The NBER Ombudsperson, or Ombuds, is a confidential, informal, independent, and neutral resource for members of the NBER community: research affiliates, employees, conference participants, and others who spend time in the NBER's offices. The Ombuds helps individuals manage conflicts, express concerns, and resolve disputes by providing impartial attention in a confidential setting. She can listen to concerns about various issues, assist in the framing of these concerns and the evaluation of options, coach individuals in reaching out to other parties, including those who have formal resolution authority, facilitate informal resolution, and serve as a voice within the NBER for concerns that individuals may feel uncomfortable raising. She can also provide information about organizational policies and procedures.

The Ombuds will not disclose an individual's name or concern to anyone else unless she is given explicit permission to do so for the purpose of informal conflict resolution. This promise of privacy may only be broken if the Ombuds determines that there is an imminent risk of serious harm. While she will create a record for administrative purposes each time she is contacted, she will only create a more detailed record with information on the matter discussed with the permission of the individual who contacts her.

The Ombuds is not an investigator and does not carry out independent fact-finding. She does not adjudicate disputes, but rather offers suggestions for ways that the parties can try to resolve them. She offers an alternative to formal reporting channels, and is independent of all other departments at the NBER. She reports only to the President. She may provide information on situations that may be of concern to the organization, in a way that will not identify particular individuals, to NBER staff members, program directors, conference organizers, and others in managerial or leadership positions.

The Ombuds may try to mediate and offer suggestions for resolving issues, but she does not accept formal complaints on behalf of the NBER. She may provide information to individuals about the process for initiating a formal complaint, and on other steps that could lead to an investigation of a matter of concern. The procedures for making formal reports of incidents of harassment and scientific misconduct may be found in the NBER’s policies covering these issues, which are available at https://papers.nber.org/professionalconduct.html

Individuals who may wish to file a formal complaint about any NBER-related matter do not need to contact the Ombuds prior to availing themselves of other channels.

Once each year, the Ombuds will provide a summary report to the NBER President on the nature of the issues that have been raised, along with a description of the way in which matters were generally resolved.

The NBER Ombuds is Robyn Klinger. She may be reached at ombuds@nber.org. She is a Boston-based lawyer with rich experience in the human resources area. Her role as NBER Ombuds is separate from her legal practice. She is available for email, telephone and in-person meetings. She will recuse herself from participating in any matter that might raise a financial or other conflict of interest for her or for members of her immediate family.

Complaints or concerns about the performance of the Ombuds should be directed to the NBER President, op@nber.org. The NBER Ombuds program will be periodically reviewed by the NBER President and Board of Directors.