



Robert and Patricia Switzer Foundation

Code of Conduct

Purpose:

The Robert and Patricia Switzer Foundation works to promote a welcoming environment at meetings and events that is safe, collaborative, supportive, and productive for all stakeholders as defined: attendees, organizing committee members, contractors, staff, trustees, volunteers, and service providers. The foundation values a diversity of perspectives, views, expertise, opinions, backgrounds, and experiences reflected among event presenters, planners, and attendees. We believe that the best way to advance knowledge is through the open, free, and respectful exchange of ideas while refraining from unacceptable behavior that may intimidate, threaten, belittle, or otherwise disrespect other stakeholders. To that end, we expect all stakeholders to abide by this Code of Conduct while attending Switzer events.

Values:

The Robert and Patricia Switzer Foundation upholds the following values:

- **Belief in Individuals.** We believe that talented and committed individuals from varied backgrounds can make a difference in this world and create positive change. With funding, training, and engaged networks and collaborations, individuals can achieve greater impact.
- **Environmental Stewardship.** The foundation seeks to protect, improve, and sustain our natural environment for the well-being of people and the planet. Switzer Fellows use science, policy and public engagement to advance environmental goals.
- **Sustainability.** We recognize the urgency of living within our ecological and physical means, and embrace holistic approaches that support and maintain the complexity and interconnectedness of natural and human systems.
- **Social Equity and Diversity.** We recognize that the destruction of the natural world and systemic, institutionalized racism are integrated and reinforcing systems; the dismantling of racism is an essential practice in seeking to protect, improve, and sustain our natural world. Selecting and supporting fellows from a range of social, cultural, racial and economic backgrounds as well as from varied issue interests and professional sectors will build a stronger environmental field.
- **Systems Thinking and Problem-solving.** What we define as “environmental issues” continues to expand with the knowledge that they are always situated within a shifting constellation of social, scientific, environmental and economic issues. We believe that working at the intersection of a wide range of perspectives will yield innovative solutions.
- **Maximizing Impact.** We seek to maximize positive environmental impact through individual and collective activities and leveraged grant resources. The foundation has an ongoing commitment to promote excellence, increase effectiveness and adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the environmental field.

Transparency/Privacy:

Events will not be recorded without notification; any attendee is expected to notify other attendees if they intend to record or photograph an event.

Meetings, events, and digital resources, including the listserv, primarily serve Fellows, but close colleagues, staff members, and current Trustees may have access. If an event is open to a wider audience, it will be clearly advertised as such.

Legal:

The [Robert and Patricia Switzer Foundation](#) is a private foundation with limits on advocacy and lobbying that are a requirement of its charitable status as a 501c3 organization and in particular as a private foundation.

Switzer Foundation resources may not be used for direct [calls to action](#) for lobbying to directly influence proposed legislation, political appointments, ballot measures and more. Switzer Fellows may not use Foundation resources to ask Fellows to "call your Senator to oppose "X" bill or nominee.

Please visit our website to view our full [Switzer Foundation and Fellows Network Advocacy Policy](#).

Expectations for Engagement:

Please review the [mission, vision, and values of the Switzer Foundation](#). These values are central to how we want to be in community with one another, and we aim to use them as guiding principles for our actions within both digital and in-person environments.

The Switzer Network is composed of members from a variety of personal and professional backgrounds and lived experiences, a quality integral to the Network and its possibilities. Some of these voices are under-represented, and the Switzer Foundation is committed to amplifying and celebrating those voices as well as protecting the diversity of expression in order to maintain an open exchange of ideas. This requires a community that recognizes the inherent worth of every person and group and an environment that fosters inclusion, dignity, understanding, and mutual respect.

Expected Behavior:

- Treat everyone with respect and consideration, especially in your critique of ideas.
- Communicate thoughtfully with others and be considerate of the multitude of views, lived experiences, and opinions that are different than your own. Be sensitive to how others might hear what you say and listen with patience and generosity.
- Foster awareness of situations in which you have real or perceived power over another group and refrain from any activity which explicitly or implicitly wields that power to silence or coerce.
- Be mindful of fellow participants and unacceptable behavior as outlined below.
- Alert foundation staff or follow another reporting procedure if you notice a situation that violates the code of conduct or someone in distress.

