policy.	
In essence, there are many stakeholders involved in the whistle-blowing process. These include the Board, whistle-blower, alleged party, staff receiving the report, investigator, Whistle-blowing Governance Officer and Head of Internal Audit.	

Component 4: Confidentiality & Protection

4. Confidentiality & protection

Underpinning ethos of whistle-blowing practice

4(a) Confidentiality: What to include?		
Commitment to confidentiality	Anonymous reporting	Special circumstances for identity disclosure
<p style="text-align: center;">Illustration</p> <p>The charity respects the confidentiality of the whistle-blower and is committed to preserving confidentiality by keeping the report and case information secure and accessible only to designated persons. Aligned with the spirit of confidentiality, the charity allows anonymous reporting.</p> <p>Confidentiality has two sides. Concurrently, the Whistle-blowing Governance Officer should ensure proper confidentiality safeguards of the filed report, while maintaining the confidentiality of those involved in the case.</p> <p>If necessary or lawful circumstances dictate the disclosure of the whistle-blower's identity, the charity must seek the whistle-blower's consent.</p>		

4(b). Protection: What to include?		
Commitment to protection	Types of protection	Sanctions
<p style="text-align: center;">Illustration</p> <p>The charity does not condone any reprisal, discrimination or harassment against whistle-blowers who report in good faith. It is committed to protecting whistle-blowers from threats to employment and any other threats of retaliatory action. Disciplinary actions will be taken against those who retaliate, harass or discriminate against whistle-blowers.</p>		

Component 5: Whistle-blowing Process

5. Whistle-blowing process

Key steps in the whistle-blowing process

5(a). Whistle-blowing process: Initiation		
Purpose: 1 st step in the whistle-blowing process.		
What to include?		
Proper report contents	Authorised personnel	Method of reporting
Illustration		
<p>The ambit of reporting covers whistle-blowing concerns made in good faith either internally or externally. Disciplinary action will be taken against employees for any false report made for personal gain or malicious motive.</p> <p>The report can be made verbally or in writing using the standard “Form to Report a Whistle-Blowing Concern” (see Page 17) which contains information on what to report. For all reports, including those raised anonymously, the charity will maintain a proper register of all concerns received. It will send an acknowledgement of receipt to the whistle-blower, if the identity is provided, and all reported concerns will be assessed by the charity. The whistle-blower should also be provided with subsequent information on the follow-up processes (e.g. assessment, investigation and action) as appropriate.</p> <p>Where the identity of the alleged person is known, the guidance should include reasonable timeframes for: (a) the escalation of alleged concern to the Whistle-blowing Governance Officer (or any designated person) (e.g. within 24 hours); (b) the formal acknowledgement of receipt (e.g. within two weeks); (c) any updates; and (d) the closure of the inquiry. More specifically, (a) and (d) are considered in relation to anonymous alleged concern.</p> <p>Typically, an employee is expected to raise the concerns with their immediate superior, who will escalate the matter to the Whistle-blowing Governance Officer (or the staff in charge of whistle-blowing).</p> <p>In cases where the immediate superior is reluctant to raise the concern or is the subject of the concern, the whistle-blower can raise the concern directly to the Whistle-blowing Governance Officer. In cases where key management is involved or the concern is exceptionally serious, the whistle-blower can report to the chairman of the Board or designated Board member (e.g. chairman of the Audit Committee).</p> <p>The whistle-blower can bypass the internal reporting mechanism and report the concern to the relevant external agency (e.g. Office of the Commissioner of Charities). Safeguards to protect confidentiality must be in place to protect the whistle-blower from reprisal, discrimination and other adverse consequences.</p>		

5(b). Whistle-blowing process: Assessment

Purpose: 2nd step in the whistle-blowing process.

What to include?

Assessment personnel

The assessment criteria

The outcome

Illustration

The Whistle-blowing Governance Officer (or a designated staff) is responsible for the assessment of all the concerns raised, including those which are anonymous in nature. The assessment examines whether the concerns raised are appropriate (i.e. they are not grievances), information provided is adequate to facilitate in the assessment and the nature of concerns (e.g. threats to health and safety, breach of laws, ethical code and fraud) to establish their severity and implication to the charity.

When the alleged person's identify is not known, attention should be made in relation to the likelihood of substantiating the allegation from the information provided and any relevant sources.

All assessments and analysis are to be consistent and properly documented, with decisions and outcomes clearly communicated to the appropriate parties on a timely basis.

Inappropriate concerns will not be investigated and the responsible staff may be subject to disciplinary action. Except for anonymous reports, the whistle-blowers may be contacted for clarification or further details on the information provided in the "Form to Report a Whistle-Blowing Concern".

5(c). Whistle-blowing process: Investigation

Purpose: 3rd step in the whistle-blowing process.

What to include?

The investigator	The investigation team	All other parties involved
The investigation process	The outcome	Recourse availability

Illustration

The Whistle-blowing Governance Officer (or a designated staff) is responsible for the appointment of the investigator and members of the investigation team, where appropriate. If required, the Board or the Audit Committee should endorse the recommendation before formal appointment.

The charity will assure the independence of the investigator in the performance of the investigation. The investigation team is empowered with the appropriate authority and must have the integrity and competency to gather and document facts, while preventing leakage of information. The charity will provide adequate support, cooperation and access of information to the investigator.

The parties involved in the investigation would be determined by the investigator depending on the nature, extent, timeline and complexity of the case. Some possible parties may include the whistle-blower, alleged party, witnesses, key staff, management, Board members and external parties. Further information may be sought from the whistle-blower and the relevant parties in the investigation.

The charity's investigation process comprises establishing the investigation objective, gathering of evidence, reporting on the findings and providing recommendations. The duration of the investigation is dependent on the nature of the concern, evidence available and complexity of the case. The whistle-blower will be informed as soon as the investigation outcome is available.

The investigation report will be reviewed by the Board or Audit Committee or a designated committee (e.g. comprising Head of Human Resources, Chief Internal Auditor and other key personnel). Where appropriate, external advice may be sought to assist in the investigation and review of the investigation report (including the findings and recommendations).

The possible outcomes include:

- i. There are no grounds for the concern. Hence, there are no further actions required;
- ii. There are grounds for the concern. Disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the charity's disciplinary policies (e.g. reprimand, suspension and termination of employment). In addition, remedial measures will be taken to minimise recurrence; and
- iii. There may be grounds for a possible criminal offence. The Board or Audit Committee should be informed and legal advice may be sought on whether the matter should be referred to the relevant authority for the appropriate action. In all these circumstances, the whistle-blower will be notified of the outcome accordingly.

