Whistleblowing Policy

1. Purpose and Aim

This policy outlines the process for reporting serious concerns about wrongdoing or malpractice within Coempowered. It applies to all staff, volunteers, and stakeholders, ensuring a safe and confidential mechanism for raising concerns without fear of reprisal.

Coempowered is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and accountability in all its operations.

2. Scope

This policy applies to any individual associated with Coempowered, including:

- Staff and volunteers.
- External partners and stakeholders.

Concerns may relate to activities such as:

- Illegal or unethical conduct.
- Financial malpractice or fraud.
- Health and safety violations.
- Breaches of Coempowered policies or procedures.
- Any actions that may harm the environment, participants, or the public.

3. Key Principles

1. **Protection for Whistleblowers**:
    a. Individuals raising concerns in good faith will be protected from victimization or retaliation.
2. **Confidentiality**:
    a. Reports will be handled confidentially, and identities will not be disclosed without consent unless required by law.

3. **Transparency and Fairness**:
    a. All concerns will be investigated impartially and appropriately.
4. **Encouragement to Speak Up**:
    a. Everyone is encouraged to report concerns without fear of negative consequences.

4. Procedures

4.1 Identifying a Concern

1. Examples of reportable concerns include:
    a. Criminal activities such as theft, fraud, or bribery.
    b. Endangering the health or safety of participants or staff.
    c. Abuse of authority or harassment.
    d. Violations of data protection policies or misuse of sensitive information.

4.2 Reporting a Concern

1. **First Step**:
    a. Concerns should be reported to the designated officer. If the concern involves the designated officer, it can be escalated to the board members.
2. **Method of Reporting**:
    a. Reports can be made via email, phone, or in writing.
    b. Include as much detail as possible, such as dates, events, and any supporting evidence.
3. **Anonymity**:
    a. Anonymous reports are accepted but may limit the ability to investigate fully.

4.3 Investigation Process

1. The responsible officer will acknowledge receipt of the concern within five working days.
2. An initial review will be conducted to determine if the concern warrants a formal investigation.
3. If an investigation is required:
    a. It will be conducted by an impartial investigator or team.
    b. Findings will be reported to the appropriate decision-makers for action.

4. Outcomes and actions will be communicated to the whistleblower, where appropriate, while maintaining confidentiality.

5. Responsibilities

1. **Staff and Volunteers**:
    a. Raise concerns promptly and in good faith.
    b. Cooperate with investigations if requested.
2. **Responsible officer** :
    a. Ensure concerns are addressed fairly and confidentially.
    b. Protect whistleblowers from retaliation.
3. **Coempowered Leadership**:
    a. Foster a culture of openness and integrity.
    b. Take appropriate action on validated concerns.

6. Protection for Whistleblowers

1. **No Retaliation**:
    a. Coempowered strictly prohibits any form of retaliation, including dismissal, harassment, or discrimination, against individuals who raise concerns in good faith.
2. **False Claims**:
    a. Malicious or knowingly false reports will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action.

7. Support for Whistleblowers

1. **Confidential Advice**:
    a. Whistleblowers can seek advice and guidance from the responsible officer before raising a formal concern.
2. **Access to Support**:
    a. Coempowered will provide emotional support and resources to whistleblowers as needed.

8. Compliance and Legal Framework

This policy aligns with relevant whistleblowing laws and regulations, ensuring compliance with legal obligations and best practices.

9. Contact Details

Responsible Officer :
Name: [Insert Name]
Contact: [Insert Email/Phone]

10. Review and Updates

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if required to reflect changes in legislation or organizational needs.