



## Session 2

### Group Exercises

Ethics Scenarios 1, 2, 3  
Supervisory Situations 4-1 and 4-2  
Case Study: Water or Sewer?

### Individual Exercises/Handouts

Worksheet T-P Leadership Self-Assessment  
Worksheet 9.3 Instilling Ethics in the Workplace  
Worksheet 6.2: Planning for Project Management

### Homework

Read Chapters 5 and 6  
Complete the Individual Exercises and read Articles and Materials from the thumb drive for Session 3  
Be prepared to discuss your jurisdiction and/or departmental budget

### Articles and Materials

Building an Ethical Culture  
Organizational Ethics  
12 Steps for Ethical Leadership  
Managing Ethical Dilemmas  
Exercise Caution with Creative Workarounds  
Four Tips for Mission and Values Statements for Local Government  
Importance of Accountability in Local Government  
Articles on Ethics Violations and Corruption

## **Group Exercises**

## Ethics

### ☞ Scenario # 1

You have just presented a half-day afternoon workshop to a professional audience. At the conclusion, an attractive workshop participant who seemed particularly interested in the topic asks you some thought-provoking questions about the topic as the other participants leave the room. You begin an animated discussion about the topic. After about ten minutes, the participant asks you if you want to continue the discussion over a cup of coffee. You don't have any plans for the next few hours. What do you do?

### ☞ Scenario # 2

The City's IT (Information Technology) supervisor informs you that one of your direct reports, Tim, has been spending considerable time on the internet looking at real estate and investment sites. The amount of time this past month exceeded 30 hours. In addition to the sites mentioned there was some activity on questionable sites per the city's code of conduct and internet use policy. You are aware that Tim has requested and received permission for outside employment provided it does not interfere with his assigned work duties. Tim continues to be a productive employee.

- ☞ Has Tim violated any code of conduct?
- ☞ Is the amount of time on the internet excessive?
- ☞ What types of sites are considered questionable?
- ☞ What is the right thing to do?

### **Scenario #3**

You are a planner in a community with a new sign ordinance that prohibits banners from being strung across the road. The ordinance was adopted in response to several unattractive advertising banners that had frequently been strung across local roads and often become entangled with electrical wires. On your way to work one morning, you see that a community group has strung a banner across the main street that advertises an upcoming charity event that will generate thousands of dollars for needy families. You know that the money is greatly needed and that local officials and residents support the event. What do you do?

### Supervisory situation 4-1

The stormwater drainage department has had the city's poorest safety record and the highest incidence of citizen complaints about appearance, attitude, and performance. The new department head recently called the first-line supervisors together to present the following challenge:

"We've got to do something about our department. I understand many of you have expressed concerns that you don't believe you're being paid enough, but it's difficult to justify a request for salary increases with our record of complaints and reputation for poor performance results. What would our department be like if things were better? I know we're capable of better performance. I want you to get together and write a vision statement for our department. After you write that vision statement, I would like you to develop three goals for your teams":

1. What would your vision statement be?
2. As a supervisor in the stormwater drainage department, what three goals would you write for yourself or for your team?
3. Would you talk to the employees to get their ideas and suggestions? What might be the benefit of talking with employees?

### Supervisory situation 4-2

You are a supervisor in the Plainville Parks and Recreation Department. You head the Forestry Team. The vision of the city of Plainville is "the safest city in the state."

1. What would your vision statement be for your team?
2. Write three goals for your team that would contribute to the vision of the city.
3. What questions would you ask your employees on a daily basis to measure the achievement of these goals?

---

## Case Study: Water or Sewer?

Jerry Rogers is a supervisor of a water and sewer maintenance crew in the town of McLean. He takes certain pride in his position—a position he worked up to after starting as a laborer with the town many years ago.

Jerry had several projects assigned to his work team. First, he had received an assignment to unclog a sewer in the downtown area. The town had received several calls from angry business owners who demanded that the problem be fixed once and for all. Almost a decade ago a lack of capital funds had forced the town to combine storm and sanitary sewers. Since then, the sewers often became blocked after a heavy rain, and raw sewage would back up. This particular sewer had experienced problems repeatedly. Usually, the problem could be easily corrected by removing a tree limb or some other obstruction at the sewer intersection closest to the back-up. The work usually took three crew members one day to complete.

The second project was a leaking water line in the industrial development park that had just been built. The soil in the area was sandy and as the development settled, the pipes had shifted slightly, causing the leaks. It looked as though there was little water accumulation, but the water pressure was down. Jerry decided that he would have to patch up the line soon. Previous repairs had taken five crew members about ten working days.