When the whistle-blower is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, he/she can raise the matter with adequate explanation to the Whistle-blowing Governance Officer (or designated staff). If

there are reasonable grounds, the charity will examine the concern. The whistle-blower can also raise this concern to an external party.

5(d). Whistle-blowing process: Action

Purpose: 4th step in the whistle-blowing process.

What to include?

Timeline for recommended course of action	Proper closure	Review and follow-up
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Illustration

In cases where there are no grounds for the concern, the Whistle-blowing Governance Officer (or a designated staff) will inform the whistle-blower of the outcome and close the case. Where there is ground for the concern, the Whistle-blowing Governance Officer must ensure that there is a person responsible for disciplinary matters (e.g. Head of Human Resources) and another person responsible for designing and implementing the remedial measures, which should be both practical and feasible.

When the matter has to be escalated to an external party, there should be an acknowledgement of the receipt of the referral. The timeline for the implementation of the recommendation should be established to provide an indication on the closure of each case.

There should be a review and follow-up by the Whistle-blowing Governance Officer (or a designated staff) with support provided by the Board or Audit Committee to ensure the proper closure of the case.

Component 6: Communications & Training

6. Communications & training	Update and equip with proper competencies
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What to include?		
Access to the policy	Avenues for clarification	Training and assistance
Illustration		
<p>The whistle-blowing policy is provided to employees by the Head of Human Resources, whistle-blowing Governance Officer or a designated staff. It is also accessible to all interested parties in the charity’s website.</p> <p>The whistle-blowing policy is communicated to all staff when they join the charity and they are briefed on any updates as appropriate. For assistance on whistle-blowing matters, employees should approach the Head of Human Resources, Whistle-blowing Governance Officer or the designated staff.</p> <p>The charity supports the training of staff involved in whistle-blowing to stay abreast of developments and to be properly equipped to handle whistle-blowing matters.</p>		

Component 7: Monitor & Review

7. Monitor & review	Ensure the whistle-blowing practice is relevant and effective
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What to include?	
Effective monitoring methods	Periodic review interval
Illustration	
<p>The Whistle-blowing Governance Officer or a designated staff monitors the status of the whistle-blowing process to ensure that it is operating as designed. Some examples include the trend of concerns raised compared to previous years, the number of concerns that failed to meet the established timeline, to record and report to the Whistle-blowing Governance Office, and the number of cases where the investigation progress is behind schedule. The monitored results should be reported to the Board or the Audit Committee.</p> <p>Internal audit or an independent party will review the whistle-blowing policy for design effectiveness and will check that the procedures are operationally effective. The review is conducted annually or as directed by the Board or Audit Committee.</p>	

Guidance on developing a whistle-blowing policy

What are the attributes of a robust whistle-blowing policy?

A policy is an important governance document. Some attributes of an effective policy are:

- It is easily understood.
- It has clearly defined objectives and is aligned with the charity's goals and strategy.
- It is relevant to the changing charity contexts.
- The key stakeholders are appropriately consulted in its development and update.
- It is easily accessible and clearly communicated to the relevant stakeholders.

The contents and details in the sample below may be adapted by charities to develop a whistle-blowing policy to suit their contexts and needs. It is drawn up from a selection of Singapore charities⁷.

1. Policy objectives and scope	The organisation is committed to a high standard of transparency, integrity, compliance and accountability. The whistle-blowing policy aims to provide a means through which employees or members of the public could, in good faith, report any activity that infringes on the organisation's code of conduct or violates the law so that the organisation may take the relevant action.
2. Whistle-blowing concerns	The policy covers serious concerns that could have a significant impact on the organisation. These include (a) fraudulent activity; (b) incorrect financial reporting; (c) unlawful activities; and (d) misconduct or unethical conduct.
3. Confidentiality and protection	Reports of whistle-blowing concerns are kept confidential to the extent possible to meet the needs of the investigation. The organisation is committed to protect a person who reports in good faith from intimidation, retaliation or adverse employment consequence.
4. Reporting channels	If employees or members of the public have cause to suspect serious concerns, a report should be made through telephone, by e-mail or by postal mail. All reports received will be channelled to the Board chairman and members of the Audit Committee. Alternatively, the report may be lodged directly with any of these individuals.
5. Assessment of concerns raised	Assessment of the concern is based on the nature and severity of the concern raised and the credibility of the information, including the sources. The Audit Committee or a designated staff shall decide whether an investigation is required to examine the issues raised. For a serious concern (e.g. alleged criminal offence), the matter should be reported to an external agency.
6. Investigation	On receiving a report, the Board or the Audit Committee shall decide on the severity and authenticity of the concern. When there are issues to be further examined, the Board or the Audit Committee will set-up an Investigation Team, comprising at least three independent members (i.e. those who are not connected to the concern reported). The whistle-blower will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation and, if appropriate, of the final outcome.

⁷ Adapted from the whistle-blowing policies of the National Kidney Foundation*, Singapore Red Cross Society**, Singapore Children's Society** and SPD*** which were retrieved from <https://www.nkfs.org/about-nkf/background/corporate-governance/whistle-blowing-policy/>, <https://www.redcross.sg/whistle-blower-policy.html>, [https://www.childrensociety.org.sg/resources/ck/files/Code%20of%20conduct%20%20Staff%20and%20Committee%20\(revised%20May%202015\).pdf](https://www.childrensociety.org.sg/resources/ck/files/Code%20of%20conduct%20%20Staff%20and%20Committee%20(revised%20May%202015).pdf) and <http://www.spd.org.sg/whistle-blowing-policy.html> respectively.

*Winner of 2016 Charity Governance Awards. **Winners of 2016 Charity Transparency Awards. *** Winner of 2016 Charity Governance Awards and 2016 Charity Transparency Awards.

