ETHICS MATTER: BE INSPIRED BY YOUR PROFESSIONAL VALUES

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Introduction:

• Effective and Responsive Local Government Is the Basis for Our Profession

• Fundamental Values Underpin ICMA’s Code of Ethics & Our Profession

• While It Is Easy To Ascribe To These Values, It Is Often More Challenging To Meet the Challenge of Demonstrating These Values
Introduction:

- In This Afternoon's Session We Will:
  
  - Review Key Values on Which the ICMA Code of Ethics & the Profession are Based
  - Discuss Why Meeting the Challenge of These Values Is Often Difficult
  - Suggest Ways to Assist You in Meeting the Challenge of Upholding These Values

Key Values:

- Equity in the Delivery of Public Services
- Preventing Political Interference
- Making Personnel Decisions Solely on Merit
- Respecting Democratic Values/Maintaining The Public's Confidence
- Avoiding Conflicts of Interest
- Demonstrating Ethical Conduct & Integrity
Equity in the Delivery of Public Services

The Challenge:

• Equity requires a commitment to fair and just implementation of public policies and services with attention to the most vulnerable and underserved members of the community.

• It requires that we ensure fairness, equal treatment and access, by creating a level playing field.

Equality = SAMENESS, it promotes fairness and justice by giving everyone the same thing.

BUT it can only work if everyone starts from the same place.

EQUITY = FAIRNESS, it’s making certain that all people get ACCESS to the same opportunities and services.

Differences in where people come from or history, can create barriers to participation or access.

Ensuring EQUITY first, allows everyone to enjoy EQUALITY.
Preventing Political Interference

The Challenges:

- One or More Elected Officials Attempting to Influence Administrative Matters
- Managers Wanting to Stay in the “Good Graces” of Elected Officials
- Fear of Employment Ramifications Including, Potentially, Termination
- Often Not a “Bright Line” Between Policy and Management

Preventing Political Interference

The Strategies:

- Take The Time to Thoughtfully Consider Where “Your Line” Is--Based on Charter/Ordinances/Form of Government
- Determine in Advance Your Thresholds for Political Interference
- Discuss With Elected Officials in Advance Of A Specific Issue The Reason For Keeping Politics Out of Service Delivery/Administration
- Realize the Impacts of Incremental Decisions That Cause Fundamental Problems
Making Personnel Decisions Solely On Merit

The Challenges:
- Fairness and impartiality should guide ALL personnel matters and decisions.
- Does emotion or bias cloud your judgement when elected officials feel comfortable urging you to hire family members?
- Are you attempting to curry favor with union leaders by heeding unsolicited personal recommendations for new hires or promotions?

The Strategies:
- Stand up against any outside encroachment or quid pro quo in all personnel matters.
- Hire and promote for VALUES.
- Ethical leadership creates an environment where the goals and values of those working in the organization align with its mission.
- Diversity, equity and inclusion are key considerations in the recruitment and retention of a talented and effective workforce that reflects the community it serves.
Respecting Democratic Values/Maintaining the Public’s Confidence

- The Challenges:
  - Skepticism of Public Institutions
  - Misalignment of Staff or Governing Board Goals With Their Residents/Constituents
  - Short Circuiting Public Participation/Input Re Decision Making
  - Poor Responsiveness to Public
  - Limited Staffing & Funding
  - Half-Hearted Implementation of Decisions

Respecting Democratic Values/Maintaining the Public’s Confidence

- The Strategies:
  - Fully Appreciate the Nature of the Organizations in Which We Serve
  - Fully Appreciate Why “The System” Was Designed the Way It Was
  - Always Appreciate the “Ends” Can’t be Separated From The “Means”
  - Remember the “Process is Often The Product”
  - Excellent Public Service & Responsiveness
Avoiding Conflicts of Interest

The Challenges:
- Struggling with decisions or actions that are inconsistent or conflict with your values is a signal of potential trouble.
- Honesty, integrity, accountability and transparency can be compromised when you forget that conflicts don’t always arise from intentional acts.
- Is your personal and professional conduct building trust among elected officials, staff and the community?

The Strategies:
- Values and principles are overarching to avoid conflicts at the intersection of personal interests or loyalties and professional obligations.
- Aligning your decisions and behaviors with your values helps to avoid conflicts in practice or appearance.
- Knowing and acting on your values is important because they guide your decisions and actions, especially in times of uncertainty and change.
- The stakes are high when your reputation is on the line.
Demonstrating Ethical Conduct & Integrity

• The Challenges:
  • Complacency/Over Confidence
  • Rationalization
  • Blind Spots
  • Entitlement
  • Self Interest
  • Fear

• The Strategies:
  • Don’t Mistake Legal for Ethical
  • Be Alert to the Ethical Implications of Decisions
  • Be Aware Potential Negative Consequences Does Not Relieve You of Your Ethical Obligations
  • Counter Blind Spots Though Reflection & Seeking Other Opinions
  • Understand How You Will be Judged as a Leader
  • Appreciate Your 3 Levels of Ethical Responsibility
  • The ICMA Code of Ethics
Questions:

- What Values Brought You to the Profession?

- What Values Are The Most Meaningful to You Now?

- How Have You Been Challenged to Live Up To These Values & How Did You Respond?

Integrity: Stephen Carter

- Discerning Right vs. Wrong

- Acting on What You Believe—Even at Personal Cost

- Saying Openly Why You Are Doing What You Are Doing
**Blind Spots: Max Bazerman & Ann Tunbrunsel**

- The Struggle Between What You Want to Do and What You Should Do
- Many Ethical Challenges are Not Identified Early Enough
- Informal Values Overwhelm Formal Values
- Most People Think They Are More Ethical Than Most Other People

**The Honest Truth About Dishonesty**

- Once We Start Violating Our Standards the More Likely That the Frequency and Magnitude of Our Violations Will Escalate
- We Often Deceive Ourselves to Maintain a Positive Self Image
- Accepting Favors, No Matter How Small, Will Bias Us in Favor of the Provider
ICMA E-Book

*Ethics Matter!*

*Advice for Public Managers*

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**Resources**

International City/County Management Association (ICMA): [www.icma.org](http://www.icma.org)

Institute for Local Government (ILG): [www.ca-ilg.org](http://www.ca-ilg.org)