The third project involved a request from the fire department for the installation of three new hydrants in the downtown area. The hydrants were required to meet recommendations made in the last fire insurance grading schedule. The department's request indicated that a grading inspector was scheduled to come to their city in three weeks. Each hydrant would probably take four crew members three days to install.

How should Jerry determine the priorities and develop a workplan for his team?

# Individual Exercises

Worksheet T-P Leadership Self Assessment

The following items describe various aspects of leadership. Respond to each item according to the way you would act if you were the leader of your department. Circle whether you would behave in the described way *always* (A), *frequently* (F), *occasionally* (O), *seldom* (S), or *never* (N).

*If I were the leader of my department,....*

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I would most likely act as the spokesperson of the group.                | A | F | O | S | N |
| 2. I would encourage overtime work.   | A | F | O | S | N |
| 3. I would allow members complete freedom in their work.                    | A | F | O | S | N |
| 4. I would encourage the use of uniform procedures.                         | A | F | O | S | N |
| 5. I would permit members to use their own judgment in solving problems.    | A | F | O | S | N |
| 6. I would stress being ahead of competing groups.                          | A | F | O | S | N |
| 7. I would speak as a representative of the group.                          | A | F | O | S | N |
| 8. I would needle members for greater effort.                               | A | F | O | S | N |
| 9. I would try out ideas in the group.                                      | A | F | O | S | N |
| 10. I would let members do their work the way they think best.              | A | F | O | S | N |
| 11. I would be working hard for a promotion.                                | A | F | O | S | N |
| 12. I would be able to tolerate postponement and uncertainty.               | A | F | O | S | N |
| 13. I would speak for the group when visitors were present.                 | A | F | O | S | N |
| 14. I would keep the work moving at a rapid pace.                           | A | F | O | S | N |
| 15. I would turn members loose on a job and let them go at it.              | A | F | O | S | N |
| 16. I would settle conflicts when they occur in the group.                  | A | F | O | S | N |
| 17. I would get swamped by details  | A | F | O | S | N |
| 18. I would represent the group at outside meetings.                        | A | F | O | S | N |
| 19. I would be reluctant to allow members any freedom of action.            | A | F | O | S | N |
| 20. I would decide what the work group should do and how it should be done. | A | F | O | S | N |
| 21. I would push for increased production.                                  | A | F | O | S | N |
| 22. I would let members have authority over some aspects of their job.      | A | F | O | S | N |
| 23. Things would usually turn out as I predict.                             | A | F | O | S | N |
| 24. I would allow the group a high degree of initiative.                    | A | F | O | S | N |
| 25. I would assign members to particular tasks.                             | A | F | O | S | N |
| 26. I would be willing to make changes.                                     | A | F | O | S | N |
| 27. I would ask members to work harder.                                     | A | F | O | S | N |
| 28. I would trust members to exercise good judgment                         | A | F | O | S | N |
| 29. I would schedule the work to be done.                                   | A | F | O | S | N |
| 30. I would refuse to explain my actions.                                   | A | F | O | S | N |
| 31. I would persuade others that my ideas are to their advantage.           | A | F | O | S | N |
| 32. I would permit the group to set its own pace.                           | A | F | O | S | N |
| 33. I would urge the group to beat its previous record.                     | A | F | O | S | N |
| 34. I would act without consulting the group.                               | A | F | O | S | N |
| 35. I would ask that group members follow standard rules and regulations.   | A | F | O | S | N |