An illustration of roles and responsibilities

Key stakeholders	Responsibilities
Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure the effective establishment, review and management (e.g. reporting, investigation and follow-up) of the whistle-blowing policy and arrangements. Should regularly review and discuss all whistle-blowing concerns. The chairman of the Board or designated director(s) may serve as the Whistle-blower Governance Officer for concerns raised on key management (e.g. head of the organisation). In practice, the above roles may be delegated to the Audit Committee.
Whistle-blower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expected to act in good faith and should refrain from making false accusations when reporting his/her concern(s). They should also contribute fully to the investigation efforts (e.g. by providing further information/evidence).
Alleged Party (The person of interest in the whistle-blowing case)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a duty to cooperate with the investigator, including the provision of relevant information, documents or other materials as may be required by the investigator.
Point of Contact/Staff receiving the report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To receive, record and report the whistle-blowing incident to the person in charge of whistle-blowing or the appropriately assigned individual. At all times, confidentiality of the case must be maintained.
Investigator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure investigations are conducted in an independent, diligent and unbiased manner. To regularly report findings to the Whistle-blowing Governance Office, Board or Audit Committee (as appropriate). The investigator and team (if required) must be independent, competent and refrain from discussing or disclosing confidential information under investigation. The investigation may include external parties with the appropriate competencies to assist in the investigation.
Whistle-blowing Governance Officer	<p>The whistle-blowing Governance Office is in charge of the whistle-blowing process. Where the concerns reported involve key management, the Board will appoint one or two members of the Board (e.g. Audit Committee chair and other directors) to assume this role.</p> <p>Some of the responsibilities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that sufficient inquiry is conducted into every concern received. The case is investigated by a qualified investigator who is independent of the area/function where the concern is alleged to have taken place. To recommend whether an external qualified investigator independent of the organisation is required. The action taken in response to the assessment/investigation is appropriate to the circumstances. There are adequate safeguards to protect the whistle-blower from reprisal, discrimination or harassment. A whistle-blower Protection Officer may be appointed to the task. To ensure the adequate measures are in place to protect the confidentiality of the whistle-blower and information about the case.
Head of Internal Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where the charities or IPCs have an internal audit function, the internal audit provides assurance to the Board on the design and operating effectiveness of the whistle-blowing policy and arrangements. The other roles that internal audit can assume may include the handling of whistle-blowing complaints, whistle-blowing investigation as well as providing advice on the relevant internal controls in the whistle-blowing process.

A sample form to report a whistle-blowing concern

Whistle-Blower Report Form	
Whistle-blower's details	
This section may be left blank if the whistle-blower wishes to remain anonymous)	
Name, Designation, Department/Charity, Contact number and E-mail address	
Can you be contacted for more information?	
Alleged Party's details	
Name, Designation, Department, Contact number and E-mail address	
Witness' details (If any)	
Name, Designation, Department/Charity, Contact number and E-mail address	
Concern/Complaint	
Describe the misconduct and how you have come to know about it.	
1. What misconduct occurred?	
2. Who committed the misconduct?	
3. When did it happen and when did you notice it?	
4. Where did it happen?	
5. Have you approached the person? If yes, what did he say?	
6. Is there any evidence that you could provide us?	
7. Were other people involved? If yes, who are they?	
8. Do you have any other details or information which would assist us in the investigation?	
9. Have you reported the incident internally or through any other channels? If yes, to whom have you made the report?	
Date:	Signature:

Who to submit the form to? E.g. Staff name, address and contact		
How to submit the form?		
(a) Electronic form via charity's website [to also include the website address]	(b) Email [to include the name of contact person, telephone number, hand phone number and email address]	(c) Mail [to include the name of contact person, telephone number, hand phone number and address]

Five key points to responsible whistle-blowing⁸

1. **Understand what whistle-blowing concerns mean**

Whistle-blowing concerns relate to misconduct or malpractice that have an adverse impact on the charity. Some examples include financial malpractices or impropriety such as fraud, corruption, bribery, kickback, theft and concealment; failure to comply with regulations, laws and ethical guidelines; threats to health and safety in the work environment; any form of criminal activity; and abuses of corporate resources.

2. **Gather and document the evidence**

Maintain a proper note of all conversations and keep a file of all written communications, relevant documents and details of any incidents (e.g. dates, time, places, parties involved, incidents, etc.).

Be truthful, act in good faith, state the facts.

Be prepared to be questioned by the charity and substantiate the concerns.

3. **Comply with the charity's policy and procedures**

Be familiar and comply with the charity's policy and procedures on raising concerns. These will ensure that adequate information is provided and the matter is attended to on a timely basis.

4. **Exercise due diligence**

Allegations of misconduct or malpractice are serious matters. They involve time, effort and resources of the charity, whistle-blowers and alleged parties. As such, due diligence must be exercised to establish the veracity of the allegation.

5. **Seek advice when required**

Seek assistance from the relevant staff (e.g. staff designated in the charity to assist employees and other stakeholders in lodging their concerns) or external legal advice, where appropriate.

⁸ Adapted from Government Accountability Project. 2017. Whistleblowing Survival Tips. <https://www.whistleblower.org/whistleblowing-survival-tips> and David Owen. The Guardian. 1 October 2014. Five tips for whistle-blowers by senior civil servant who took on the Treasury. <https://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2014/oct/01/whistleblowers-public-sector-david-owen-treasury-five-tips>

Conclusion

Whistle-blowing policies and arrangements are an integral part of sound and robust corporate governance and must be aligned with the charity's goals and strategy. The guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive and prescriptive, but principle-driven to allow adaptation to their specific needs, in form and substance.

The Institute of Internal Auditors Singapore (IIA Singapore). September 2017.

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A GUIDE FOR CHARITIES AND
INSTITUTIONS OF A PUBLIC CHARACTER



WHISTLE- BLOWING POLICY AND PROCEDURES



*The Institute of
Internal Auditors
Singapore*

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Disclaimer

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Introduction

Purpose and scope

In April 2017, a revised Code of Governance for Charities and Institutions of a Public Character (the “Code”) was released by the Charity Council. Under the revised Code, Singapore charities in the enhanced tier and Institutions of a Public Character (IPCs) in the enhanced and the advanced tier¹ (hereinafter referred to as the charities) should disclose in their annual reports whether they have a whistle-blowing policy for financial years beginning on or after 1st January 2018.

This requirement aims to encourage employees and other stakeholders to report concerns on misconduct or malpractice (i.e. improper, illegal or negligent behaviour) in good faith, without malice or personal benefit. Without the fear of reprisal, discrimination or adverse consequences, it enables charities to take timely and appropriate actions for any allegations, thereby propagating a culture of probity, respect and transparency.

This guide provides assistance to the charities to develop a whistle-blowing policy and procedures. A policy can be defined as a set of basic principles and associated guidelines, formulated and enforced by the governing body of a charity, to direct and limit its actions in pursuit of long-term goals. Procedures or arrangements are the specific methods employed to express policy in action in day-to-day operations of the charity.

