

The Earth Elders

Whistleblower & Document Retention Policy

The Grand Council of Eagle and the Condor (Also Known as The Earth Elders)

A 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Organization

ARTICLE I: PURPOSE

The Grand Council of Eagle and the Condor, also known as **The Earth Elders** (the "Organization"), is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and accountability in its operations. The purpose of this Whistleblower Policy is to encourage employees, volunteers, board members, contractors, and others associated with the Organization to report any suspected illegal or unethical behavior, fraud, waste, or abuse without fear of retaliation.

This policy is intended to protect those who come forward with good faith reports of suspected misconduct, ensuring that they can report concerns freely and confidently, without fear of reprisal or adverse employment or volunteer consequences.

ARTICLE II: SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees, officers, directors, volunteers, contractors, and agents of **The Grand Council of Eagle and the Condor** (also known as **The Earth Elders**). It covers the reporting of any illegal or unethical behavior, including but not limited to:

- Financial misconduct, such as fraud, theft, or embezzlement
- Violations of federal, state, or local laws or regulations
- Violations of Organization policies, including conflicts of interest
- Unsafe or illegal workplace practices
- Abuse of power, harassment, or discriminatory practices
- Improper conduct related to fundraising, grant applications, or use of donor funds
- Environmental violations or mismanagement of resources
- Any other illegal, unethical, or inappropriate actions or behaviors

ARTICLE III: REPORTING PROCEDURE

Section 1. Responsibility to Report

Any person who suspects misconduct, illegal activity, or violations of the Organization's policies or ethical standards is encouraged to report their concerns. Reports may be made anonymously, although providing contact information is encouraged to allow for follow-up and clarification of the concern.

Section 2. How to Report

Reports may be made through the following methods:

- **Direct Report:** Concerns can be reported directly to the Executive Director, Board Chair, or any member of the Board of Directors. If the concern involves the Executive Director or Board Chair, the report should be directed to another Board member.
- **Anonymous Report:** Individuals may report concerns anonymously by submitting a written report, which can be mailed to the Organization's office, clearly marked "Confidential."

Section 3. Content of Report

Reports should include as much detail as possible, such as dates, individuals involved, specific actions or behaviors observed, and any supporting evidence. The more specific the report, the better the Organization can investigate the issue appropriately.

ARTICLE IV: HANDLING AND INVESTIGATION OF REPORTS

Section 1. Acknowledgment of Report

Upon receiving a report, the Organization will promptly acknowledge receipt of the concern, unless the report is made anonymously. Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of the person reporting the concern, within the limits of the law and the need to conduct a thorough investigation.

Section 2. Investigation

All reports of suspected misconduct will be taken seriously and investigated promptly. The Board of Directors or an appointed committee may oversee the investigation or delegate the responsibility to an independent party. The individual making the report will be kept informed of the status of the investigation, to the extent possible.

If the report involves senior leadership (such as the Executive Director or Board members), an independent external investigator may be appointed to ensure the impartiality of the process.

Section 3. Conclusion of Investigation

Upon the conclusion of the investigation, appropriate corrective action will be taken if necessary. This may include disciplinary measures, policy revisions, or legal action if warranted. The findings of the investigation will be reported to the Board of Directors.

Section 4.Retention and Destruction of Records

All documents, reports, communications, and related materials pertaining to a whistleblower report, including the initial complaint, investigation records, and final resolution, shall be maintained in a secure and confidential manner in accordance with the organization's document retention policy and applicable laws and regulations.

1. Retention Period

All whistleblower records shall be retained for a minimum of **seven (7) years** from the date the case is closed, or for a longer period if required by applicable laws, regulations, legal proceedings, or contractual obligations.

2. Confidential Storage

These records shall be stored securely—electronically or physically—to protect the confidentiality of all parties involved, and to ensure they are accessible only to authorized personnel.

3. Destruction of Records

At the end of the retention period, records shall be destroyed in a secure manner that maintains confidentiality and prevents unauthorized access or reconstruction of information. Acceptable methods include shredding paper documents and permanently deleting electronic files using industry-standard secure deletion protocols.

4. Suspension of Destruction

In the event of ongoing or anticipated litigation, investigation, or audit, any routine destruction of related documents shall be suspended until it is confirmed that the matter is fully resolved and no further preservation is legally required.

5. Audit and Compliance

The organization's Compliance Officer (or equivalent role) shall oversee the retention and destruction process for whistleblower records and ensure adherence to this policy. Periodic audits may be conducted to confirm compliance.

ARTICLE V: PROTECTION AGAINST RETALIATION

Section 1. No Retaliation

The Grand Council of Eagle and the Condor prohibits any form of retaliation against any individual who, in good faith, reports a concern or suspected violation of the Organization's policies, laws, or ethical standards. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, adverse employment actions, harassment, discrimination, intimidation, threats, or any other action that negatively impacts the individual.

Any employee, volunteer, or contractor who engages in retaliation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination or removal from their position.

Section 2. Acting in Good Faith

Anyone filing a report concerning misconduct must act in good faith and have reasonable grounds for believing the information disclosed indicates a violation. Reports that are found to have been made maliciously, or with knowledge that the information was false, will be considered a serious offense and may result in disciplinary action.

ARTICLE VI: CONFIDENTIALITY

Reports of concerns, investigations, and their outcomes will be kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation, the Organization's legal obligations, and its duty to take corrective action. The identity of individuals who report concerns or participate in the investigation will be protected and shared only with those directly involved in addressing the matter.

ARTICLE VII: EDUCATION AND DISSEMINATION

The Organization shall ensure that this Whistleblower Policy is widely disseminated to all employees, officers, directors, and volunteers of the Organization. Training or education sessions will be provided to raise awareness of the policy and ensure that all associated parties understand their rights and responsibilities under this policy.

A copy of this policy shall be posted in a prominent place in the Organization's office and shall be included in the Organization's employee and volunteer handbooks.

ARTICLE VIII: REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS

This Whistleblower Policy will be reviewed by the Board of Directors annually or more frequently as needed to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness. Any amendments must be approved by a majority vote of the Board of Directors.