Use the score sheet to tally your scores and mark them in the spaces below

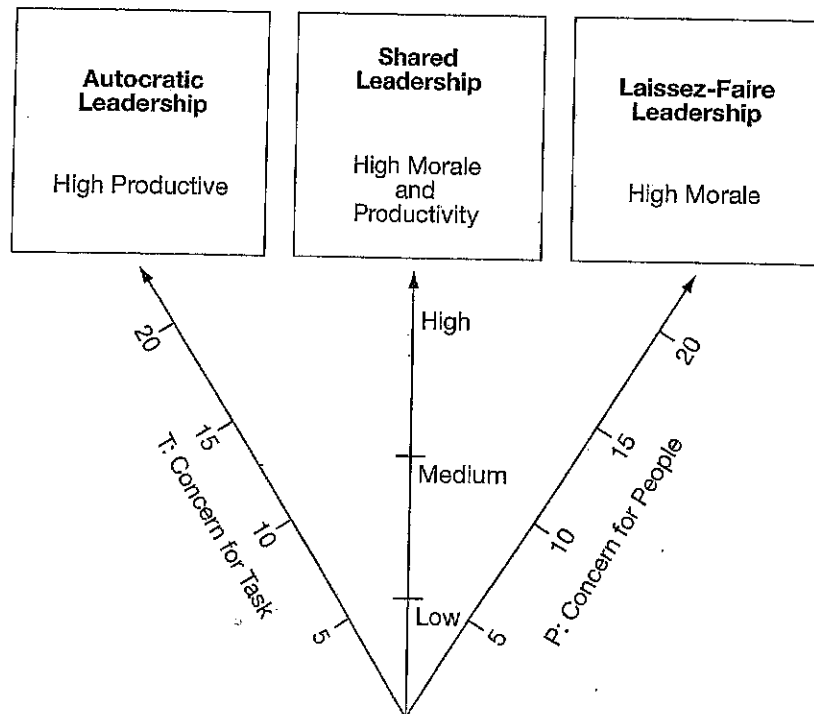
T \_\_\_\_\_

P \_\_\_\_\_

## Leadership-Style Scoring Sheet

Follow these instructions to score your answers and determine your leadership style:

1. Circle items 8, 12, 17, 18, 19, 30, 34, and 35.
2. Look at your responses to each of the circled items. Put a check (✓) if you marked S (seldom) or N (never) to that item.
3. Now look at the uncircled items and put a check (✓) in front of items to which you responded A (always) or F (frequently).
4. Circle the checks that are in front of the following items: 3, 5, 8, 10, 15, 18, 19, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, and 35.
5. Count the circled checks. This is your score for concern for people. Record the score in the blank following the letter P at the end of the questionnaire.
6. Count the uncircled checks. This is your score for concern for tasks. Record this number in the blank following the letter T.
7. Mark your score on the concern for task (T) dimension on the left arrow below. Next, mark your score on the concern for people (P) dimension. Draw a straight line that intersects the P and T scores. The point at which that line crosses the shared leadership arrow indicates your score on that dimension.



©2005, ICMA. Reprint permission for this page granted only to participants of the *Effective Supervisory Skill Building* course. Adapted from *A Handbook of Structured Experiences for Human Relations Training*, vol. 1, by J.W. Pfeiffer & J.E. Jones (Eds.) Copyright ©1974 by Pfeiffer & Company, San Diego, CA. Used with permission. The T-P Leadership Questionnaire was adapted from Sergiovanni, Metzcus, and Burden's revision of the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire, *American Educational Research Journal* 6 (1969), 62-79.



**Worksheet 9.3****Instilling Ethics in the Workplace**

The following strategies can be employed to define and encourage ethical behavior. Check each of the strategies that is employed in your local government.

- Ethics is discussed as part of employee selection, orientation, and evaluation.
- There are regular opportunities for ethics awareness training, using cases, videotapes, role-playing, and other exercises.
- There are regular opportunities for employees to discuss their view and concerns on ethics.
- There is a code of ethics that applies to everyone, and everyone has a copy.
- There are guidelines for identifying potential ethical problems.
- There are procedures for handling ethical problems when they arise.
- Areas susceptible to unethical practices have been identified and adequate controls have been implemented.
- The standards of ethical conduct are consistently enforced and appropriate sanctions promptly applied.
- There is an ethics committee or officer that administers and enforces the code of ethics.
- The decisions of ethics committees or officers are published and available for others to review.
- An employee can obtain an advisory opinion in advance of a proposed action.
- Ethically questionable conduct is dealt with immediately and appropriately.

What other strategies have been undertaken by your local government to encourage ethical behavior?

What strategies could be undertaken?

**Worksheet 6.2****Planning for Project Management**

Think about a project that you are currently managing or that you will likely manage in the near future. Answer the following questions:

1. What process or system will the team study? What parts of this process or system will not be included in the study?
2. Who is in charge of the project? How will decisions be made?
3. What perceived need led to the selection of this project? What data were collected to verify the choice and focus of the project?
4. What are the goals or desired outcomes of the project? What specific improvement goals is the team expected to achieve? What changes are expected to result?
5. How will the process be improved? Will improvement occur in phases? What impact will the new process have on the local government or department? On employees? On citizens?
6. Design a flowchart that describes the process or system and that shows which parts the team should target.
7. List team members. What work areas or technical specialties must be represented for the team to accomplish its mission?
8. When will the project begin? Is there a target date for completion? What limitations are there on the length of the project?
9. What financial resources will be needed? What limitations are there on budgets? What other resources will be needed?
10. When, where, and how often will the team meet? Who will facilitate team meetings?
11. How often will the team report results? To whom will results be reported? In what format?
12. What training is needed? How will training be provided?