How to use this guide?

This guide comprises three main sections:

1. A background of what is, and what is not, a whistle-blowing concern and an understanding of what a whistle-blowing process looks like.
2. Whistle-blowing policy which provides the framework to drive the whistle-blowing process and practices in a charity. It provides an overview of the key constituents of a whistle-blowing policy and why they are important. What are the key considerations for each key component when developing a whistle-blowing policy?
3. Guidance on developing a whistle-blowing policy. In essence, what are the attributes of a good policy? A sample whistle-blowing policy has been included as reference.

A whistle-blowing concern reporting form is provided on Page 17. This guide is not meant to cover all possible whistle-blowing contexts. Users should adapt and exercise judgement and discretion in the use of this guide.

¹ Charities in the enhanced tier: Gross annual receipts or a total expenditure of S\$10 million or more.
IPCs in the enhanced tier: Gross annual income or total expenditure of S\$500,000 and up to S\$10 million.
IPCs in the advanced tier: Gross annual income or total expenditure of S\$10 million or more.

Whistle-blowing

What is a whistle-blowing concern?

To whistle-blow is to report concerns by employees or other stakeholders in good faith on misconduct or malpractice that may be detrimental to the charity and/or public interest. However, grievances of a personal nature are not a whistle-blowing concern. The definitions of these two terms and illustrations are provided in Table 1.

Grievance	Whistle-blowing concern
The concern is of an individual or personal matter (or what is not a whistle-blowing concern). This is usually handled by the respective head of department and/or the head of human resource.	The concern is about non-personal matters such as the charity, other employees, suppliers, customers and the public at large.
Examples	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms of employment. • Remuneration and performance appraisal. Allegations of unfair treatment at work. • Bullying and harassment. • Disagreements among employees; and between employees and management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to comply with legal obligations. • Threats to health or safety of employees and/or the public. • Fraud (e.g. theft, corruption, misrepresentation, bribery, kickback or embezzlement). • Abuse of power. • A deliberate attempt to cover up any of the above.

Table 1: Differences between a Grievance and Whistle-blowing Concern²

Why is whistle-blowing important?

A charity's eco-system comprises many stakeholders, processes and a multitude of interactions among its constituents. While the Board³ and management normally have in place systems of internal controls to ensure that the people do the right thing and do the right things right, in reality, misconduct and malpractice can, and do occur.

Employees and other relevant stakeholders (e.g. customers and suppliers) are key players in this eco-system. As they are positioned at the forefront of activities in the charities, they are also well-placed to be aware of acts of misconduct and malpractice. When they whistle-blow, that is, they raise their concerns

² Adapted from NIAO. November 2014. Whistleblowing in the Public Sector – A Good Guide for Workers and Employers; and NHS Employer. March 2017. A Manager's Guide to Raising (Whistleblowing) Concerns.

³ As defined in the Code of Governance to be "the governing body responsible for overseeing and managing a charity. It is also sometimes known as council or management committee".

to the appropriate channels, these concerns may provide a useful warning sign of an actual or impending risk facing the charity and may enable its aversion. Therefore, the ability and willingness of these interested parties to whistle-blow is highly important.

What does a whistle-blowing process look like?

There are number of ways to raise whistle-blowing concerns – internal and external reporting channels. The internal whistle-blower (e.g. employee) can report to his/her direct supervisor, use the internal channels (e.g. reporting hotline, mail, and online form) or report to an external agency (e.g. Office of the Commissioner of Charities). Depending on the severity of the alleged concern (e.g. when the concern involves a criminal offence), the charity can refer the matter to the relevant external agency. On the other hand, the external whistle-blower can raise the concern either through the internal and/or external channels (see Diagram 1).

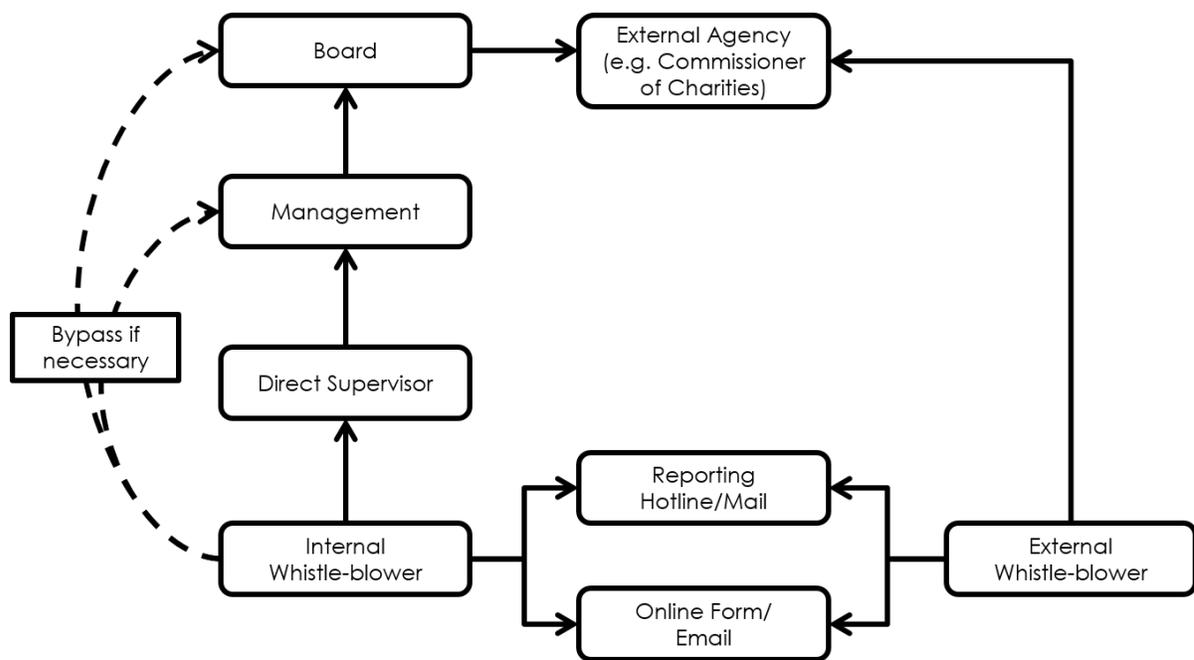


Diagram 1: Ways to Raise Concerns for Employees and Other Stakeholders

There are many whistle-blowing processes in practice. For simplicity and as shown in Diagram 2, there are four steps:

1. Initiation (i.e. raising of the concern);
2. Assessment of the concern;
3. Investigation to substantiate the concern; and
4. Measures to ensure that the recommended course of action is carried out, including proper follow-up, notification of the outcome to the whistle-blower for non-anonymous concern raised and closure of the case.