Unacceptable Behavior:

- Participation, facilitation, or promotion of harassment*, intimidation* or discrimination* behaviors at meetings, events, or via email or social media.

- Physical, emotional, or verbal abuse* of any attendee, speaker, volunteer, presenter, staff or board member, service provider or other stakeholder.
- Participating in activities or posting content that violate the foundation's legal obligations (such as political lobbying).
- Distribution or display of offensive or insensitive materials as related to the guidelines of unacceptable behavior*.
- Recording events without notification and group agreement or taking photos of event attendees without their awareness and consent.
- Publicly sharing the location or contact information of any other stakeholder beyond information shared in the foundation materials.
- Spamming participants or posting unsolicited links in comments, questions, or chat boxes.
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment, including: relationship/dating violence, stalking, invasions of sexual privacy, retaliation, and quid pro quo or hostile environments.

*Examples of unacceptable behavior include, but are not limited to: inappropriate comments related to gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disability, mental illness, neuro(a)typicality, physical appearance, body size, race, religion, national origin, or socioeconomic status; making others feel unsafe or uncomfortable based on identity; unwelcome advances or requests for sexual favors; inappropriate use of nudity and/or sexual images in public spaces or in presentations; threatening, bullying or stalking any attendee, speaker, volunteer, presenter, staff member, or service provider.

Consequences:

Anyone requested to stop unacceptable behavior is expected to comply immediately.

Violators will first be taken aside by, or receive a message from, a staff or designated network member explaining the violation. If applicable, the content will be removed.

Repeated violations of this policy in digital spaces will result in the sender being removed from the listserv and/or blocked from other digital communications.

Repeated violations of this policy at in-person events will result in being prohibited from attending events.

Foundation staff may take any action deemed necessary and appropriate. This may include, but is not limited to: immediate restriction from accessing and participating in events or communications without warning or refund and removal of all contributed content.

Reporting:

Should any member of the Network experience harassment from another member of the Network, on or offline, they are encouraged to report or discuss the event with a designated Network member or staff member with whom they feel comfortable. If they would like to remain anonymous but still discuss the event, they are encouraged to bring it to another Network member with whom they feel comfortable who can speak on their behalf and protect their privacy. With consent and input of the affected individual, staff, or in some cases, the Fellows Advisory Committee, will conduct an internal investigation.

Additionally, if anyone identifies that the values expressed in the above Expectations of Engagement section have not been upheld by an individual or group, members of the listserv are encouraged to bring their concerns to Laine (laine@switzernetwork.org), a designated Network member, or another staff member with whom they feel comfortable.

We believe that education, discussion, and conversation can help build a more just environment for all and are committed to facilitating difficult conversations to help uphold and maintain these values.

Feedback:

As we develop these Codes of Conduct, we invite feedback from the network. Please email Laine (laine@switzernetwork.org) with any feedback you may have. If possible, please provide your feedback in the form of bulleted list items with reference to the section in question.

After December 31, 2022, this Code of Conduct will be reviewed periodically by the Fellows Advisory Committee. Input from Network members is welcome at any time.

Self-Education:

For the purposes of self-education, please feel free to investigate the following resources:

- <https://diversity.natsci.msu.edu/education/self-education/>
- <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/why-race-matters-when-we-talk-about-the-environment/>

We would like this list of resources to include the vast wisdom of our community. Please email Laine any digital resources that you believe should be added to this list.

Other Resources:

The Switzer Foundation also maintains:

- BIPOC Slack community (open only to BIPOC Switzer Fellows)
- Race and Equity Discussion Group listserv (open to all Switzer Fellows)
- Work/Life balance Slack community (open to all Switzer Fellows)

If you are interested in joining or have questions about any of these other communities, or would like to discuss developing a different community or affinity group, please contact Laine (laine@switzernetwork.org).