



Equal Opportunities Policy

Last Updated: 20 March 2023



Purpose

1. Policy Statement

This policy sets out Think Pacific's approach to Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Inclusion on our projects and programs. It explains how Think Pacific, as a volunteer organisation and employer, will ensure equal opportunities throughout our operations and organisation. Think Pacific is committed to promoting equal opportunities and non-discriminatory treatment for all members of its community regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (Protected Characteristics).

2. About this policy

- 2.1.** This policy sets out Think Pacific's approach to equal opportunities and the avoidance of discrimination. It applies to all aspects of our project, programs, internships and also employment with us.
- 2.2.** Think Pacific is committed to providing an inclusive environment which promotes equality and diversity and respects the rights and dignity of all its staff, students and participants
- 2.3.** This policy covers all employees, students, officers, consultants, contractors, volunteers, visitors, interns, casual workers and agency workers as well as job applicants and those applying for our programs.
- 2.4.** It is intended that this policy will apply across the Think Pacific Group (including Think Pacific Foundation Fiji) and promotion of programmes anywhere in the world, except where adherence to it would result in contravention of local laws.
- 2.5.** This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment or any student or participants contract with the organisation and it may be amended at any time.

3. Responsibility for this policy

- 3.1.** The Think Pacific Board of Directors has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with discrimination law. Day-to-day operational responsibility for this policy, including regular review of this policy, has been delegated to the Director for Operations
- 3.2.** All managers must set an appropriate standard of behaviour, lead by example and ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote our aims and objectives with regard to equal opportunities. Staff will be given appropriate training on equal opportunities awareness commensurate with their duties.
- 3.3.** If you have any questions about the content or application of this policy, your first point of contact should be the Director of Operations at Think Pacific.
- 3.4.** This policy is reviewed annually by the Board of Directors. Any substantial changes to it will be made in consultation with Think Pacific's Senior Management team and communicated to our university partners.
- 3.5.** Staff, students, university partners and participants are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved by contacting the Board of Directors.
- 3.6.** Think Pacific will monitor the application of and compliance with this policy and assess the progress made in achieving its equality and diversity objectives at the annual board of Directors Meeting.

4. Discrimination

- 4.1.** No member of the Think Pacific community, including staff, interns, participants and volunteers may unlawfully discriminate against or harass other people. This includes fellow participants, colleagues, current and former employees, students, job applicants, student applicants, officers, clients, customers, suppliers and visitors. This applies when on Think Pacific projects and premises, outside the Think Pacific projects and premises (when dealing with customers, suppliers or

other work -related contacts), on work-related trips or events (including work-related social events or student social events) and on social media.

4.2. The following forms of discrimination are prohibited under this policy and are unlawful:

- 4.2.1. Direct discrimination:** treating someone less favourably because of a Protected Characteristic. For example, failing to offer a student a place for a project because of his or her religious views.
- 4.2.2. Indirect discrimination:** a provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but adversely affects people with a particular Protected Characteristic more than others, and is not justified.
- 4.2.3. Harassment:** this includes sexual harassment and other unwanted conduct related to a Protected Characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.
- 4.2.4. Victimization:** retaliation against anyone to whom this policy applies who has complained or has supported someone else's complaint about discrimination or harassment.
- 4.2.5. Disability discrimination:** this includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments, where possible, to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability

5. Disabilities

- 5.1.** If you are disabled or become disabled, we encourage you to tell us about your condition so that we can support you as appropriate.
- 5.2. Students and applicants** - Think Pacific Directors shall always consider specific adjustments that may be appropriate for particular students or help universities to develop plans for how they might support students with disabilities to take part in our projects.
- 5.3.** The nature of our programmes in very remote, challenging and rural locations may mean that some programs come with certain health and safety risks to participants with disabilities. Ensuring the health and safety of participants is always our main priority. However, through discussion, planning and university

support we shall assess each individual case in detail to provide any available and feasible option to participate in a programme. The Think Pacific Project Manager or Think Pacific Director shall consult with you, your medical adviser or the University's Occupational Health Adviser about possible adjustments.

5.4. Employees, workers and job applicants (including internships) - if you experience difficulties at work because of your disability, you should contact your line manager in the first instance, to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. Your line manager or the relevant Director may wish to consult with you or your medical adviser about possible adjustments.

5.5. The Board of Directors will consider and make reasonable adjustments for all those to whom this policy applies as appropriate, and wherever possible, in each particular case.