## Articles and Materials

# Building an Ethical Culture

Eight factors to consider | BY MARTHA PEREGO, ICMA-CM

**ICMA members, who adhere to the ICMA Code of Ethics, are proud of their commitment to a very high ethical standard. But are we equally proud of the ethical climate of the organizations in which we work and lead? Have we demonstrated real leadership in promoting ethical behaviors and practices in our organizations?**

The dawn of a new decade is the perfect time to focus on the ethical fitness and well-being of your organization. There is no better time to either craft a thoughtful strategy for strengthening the ethical culture of the organization you lead or take stock of your efforts to date. Consider these factors that are critical to building an ethical culture:

**1. The standard is set at the top.** You can't lead from the rear on this issue. In the mundane everyday activities as well as in the challenging moments, you set the ethical standard and tone. If you want to inspire your staff to the highest standard of conduct, you must model the conduct you want to see in others. As Stephen Covey noted, "What you do has far greater impact than what you say." And when errors or missteps happen, you must demonstrate true accountability by taking personal responsibility and addressing the deficiencies.

**2. Define the organization's core values and the behaviors that support those values.** ICMA members can look to the ICMA Code of Ethics for values-based

guidance on ethical dilemmas. Staff members who belong to other professional associations with a code of ethics get similar assistance. But employees who are not members of a professional association with a code of ethics are left without any guidance if their place of employment fails to define its core values and the behaviors that support those values.

Work to develop organizational values that will reduce ambiguity and provide individuals with some essential guidance on what's expected and what's right. As you develop your group's values, use a process that engages elected officials and staff to achieve greater commitment to the values.

If your organization already has a code of ethics, is it still viable and does it influence conduct? Is there still clarity and agreement on the core values that drive critical decisions? Remember that organizations or teams with shared values produce the best results.

**3. Assess the organization's culture.** Wouldn't some baseline information about attitudes and behaviors in the organization be helpful in crafting your strategy? For example, how would your staff respond to these statements:

- I work with people I can trust.
- My supervisors are ethical in their decisions and conduct.
- I am expected to report questionable behavior when I see it.



**MARTHA PEREGO, ICMA-CM**, is director of member services and ethics director, ICMA, Washington, D.C. (mperegó@icma.org).

## ICMA

International City/County  
Management Association

icma.org

January 2020

Public Management (PM) (USPS: 449-300) is published monthly by ICMA (the International City/County Management Association) at 777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002-4201. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. The opinions expressed in the magazine are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of ICMA.

**COPYRIGHT** 2019 by the International City/County Management Association. All rights reserved. Material may not be reproduced or translated without written permission.

**REPRINTS:** To order article reprints or request reprint permission, contact pm@icma.org.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** U.S. subscription rate, \$46 per year; other countries subscription rate, \$155 per year. Printed in the United States. Contact: 202/289-4262; subscriptions@icma.org.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Public Management, ICMA, 777 N. Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20002-4201.

**ARTICLE PROPOSALS:** Visit icma.org/pm to see "Editorial Guidelines" for contributors.

For more information on local government leadership and management topics, visit icma.org.

### Public Management (PM)

icma.org/pm

**ICMA**  
777 North Capitol Street, N.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20002-4201

**EDITORIAL OFFICE:**  
pm@icma.org

**ADVERTISING SALES:**  
202-367-2497  
Tilman Gerald  
The Townsend Group, Inc.  
gerald@townsend-group.com

**ICMA MEMBER SERVICES:**  
800.745.8780 | 202.962.3680  
membership@icma.org

### ICMA Creating and Supporting Thriving Communities

ICMA's vision is to be the leading association of local government professionals dedicated to creating and supporting thriving communities throughout the world. It does this by working with its more than 12,000 members to identify and speed the adoption of leading local government practices and improve the lives of residents. ICMA offers membership, professional development programs, research, publications, data and information, technical assistance, and training to thousands of city, town, and county chief administrative officers, their staffs, and other organizations throughout the world.

**Public Management (PM)** aims to inspire innovation, inform decision making, connect leading-edge thinking to everyday challenges, and serve ICMA members and local governments in creating and sustaining thriving communities throughout the world.



ethical decision-making. Regular training builds awareness of common ethical issues, provides tools and strategies for effective problem-solving, and, yes, can even inspire people to do the right thing when they are faced with a difficult ethical dilemma.

