

# 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



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## 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



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## 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

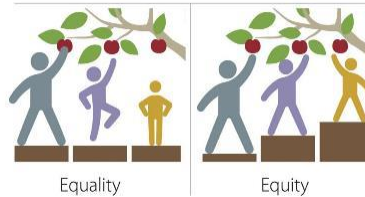


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## Equity in the Delivery of Public Services

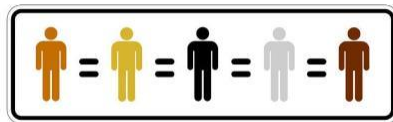
### The Challenge:

- 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.



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## Equity in the Delivery of Public Services



- **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**.

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## 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



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## 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



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## 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?



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## Making Personnel Decisions Solely On Merit



### 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.

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## 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



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## 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



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## 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?

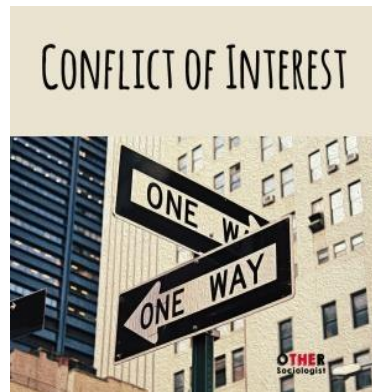


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## Avoiding Conflicts of Interest

### 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.



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## Demonstrating Ethical Conduct & Integrity

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



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## Demonstrating Ethical Conduct & Integrity

- 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



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### Questions:

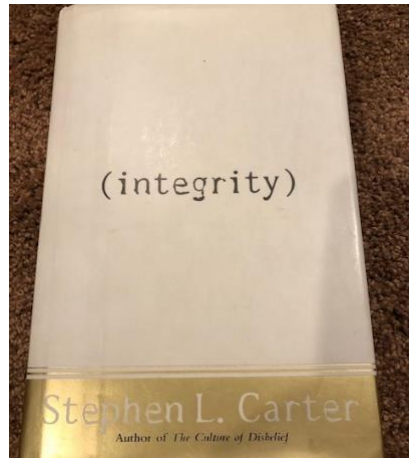
- What Values Brought You to the Profession?
- What Values Are The Most Meaningful to You Now?
- How Have You Been Challenged to Live Up To These Values & How Did You Respond?



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### *Integrity:* Stephen Carter

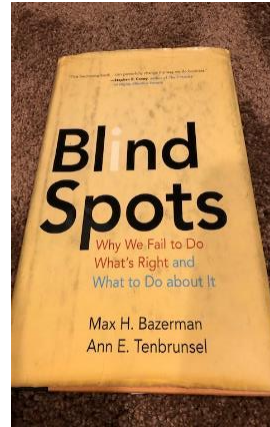
- Discerning Right vs. Wrong
- Acting on What You Believe—Even at Personal Cost
- Saying Openly Why You Are Doing What You Are Doing



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## *Blind Spots: Max Bazerman & Ann Tunbrunsel*

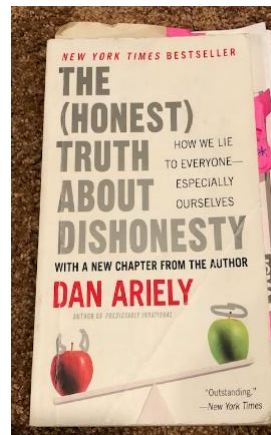
- The Struggle Between What You Want to Do and What You Should Do
- Many Ethical Challenges are Not Identified Early Enough
- Informal Values Overwhelm Formal Values
- Most People Think They Are More Ethical Than Most Other People



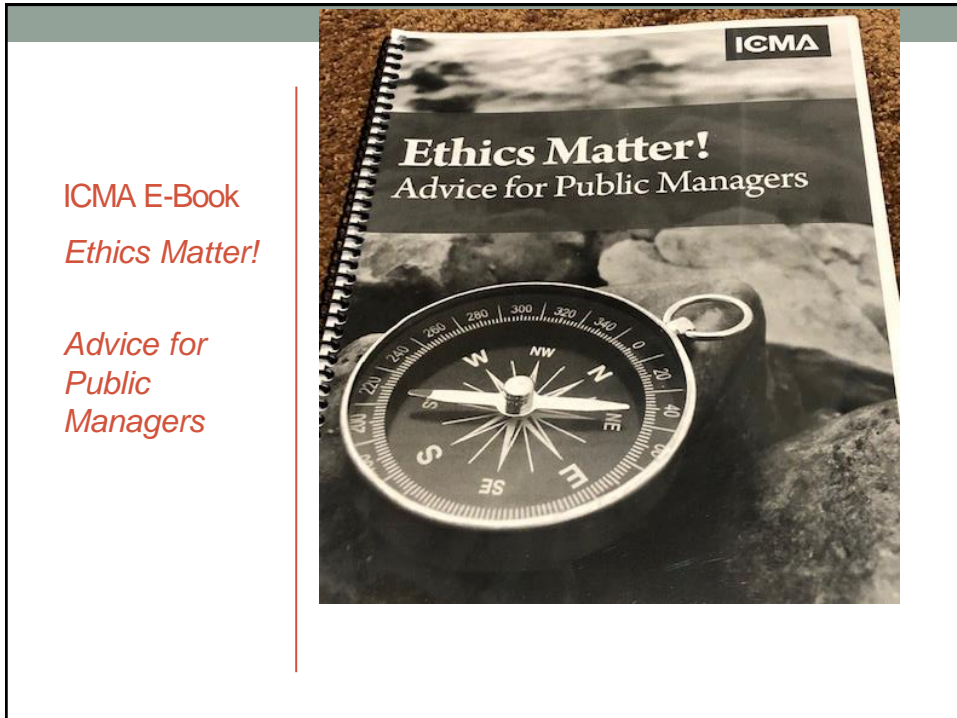
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## *The Honest Truth About Dishonesty*

- Once We Start Violating Our Standards the More Likely That the Frequency and Magnitude of Our Violations Will Escalate
- A Single Act of Dishonesty Can Change A Person's Behavior Going Forward—Changing Self Image and Reducing Our Defenses
- We Often Deceive Ourselves to Maintain a Positive Self Image
- Accepting Favors, No Matter How Small, Will Bias Us in Favor of the Provider



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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)

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