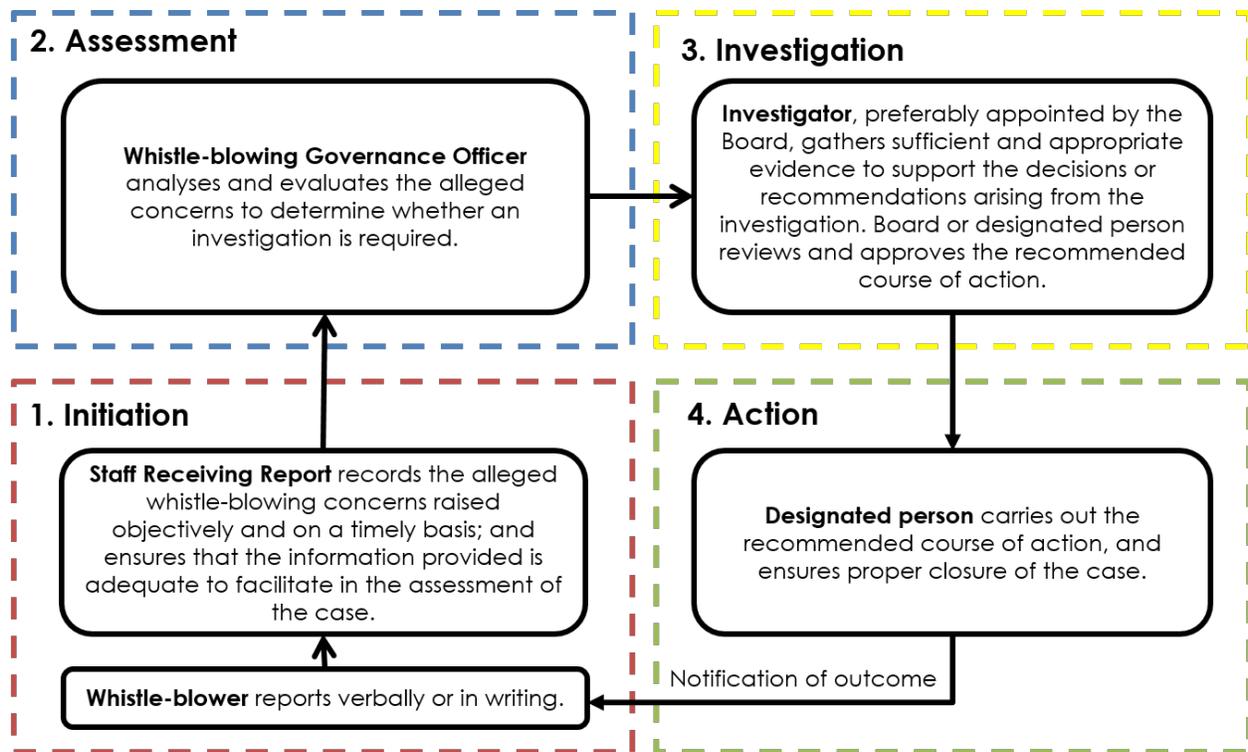


Diagram 2: Overview of a Whistle-blowing Process

Whistle-blowing policy

What is a whistle-blowing policy?

The Board articulates its direction and intent on whistle-blowing through the whistle-blowing policy. It is designed to provide a clear tone of commitment to employees and other stakeholders that whistle-blowing concerns are important to sound governance and that they are taken seriously by the charity. They are encouraged to raise their concerns with an assurance of confidentiality and protection in the policy. It articulates how the whistle-blowing process handles concerns from the initiation of the concern to the closure of the case. Last, but not least, the policy includes a framework of accountability and responsibility, competency, monitoring and review to ensure the design and operational effectiveness of the whistle-blowing processes and practices in the charity.

Why is a whistle-blowing policy important?

A formal policy provides clarity and transparency on the whistle-blowing process as well as the framework to enhance its effectiveness. It keeps employees and other stakeholders on “the same page” as the Board in relation to its appetite on misconduct or malpractice. The desired outcome is to develop and embed a culture of openness in the reporting of misconduct or malpractice.

What are the key components of a whistle-blowing policy?

The decision on the contents and details of a policy to suit the needs of the charity requires judgement. Seven key components are commonly included in the policy:

Component	Purpose
1. Policy objectives	Set the tone and what it aims to achieve
2. Policy scope	Stakeholders covered in the policy
3. Roles & responsibilities	Structure of accountability and responsibility
4. Confidentiality & protection	Underpinning ethos of whistle-blowing practice
5. Whistle-blowing process	Key steps in the whistle-blowing process
6. Communications & training	Update and equip with proper competencies
7. Monitor & review	Ensure the whistle-blowing practice is relevant and effective

Each key component has its purpose and needs contents (i.e. the information to be included). This guide articulates the specific information to be considered and includes illustrations⁴ on how they are expounded in a policy.⁵

Component 1: Policy Objectives



What to include?		
Define whistle-blowing concern	Importance of whistle-blowing	Objectives of the policy
Illustration		
<p>To whistle-blow is to report concerns by employees or other stakeholders in good faith on misconduct or malpractice that may be detrimental to the charity and/or public interest. Whistle-blowing is an essential part of sound governance.</p> <p>The policy addresses the Board’s commitment to proper ethical behaviour where employees and other stakeholders are encouraged to report concerns without fear of reprisal or unfair treatment.</p> <p>The objectives of the policy are⁶:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a formal process to raise and handle whistle-blowing concerns and a framework to support the process. • To encourage employees and other stakeholders to report improper, unethical and inappropriate behaviour. • To provide assurance that all reports will be properly addressed, treated with confidentiality and there are adequate whistle-blower safeguards from reprisal in any form. • To promote and develop a culture of accountability, integrity and transparency. 		

⁴ The components, elements or information to be included within each component and illustrations are not meant to be exhaustive. Charities must adapt, exclude or include additional components and/or elements, where appropriate, to suit its contents and needs.