Use new council orientations and goal-setting sessions to encourage elected officials to consider how their conduct

and commitment to public service values contribute to ethical government. Take the time to enlighten them about the ICMA Code of Ethics and your professional standards.

**7. Inoculate against the “e-virus” by providing advice, counseling, and safe reporting.** Make sure that staff members have informal and formal opportunities to raise any ethical concerns they may have about conduct or decisions in the organization. Create a safe and responsive environment outside the chain of command for those who need advice or want to report a concern. Effectively providing for advice and counseling may actually decrease the need for someone to “blow the whistle” by giving leadership advance warning and the opportunity to address ethically troubling activities.

**8. Promote your values.** Publicly and consistently communicate the values that guide you and the organization in your exchanges with the public, media, business, and other stakeholders. It is not about making a cavalier statement that your organization is better than others. It is demonstrating that you do have standards and are willing to be held accountable to them.

Employees want to be successful in their work and proud of the organization they work for. Make building a strong ethical culture your priority in 2020 to ensure the likelihood that will be true for both your employees and for you. **PM**

- I understand where to go for advice about ethical issues.

Assess your own conduct. Do you think that members of your staff would say that you demonstrate ethical behavior? Would they say that you show appreciation when they bring forth bad news, or do you “shoot the messenger” if they do so?

**4. Select the right who.** Recruit the most talented, ethical employees and link good conduct with incentive structures. Consider outlining your ethical expectations in the job description and recruitment announcements as well as incorporating questions designed to assess ethical awareness in the interview. Reinforce those expectations as part of the onboarding process. As Warren Buffett once noted, “In looking for people to hire, look for three qualities: integrity, intelligence, and energy. And if they don’t have the first, the other two will kill you.”

Celebrate exemplary conduct, whether it’s the ordinary everyday ethical conduct or the single courageous act.

**5. Challenge bad behavior.** It’s an old but true adage that what we allow, we approve. Do not walk by something that is wrong without addressing it. Failure to do so sends the implicit message that you condone that behavior.

**6. Commit to ethics training.** Good people don’t always make wise choices. Everyone can benefit from training to strengthen

#### 2019–2020 ICMA Executive Board

##### PRESIDENT

Jane Brautigam\*  
City Manager, Boulder, Colorado

##### PRESIDENT-ELECT

James Malloy\*  
Town Manager, Lexington, Massachusetts

##### PAST PRESIDENT

Karen Pinkos\*  
City Manager, El Cerrito, California

##### VICE PRESIDENTS

###### International Region

Tim Anderson  
Chief Administrative Officer, Waterloo,  
Ontario, Canada

###### Sue Bidrose

Chief Executive Officer, Dunedin City  
Council, New Zealand

###### Robert Kristof

City Manager, Timisoara, Romania

###### Midwest Region

Wally Bobkiewicz\*  
City Administrator, Issaquah, Washington\*\*

Clint Gridley\*  
City Administrator, Woodbury, Minnesota

Molly Mehner\*  
Deputy City Manager, Cape Girardeau,  
Missouri

###### Mountain Plains Region

Heather Geyer\*  
City Manager, Northglenn, Colorado

Michael Land\*  
City Manager, Coppell, Texas

Raymond Gonzales  
County Manager, Adams County, Colorado

###### Northeast Region

Matthew Hart\*  
Town Manager, West Hartford, Connecticut

Christopher Coleman\*  
Town Manager, Westwood, Massachusetts

Teresa Tieman\*  
Town Manager, Fenwick Island, Delaware

###### Southeast Region

W. Lane Bailey\*  
City Manager, Salisbury, North  
Carolina

Laura Fitzpatrick\*  
Deputy City Manager, Chesapeake,  
Virginia

Michael Kaigler\*  
Assistant County Manager, Cha-  
atham County, Georgia

###### West Coast Region

Maria Hurtado\*  
Assistant City Manager, Hayward,  
California

Edward Shikada\*  
City Manager, Palo Alto, California

Peter Troedsson\*  
City Manager, Albany, Oregon

\* ICMA Credentialed Manager  
(ICMA-CM)

\*\* Serving the region from  
a different location as is  
permissible in the ICMA  
Constitution.



ICMA Executive Director Marc Ott

Director, Member  
Publications Lynne Scott lscott@icma.org

Managing Editor Kerry Hansen khansen@icma.org

Newsletter Editor Kathleen Karas kkaras@icma.org

Design & Production picantecreative.com

BY KEVIN DUGGAN, ICMA-CM

## ORGANIZATIONAL ETHICS

Leading practices for an ethical strategy

**O**rganizations that use leading practices are often defined as using approaches and techniques designed to achieve optimal results in one or more functional areas. They often seek out the most contemporary thinking regarding proven practices most likely to lead to organizational success.