6. Breaches of this policy

6.1. We take a strict approach to breaches of this policy, which will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant staff or participant Code Of Conduct disciplinary procedures. Serious cases of deliberate discrimination may amount to gross misconduct resulting in dismissal for employees and withdrawal from the project for university students and participants.

6.2. Employees, workers and job applicants can raise allegations of discrimination through the Grievance Procedure or through our Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy as appropriate. Students or applicants should raise a complaint under the Student & Participants Complaints Procedure. Complaints will be treated in confidence and investigated as appropriate.

6.3. There must be no victimisation or retaliation against staff, students or participants who complain about discrimination. However, making a false allegation deliberately and in bad faith will be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedures.

7. Participant Selection

- 7.1. Think Pacific is committed to a policy of fair selection and admissions and fair access through the recruitment of students and participants for our projects and programs.
- 7.2. Think Pacific confirms its commitment to a policy of equal opportunities in which individuals are selected, developed and otherwise treated on the basis of his or her relevant merits and abilities and are given equal opportunities within their project or program
- 7.3. No applicant shall be treated more or less favourably for selection to a project or program than any other on account of a protected characteristic.
- 7.4. Some programs have a specific age range set by local partnerships or project objectives (for example, projects aimed to promote the Fijian Ministry of Youth aims for participants aged 18-35). Where this is the case, participants shall always be directed to the closest appropriate programme or opportunity to ensure we can facilitate their involvement in Think Pacific.

8. Religion, belief and project participation

- 8.1. Think Pacific will take such steps as are reasonable and practicable to ensure that no participant is put at a disadvantage because of their religion or belief.
- 8.2. Where you have a religious or other belief which conflicts with your normal obligations to Think Pacific or the program, alternative strategies and/or arrangements will be considered in consultation with you, in so far as such alternatives are reasonable and practicable in consultation with our Community Development Advisor in Fiji. In particular we may allow a student whose religion or beliefs require absence from a particular project activity at a specific time to perform this activity at another time or make alternative reasonable adjustments.
- 8.3. If the activity in which your religion or belief prevents you taking part will form a major part of a module or program, or may be a key theory, technique or principle of the program concerned, it may not be possible to make alternative arrangements without compromising the integrity of the program or local government objectives for the initiative or module. This shall be discussed with

you and consideration taken at all times, whilst also considering the duty our projects have for Fijian communities and Ministry partners.

9. Project partners and third parties

- 9.1.** Think Pacific will take reasonable steps to ensure that our partners and third party providers and institutions we work with connected to our programs put in place arrangements that are proportionate and transparent to this policy. So far as Think Pacific is reasonably able to do so, it will require such providers to comply with relevant equality legislation.

10. Employees and internship recruitment and selection

- 10.1.** Recruitment, promotion, and other selection exercises such as redundancy selection will be conducted on the basis of merit, against objective criteria that avoid discrimination.
- 10.2.** Job applicants should not be asked questions which might suggest an intention to discriminate on grounds of a Protected Characteristic. For example, applicants should not be asked whether they are pregnant or planning to have children.
- 10.3.** Job applicants should not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made except where it is necessary to establish if an applicant can perform an intrinsic part of the job (subject to any reasonable adjustments). Where necessary, job offers can be made conditional on a satisfactory medical check.
- 10.4.** We are required by law to ensure that all employees are entitled to work in the UK (or Fiji where appropriate). Assumptions about immigration status should not be made based on appearance or apparent nationality. All prospective employees, regardless of nationality, must be able to produce original documents (such as a passport) before employment starts, to satisfy current immigration legislation. The list of acceptable documents is available from the Human Resources Department or UK Visas and Immigration.
- 10.5.** To ensure that this policy is operating effectively, and to identify groups that may be underrepresented or disadvantaged in our organisation, we may monitor applicants' ethnic group, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion and age as part of the recruitment procedure. Provision of this information is voluntary and

it will not adversely affect an individual's chances of recruitment or any other decision related to their employment. The information is removed from applications before shortlisting, and kept in an anonymised format solely for the purposes stated in this policy. Analysing this data helps us take appropriate steps to avoid discrimination and improve equality and diversity.

11. Employees training, promotion and conditions of service

- 11.1.** Employees will be given appropriate access to training to enable them to progress within Think Pacific and all promotion decisions will be made on the basis of merit.
- 11.2.** Our conditions of service, benefits and facilities are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are available to all who should have access to them.
- 11.3.** We will ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory.
- 11.4.** We will also ensure that disciplinary procedures and penalties are applied without discrimination, whether they result in disciplinary warnings, dismissal or other disciplinary action.