⁵ Adapted from The Hong Kong Institute of Chartered Secretaries. December 2010. Whistleblowing Toolkit.

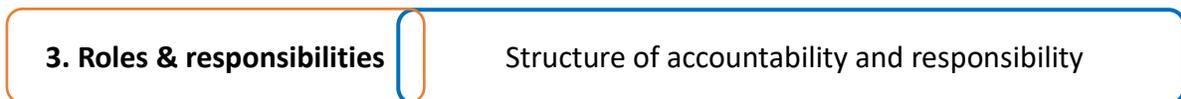
⁶ Adapted from FBN Holdings. 2016. FBN Holdings – Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure.

Component 2: Policy Scope



What to include?
Extent of policy coverage
Illustration
This policy is designed to enable employees and other relevant stakeholders to report any alleged concerns in good faith on misconduct or malpractice.

Component 3: Roles & Responsibilities



What to include?	
Whistle-blowing structure	Roles and responsibilities
Illustration	
The Board oversees whistle-blowing practices in the charity. This oversight responsibility requires the establishment of a whistle-blowing policy that is relevant to the context of the charity.	
The Board is usually assisted by a staff in charge (or Whistle-blowing Governance Officer) of the whistle-blowing process who ensures that the procedures are carried out in accordance with the policy.	
In essence, there are many stakeholders involved in the whistle-blowing process. These include the Board, whistle-blower, alleged party, staff receiving the report, investigator, Whistle-blowing Governance Officer and Head of Internal Audit.	

Component 4: Confidentiality & Protection

4. Confidentiality & protection

Underpinning ethos of whistle-blowing practice

4(a) Confidentiality: What to include?		
Commitment to confidentiality	Anonymous reporting	Special circumstances for identity disclosure
Illustration		
<p>The charity respects the confidentiality of the whistle-blower and is committed to preserving confidentiality by keeping the report and case information secure and accessible only to designated persons. Aligned with the spirit of confidentiality, the charity allows anonymous reporting.</p> <p>Confidentiality has two sides. Concurrently, the Whistle-blowing Governance Officer should ensure proper confidentiality safeguards of the filed report, while maintaining the confidentiality of those involved in the case.</p> <p>If necessary or lawful circumstances dictate the disclosure of the whistle-blower's identity, the charity must seek the whistle-blower's consent.</p>		

4(b). Protection: What to include?		
Commitment to protection	Types of protection	Sanctions
Illustration		
<p>The charity does not condone any reprisal, discrimination or harassment against whistle-blowers who report in good faith. It is committed to protecting whistle-blowers from threats to employment and any other threats of retaliatory action. Disciplinary actions will be taken against those who retaliate, harass or discriminate against whistle-blowers.</p>		

Component 5: Whistle-blowing Process

5. Whistle-blowing process	Key steps in the whistle-blowing process
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5(a). Whistle-blowing process: Initiation		
Purpose: 1 st step in the whistle-blowing process.		
What to include?		
Proper report contents	Authorised personnel	Method of reporting
Illustration		
<p>The ambit of reporting covers whistle-blowing concerns made in good faith either internally or externally. Disciplinary action will be taken against employees for any false report made for personal gain or malicious motive.</p> <p>The report can be made verbally or in writing using the standard “Form to Report a Whistle-Blowing Concern” (see Page 17) which contains information on what to report. For all reports, including those raised anonymously, the charity will maintain a proper register of all concerns received. It will send an acknowledgement of receipt to the whistle-blower, if the identity is provided, and all reported concerns will be assessed by the charity. The whistle-blower should also be provided with subsequent information on the follow-up processes (e.g. assessment, investigation and action) as appropriate.</p> <p>Where the identity of the alleged person is known, the guidance should include reasonable timeframes for: (a) the escalation of alleged concern to the Whistle-blowing Governance Officer (or any designated person) (e.g. within 24 hours); (b) the formal acknowledgement of receipt (e.g. within two weeks); (c) any updates; and (d) the closure of the inquiry. More specifically, (a) and (d) are considered in relation to anonymous alleged concern.</p> <p>Typically, an employee is expected to raise the concerns with their immediate superior, who will escalate the matter to the Whistle-blowing Governance Officer (or the staff in charge of whistle-blowing).</p> <p>In cases where the immediate superior is reluctant to raise the concern or is the subject of the concern, the whistle-blower can raise the concern directly to the Whistle-blowing Governance Officer. In cases where key management is involved or the concern is exceptionally serious, the whistle-blower can report to the chairman of the Board or designated Board member (e.g. chairman of the Audit Committee).</p> <p>The whistle-blower can bypass the internal reporting mechanism and report the concern to the relevant external agency (e.g. Office of the Commissioner of Charities). Safeguards to protect confidentiality must be in place to protect the whistle-blower from reprisal, discrimination and other adverse consequences.</p>		

5(b). Whistle-blowing process: Assessment

Purpose: 2nd step in the whistle-blowing process.

What to include?

Assessment personnel	The assessment criteria	The outcome
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Illustration

The Whistle-blowing Governance Officer (or a designated staff) is responsible for the assessment of all the concerns raised, including those which are anonymous in nature. The assessment examines whether the concerns raised are appropriate (i.e. they are not grievances), information provided is adequate to facilitate in the assessment and the nature of concerns (e.g. threats to health and safety, breach of laws, ethical code and fraud) to establish their severity and implication to the charity.

When the alleged person's identify is not known, attention should be made in relation to the likelihood of substantiating the allegation from the information provided and any relevant sources.

All assessments and analysis are to be consistent and properly documented, with decisions and outcomes clearly communicated to the appropriate parties on a timely basis.

Inappropriate concerns will not be investigated and the responsible staff may be subject to disciplinary action. Except for anonymous reports, the whistle-blowers may be contacted for clarification or further details on the information provided in the "Form to Report a Whistle-Blowing Concern".