A good deal is written and spoken about these practices in many areas of local government, including budgeting, resident engagement, human resources, law enforcement, and more. But what about ethics?

Have you considered whether your organization follows ethical best practices? Recognizing the many negative consequences for individuals or organizations that become ensnared in an ethical crisis, implementing the policies and processes most likely to prevent such events should undeniably be a high organizational priority. Here are some examples:

**Organizational code of ethics.** ICMA's Code of Ethics serves as a guide to a local government administrator's professional conduct. Organizational codes can also be an important component of a program to increase the odds that your organization will consistently perform in a manner considered consistent with high ethical standards.

Many ethical missteps are the result of staff members not recognizing they are violating organizational norms. To be truly effective, however, such codes need to be understood, accepted, and followed. Often, the old saying "the process is the product" applies.

Codes that are simply promulgated and given attention primarily when initially launched are not likely to have a long-term impact. Codes that are created with the active participation of staff and

reinforced with regular reference and discussion, however, are most likely to have a real impact.

**Employee selection processes.** To say the least, it is difficult to have an ethical organization without ethical employees. So why is so little time, attention, and effort given to making sure we hire individuals who are most likely to meet our organizational expectations? Does your organization incorporate ethics as a topic in job announcements, interview processes, and background checks? If not, why not?

**Employee orientation.** Thoughtful employee orientation programs are an important component of making sure new staff members are given the best opportunity to make a successful transition to our organizations and to meet organizational expectations. Does your program discuss organizational ethical expectations and values? If it does, that communicates a powerful message.

**Training.** Training is a critical component of establishing and maintaining all kinds of skills and aptitudes. What we train about and how often we train about it communicates a clear message regarding organization priorities.

When was the last time your organization had an employee development session on the topic of ethical conduct? Was it designed to be of practical value to your employees as they make decisions with ethical consequences on a regular basis?

**Performance evaluation systems.** What is covered, or is not covered, in the employee evaluation process communicates to employees what is



*Public Management (PM)* aims to inspire innovation, inform decision making, connect leading-edge thinking to everyday challenges, and serve ICMA members and local governments in creating and sustaining thriving communities throughout the world.

ICMA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
Marc Ott

DIRECTOR OF MEMBER PUBLICATIONS  
Lynne Scott

ART DIRECTOR  
Erika White

DESIGN  
Picante Creative Publications  
www.picantecreative.com

EDITOR  
Beth Payne

**PUBLIC MANAGEMENT (PM)** (USPS: 449-300) IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY EXCEPT FEBRUARY BY ICMA (THE INTERNATIONAL CITY/COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION) AT 777 NORTH CAPITOL STREET, N.E., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20002-4201. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID AT WASHINGTON, D.C., AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES. THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THE MAGAZINE ARE THOSE OF THE AUTHORS AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THE VIEWS OF ICMA.

**COPYRIGHT 2018** by the International City/County Management Association. All rights reserved. Material may not be reproduced or translated without written permission.

**REPRINTS:** Apply to the editor for permission to reprint any part of the magazine.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** U.S. subscription rate, \$46 per year; other countries subscription rate, \$156 per year. Printed in the United States.  
Contact: 202/289-4262; subscriptions@icma.org.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *Public Management*, ICMA, 777 N. Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 600, Washington, D.C. 20002-4201.

**ARTICLE PROPOSALS:** Visit [icma.org/pm](http://icma.org/pm) to see "Editorial Guidelines" for contributors.

**EDITORIAL INFORMATION**  
202/962-3619  
bpayne@icma.org

**ADVERTISING SALES**  
Christopher Riordan  
The Townsend Group, Inc.  
Tel: 202/367-2462  
Fax: 202/367-2173  
criordan@townsend-group.com