5(c). Whistle-blowing process: Investigation		
Purpose: 3 rd step in the whistle-blowing process.		
What to include?		
The investigator	The investigation team	All other parties involved
The investigation process	The outcome	Recourse availability
Illustration		
<p>The Whistle-blowing Governance Officer (or a designated staff) is responsible for the appointment of the investigator and members of the investigation team, where appropriate. If required, the Board or the Audit Committee should endorse the recommendation before formal appointment.</p> <p>The charity will assure the independence of the investigator in the performance of the investigation. The investigation team is empowered with the appropriate authority and must have the integrity and competency to gather and document facts, while preventing leakage of information. The charity will provide adequate support, cooperation and access of information to the investigator.</p> <p>The parties involved in the investigation would be determined by the investigator depending on the nature, extent, timeline and complexity of the case. Some possible parties may include the whistle-blower, alleged party, witnesses, key staff, management, Board members and external parties. Further information may be sought from the whistle-blower and the relevant parties in the investigation.</p> <p>The charity's investigation process comprises establishing the investigation objective, gathering of evidence, reporting on the findings and providing recommendations. The duration of the investigation is dependent on the nature of the concern, evidence available and complexity of the case. The whistle-blower will be informed as soon as the investigation outcome is available.</p> <p>The investigation report will be reviewed by the Board or Audit Committee or a designated committee (e.g. comprising Head of Human Resources, Chief Internal Auditor and other key personnel). Where appropriate, external advice may be sought to assist in the investigation and review of the investigation report (including the findings and recommendations).</p> <p>The possible outcomes include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. There are no grounds for the concern. Hence, there are no further actions required; ii. There are grounds for the concern. Disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the charity's disciplinary policies (e.g. reprimand, suspension and termination of employment). In addition, remedial measures will be taken to minimise recurrence; and iii. There may be grounds for a possible criminal offence. The Board or Audit Committee should be informed and legal advice may be sought on whether the matter should be referred to the relevant authority for the appropriate action. In all these circumstances, the whistle-blower will be notified of the outcome accordingly. <p>When the whistle-blower is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, he/she can raise the matter with adequate explanation to the Whistle-blowing Governance Officer (or designated staff). If</p>		

there are reasonable grounds, the charity will examine the concern. The whistle-blower can also raise this concern to an external party.

5(d). Whistle-blowing process: Action

Purpose: 4th step in the whistle-blowing process.

What to include?

Timeline for recommended course of action	Proper closure	Review and follow-up
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Illustration

In cases where there are no grounds for the concern, the Whistle-blowing Governance Officer (or a designated staff) will inform the whistle-blower of the outcome and close the case. Where there is ground for the concern, the Whistle-blowing Governance Officer must ensure that there is a person responsible for disciplinary matters (e.g. Head of Human Resources) and another person responsible for designing and implementing the remedial measures, which should be both practical and feasible.

When the matter has to be escalated to an external party, there should be an acknowledgement of the receipt of the referral. The timeline for the implementation of the recommendation should be established to provide an indication on the closure of each case.

There should be a review and follow-up by the Whistle-blowing Governance Officer (or a designated staff) with support provided by the Board or Audit Committee to ensure the proper closure of the case.

Component 6: Communications & Training

6. Communications & training	Update and equip with proper competencies
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What to include?		
Access to the policy	Avenues for clarification	Training and assistance
Illustration		
<p>The whistle-blowing policy is provided to employees by the Head of Human Resources, whistle-blowing Governance Officer or a designated staff. It is also accessible to all interested parties in the charity’s website.</p> <p>The whistle-blowing policy is communicated to all staff when they join the charity and they are briefed on any updates as appropriate. For assistance on whistle-blowing matters, employees should approach the Head of Human Resources, Whistle-blowing Governance Officer or the designated staff.</p> <p>The charity supports the training of staff involved in whistle-blowing to stay abreast of developments and to be properly equipped to handle whistle-blowing matters.</p>		

Component 7: Monitor & Review

7. Monitor & review	Ensure the whistle-blowing practice is relevant and effective
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What to include?	
Effective monitoring methods	Periodic review interval
Illustration	
<p>The Whistle-blowing Governance Officer or a designated staff monitors the status of the whistle-blowing process to ensure that it is operating as designed. Some examples include the trend of concerns raised compared to previous years, the number of concerns that failed to meet the established timeline, to record and report to the Whistle-blowing Governance Office, and the number of cases where the investigation progress is behind schedule. The monitored results should be reported to the Board or the Audit Committee.</p> <p>Internal audit or an independent party will review the whistle-blowing policy for design effectiveness and will check that the procedures are operationally effective. The review is conducted annually or as directed by the Board or Audit Committee.</p>	

Guidance on developing a whistle-blowing policy

What are the attributes of a robust whistle-blowing policy?

A policy is an important governance document. Some attributes of an effective policy are:

- It is easily understood.
- It has clearly defined objectives and is aligned with the charity's goals and strategy.
- It is relevant to the changing charity contexts.
- The key stakeholders are appropriately consulted in its development and update.
- It is easily accessible and clearly communicated to the relevant stakeholders.

The contents and details in the sample below may be adapted by charities to develop a whistle-blowing policy to suit their contexts and needs. It is drawn up from a selection of Singapore charities⁷.

1. Policy objectives and scope	The organisation is committed to a high standard of transparency, integrity, compliance and accountability. The whistle-blowing policy aims to provide a means through which employees or members of the public could, in good faith, report any activity that infringes on the organisation's code of conduct or violates the law so that the organisation may take the relevant action.
2. Whistle-blowing concerns	The policy covers serious concerns that could have a significant impact on the organisation. These include (a) fraudulent activity; (b) incorrect financial reporting; (c) unlawful activities; and (d) misconduct or unethical conduct.
3. Confidentiality and protection	Reports of whistle-blowing concerns are kept confidential to the extent possible to meet the needs of the investigation. The organisation is committed to protect a person who reports in good faith from intimidation, retaliation or adverse employment consequence.
4. Reporting channels	If employees or members of the public have cause to suspect serious concerns, a report should be made through telephone, by e-mail or by postal mail. All reports received will be channelled to the Board chairman and members of the Audit Committee. Alternatively, the report may be lodged directly with any of these individuals.
5. Assessment of concerns raised	Assessment of the concern is based on the nature and severity of the concern raised and the credibility of the information, including the sources. The Audit Committee or a designated staff shall decide whether an investigation is required to examine the issues raised. For a serious concern (e.g. alleged criminal offence), the matter should be reported to an external agency.
6. Investigation	On receiving a report, the Board or the Audit Committee shall decide on the severity and authenticity of the concern. When there are issues to be further examined, the Board or the Audit Committee will set-up an Investigation Team, comprising at least three independent members (i.e. those who are not connected to the concern reported). The whistle-blower will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation and, if appropriate, of the final outcome.