**ICMA**  
icma.org | icma.org/pm

# 2017-2018 ICMA EXECUTIVE BOARD

## PRESIDENT

**David Johnstone**

*City Manager—Retired, Candiac, Quebec, Canada*

## PRESIDENT-ELECT

**Karen Pinkos\***

*Assistant City Manager, El Cerrito, California*

## PAST PRESIDENT

**Lee Feldman\***

*City Manager, Fort Lauderdale, Florida*

## VICE PRESIDENTS

### WEST COAST REGION

**Bruce Channing**

*City Manager—Retired, Laguna Hills, California*

**Martha Bennett\***

*Chief Operating Officer Metro Council,  
Portland, Oregon*

**Marla Hurtado**

*Assistant City Manager, Hayward, California*

### MOUNTAIN PLAINS REGION

**Bert Lumbreras\***

*City Manager, San Marcos, Texas*

**James Jayne**

*County Manager, Coconino County, Arizona*

**Heather Geyer**

*City Manager, Northglenn, Colorado*

### MIDWEST REGION

**Lon Pluckhahn\***

*City Manager, Marion, Iowa*

**Patrick Klein**

*Director of Aviation, Kansas City, Missouri*

**Wally Bobkiewicz\***

*City Manager, Evanston, Illinois*

### SOUTHEAST REGION

**Carl Harness\***

*Chief Human Services Administrator,  
Hillsborough County, Florida*

**Edward Driggers\***

*City Administrator, Greer, South Carolina*

**W. Lane Bailey\***

*City Manager, Salisbury, North Carolina*

### NORTHEAST REGION

**Carlos Bala\***

*Deputy City Manager, Concord, New Hampshire*

**Stephanie Mason\***

*Township Manager, Doylestown, Pennsylvania*

**Matthew Hart\***

*Town Manager, West Hartford, Connecticut*

### INTERNATIONAL REGION

**Dennis Hovenden\***

*Chief Executive Officer  
Frankston City Council, Victoria, Australia*

**Frans Mencke**

*City Manager, Hoorn, Netherlands*

**Tim Anderson**

*Chief Administrative Officer, Waterloo,  
Ontario, Canada*

\*ICMA CREDENTIALLED MANAGER (ICMA-CM)

important in their roles. What does your evaluation processes say about ethical conduct as a priority?

**Reporting of suspected ethical misconduct.** Does your organization make it clear when employees are expected to report suspected ethical misconduct? Is it clear that a failure to disclose can ensnare others (including themselves) in the ethical problem?

Are there multiple avenues and individuals within the organization—in addition to an employee's supervisor or team leader—to which suspected problems can be reported (e.g., chief administrative officer's office, human resources, attorney)? Are employees given the assurance that if they do report their suspicions in good faith, they will be protected from retaliation?

## The Leadership Message

One of the most powerful messages

regarding organizational ethical expectations comes from the leadership of the organization. Does the chief executive and leadership team both talk about and model high ethical standards?

Do they regularly describe their ethical expectations for the organization and its members? Does the chief executive officer have an open-door policy allowing employees to talk about sensitive issues? Is it clear the leader is willing to listen to bad news and is not in the habit of "shooting the messenger?"

The ethical best practices discussed in this article do not represent a comprehensive list, but how many of these practices does your organization use? Have you considered what is an appropriate ethics strategy for your organization? **RM**



**KEVIN DUGGAN, ICMA-CM**, is ICMA West Coast Regional Director, Mountain View, California (kduggan@icma.org), and is the former city manager of Mountain View.

## Take Your Workplace Culture to New Heights

**NOW** is the perfect time to ensure that your staff understands your organization's values by providing the training and tools needed to address perplexing, on-the-job issues.

ICMA offers local government-specific training and technical assistance for staff, leaders, elected officials, board members, and commissioners.

**ICMA** Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

ICMA Ethics Center  
202-962-3521 | [icma.org/ethics](http://icma.org/ethics)

# Ethics

---

## 12 Steps for Ethical Leadership

1. **Hold yourself to a higher standard than is required.** Your action may be legal but unethical. Some people see a line in the sand and ask how close they can get to it without crossing it. This line, however, is a starting point. Stay as far away from the "unethical" line as possible, to avoid even the appearance of impropriety. Be sure your local government has an ethics law or ordinance. Just as important, actively promote and reinforce the ethical values that your organization supports.
2. **Openly share information.** Go beyond the technical requirements to disclose any personal or financial interest you may have. You gain public trust when you fully disclose information in a timely way.
3. **Stay out of politics.** Exercise your right to vote, and be a good advocate for your local government's position with the state legislature and Congress. But do not show favoritism to members of your governing body or to any candidate for office. Just say "no" when candidates ask you to sign their petitions, give them a contribution or endorsement, or help them with their fund-raising activities. And do not run for elected office yourself unless you are no longer employed in an appointed local government position.
4. **Keep your word.** If you accept a job, honor this commitment unless the fundamental terms of employment change.
5. **Don't accept or solicit gifts.** Some special interests or powerful individuals may assume they can buy your influence. If your organization doesn't have a policy, establish one so that employees understand the reasons they cannot accept inappropriate gifts.
6. **Tell the truth, and take care to be accurate.** Your resume should be complete and accurate. Likewise, your local government's financial and operational reports should reflect the highest standards of accuracy and clarity of information.
7. **Remember the powerless.** Your responsibility is to serve the best interests of all the people, not just to be a referee for competing interests that have power. Children, the elderly, the disabled, troubled teenagers, and those who are struggling to make ends meet all count on you to remember their voices.
8. **Keep improving your knowledge and skills, and generate a learning environment for your organization.** Competence is critical to using public resources wisely.