⁷ Adapted from the whistle-blowing policies of the National Kidney Foundation*, Singapore Red Cross Society**, Singapore Children's Society** and SPD*** which were retrieved from <https://www.nkfs.org/about-nkf/background/corporate-governance/whistle-blowing-policy/>, <https://www.redcross.sg/whistle-blower-policy.html>, [https://www.childrensociety.org.sg/resources/ck/files/Code%20of%20conduct%20%20Staff%20and%20Committee%20\(revised%20May%202015\).pdf](https://www.childrensociety.org.sg/resources/ck/files/Code%20of%20conduct%20%20Staff%20and%20Committee%20(revised%20May%202015).pdf) and <http://www.spd.org.sg/whistle-blowing-policy.html> respectively.

*Winner of 2016 Charity Governance Awards. **Winners of 2016 Charity Transparency Awards. *** Winner of 2016 Charity Governance Awards and 2016 Charity Transparency Awards.

An illustration of roles and responsibilities

Key stakeholders	Responsibilities
Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure the effective establishment, review and management (e.g. reporting, investigation and follow-up) of the whistle-blowing policy and arrangements. Should regularly review and discuss all whistle-blowing concerns. The chairman of the Board or designated director(s) may serve as the Whistle-blower Governance Officer for concerns raised on key management (e.g. head of the organisation). In practice, the above roles may be delegated to the Audit Committee.
Whistle-blower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expected to act in good faith and should refrain from making false accusations when reporting his/her concern(s). They should also contribute fully to the investigation efforts (e.g. by providing further information/evidence).
Alleged Party (The person of interest in the whistle-blowing case)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a duty to cooperate with the investigator, including the provision of relevant information, documents or other materials as may be required by the investigator.
Point of Contact/Staff receiving the report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To receive, record and report the whistle-blowing incident to the person in charge of whistle-blowing or the appropriately assigned individual. At all times, confidentiality of the case must be maintained.
Investigator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure investigations are conducted in an independent, diligent and unbiased manner. To regularly report findings to the Whistle-blowing Governance Office, Board or Audit Committee (as appropriate). The investigator and team (if required) must be independent, competent and refrain from discussing or disclosing confidential information under investigation. The investigation may include external parties with the appropriate competencies to assist in the investigation.
Whistle-blowing Governance Officer	<p>The whistle-blowing Governance Office is in charge of the whistle-blowing process. Where the concerns reported involve key management, the Board will appoint one or two members of the Board (e.g. Audit Committee chair and other directors) to assume this role.</p> <p>Some of the responsibilities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that sufficient inquiry is conducted into every concern received. The case is investigated by a qualified investigator who is independent of the area/function where the concern is alleged to have taken place. To recommend whether an external qualified investigator independent of the organisation is required. The action taken in response to the assessment/investigation is appropriate to the circumstances. There are adequate safeguards to protect the whistle-blower from reprisal, discrimination or harassment. A whistle-blower Protection Officer may be appointed to the task. To ensure the adequate measures are in place to protect the confidentiality of the whistle-blower and information about the case.
Head of Internal Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where the charities or IPCs have an internal audit function, the internal audit provides assurance to the Board on the design and operating effectiveness of the whistle-blowing policy and arrangements. The other roles that internal audit can assume may include the handling of whistle-blowing complaints, whistle-blowing investigation as well as providing advice on the relevant internal controls in the whistle-blowing process.

A sample form to report a whistle-blowing concern

Whistle-Blower Report Form	
Whistle-blower's details	
This section may be left blank if the whistle-blower wishes to remain anonymous)	
Name, Designation, Department/Charity, Contact number and E-mail address	
Can you be contacted for more information?	
Alleged Party's details	
Name, Designation, Department, Contact number and E-mail address	
Witness' details (If any)	
Name, Designation, Department/Charity, Contact number and E-mail address	
Concern/Complaint	
Describe the misconduct and how you have come to know about it.	
1. What misconduct occurred?	
2. Who committed the misconduct?	
3. When did it happen and when did you notice it?	
4. Where did it happen?	
5. Have you approached the person? If yes, what did he say?	
6. Is there any evidence that you could provide us?	
7. Were other people involved? If yes, who are they?	
8. Do you have any other details or information which would assist us in the investigation?	
9. Have you reported the incident internally or through any other channels? If yes, to whom have you made the report?	
Date:	Signature:

Who to submit the form to? E.g. Staff name, address and contact		
How to submit the form?		
(a) Electronic form via charity's website [to also include the website address]	(b) Email [to include the name of contact person, telephone number, hand phone number and email address]	(c) Mail [to include the name of contact person, telephone number, hand phone number and address]

Five key points to responsible whistle-blowing⁸

1. **Understand what whistle-blowing concerns mean**

Whistle-blowing concerns relate to misconduct or malpractice that have an adverse impact on the charity. Some examples include financial malpractices or impropriety such as fraud, corruption, bribery, kickback, theft and concealment; failure to comply with regulations, laws and ethical guidelines; threats to health and safety in the work environment; any form of criminal activity; and abuses of corporate resources.

2. **Gather and document the evidence**

Maintain a proper note of all conversations and keep a file of all written communications, relevant documents and details of any incidents (e.g. dates, time, places, parties involved, incidents, etc.). Be truthful, act in good faith, state the facts. Be prepared to be questioned by the charity and substantiate the concerns.

3. **Comply with the charity's policy and procedures**

Be familiar and comply with the charity's policy and procedures on raising concerns. These will ensure that adequate information is provided and the matter is attended to on a timely basis.

4. **Exercise due diligence**

Allegations of misconduct or malpractice are serious matters. They involve time, effort and resources of the charity, whistle-blowers and alleged parties. As such, due diligence must be exercised to establish the veracity of the allegation.

5. **Seek advice when required**

Seek assistance from the relevant staff (e.g. staff designated in the charity to assist employees and other stakeholders in lodging their concerns) or external legal advice, where appropriate.

⁸ Adapted from Government Accountability Project. 2017. Whistleblowing Survival Tips. <https://www.whistleblower.org/whistleblowing-survival-tips> and David Owen. The Guardian. 1 October 2014. Five tips for whistle-blowers by senior civil servant who took on the Treasury. <https://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2014/oct/01/whistleblowers-public-sector-david-owen-treasury-five-tips>

Conclusion

Whistle-blowing policies and arrangements are an integral part of sound and robust corporate governance and must be aligned with the charity's goals and strategy. The guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive and prescriptive, but principle-driven to allow adaptation to their specific needs, in form and substance.

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