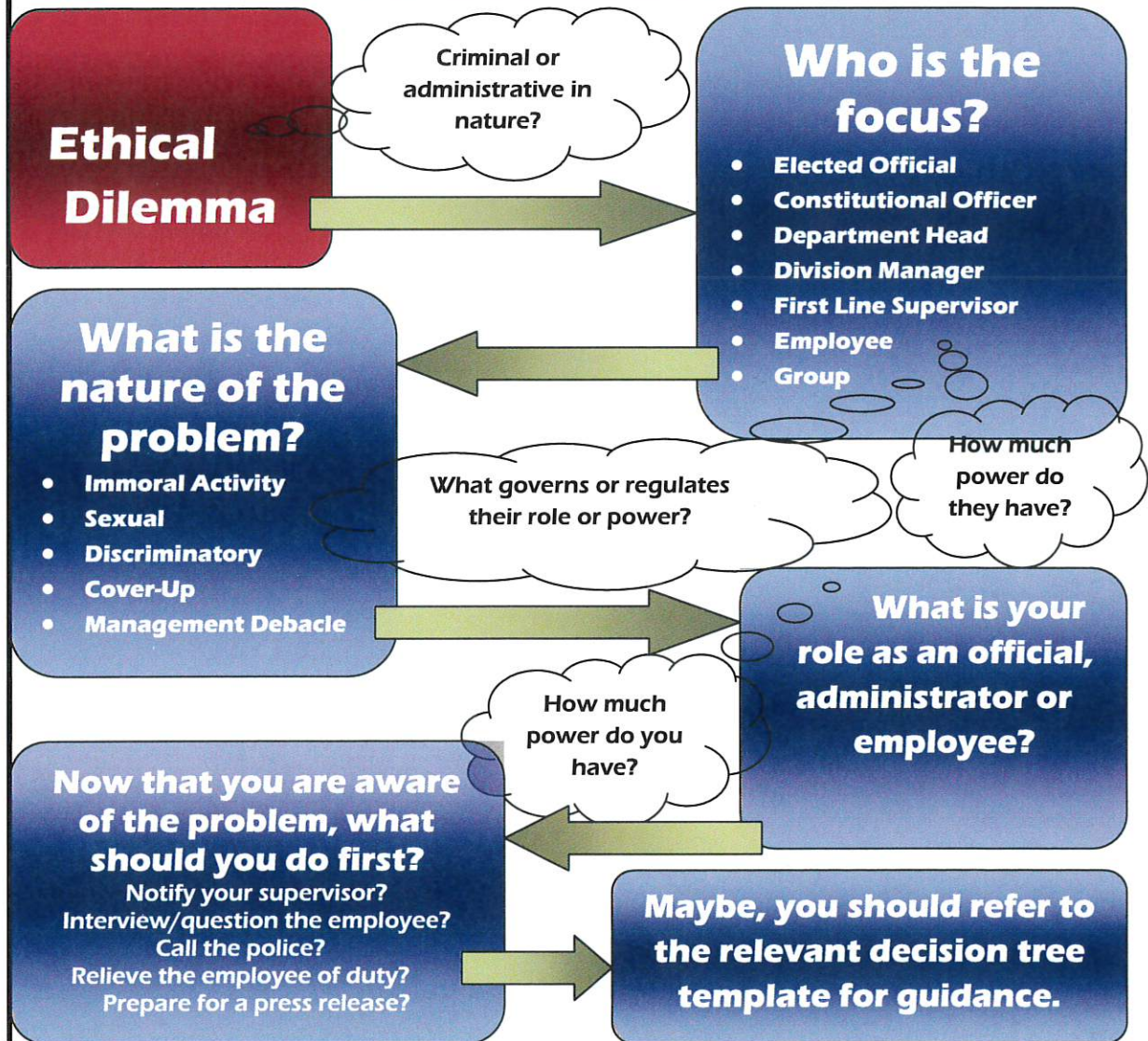
9. **Use fairness and merit in all personnel actions.** Be sure your organization has positive programs to ensure meaningful employment opportunities for all segments of the community.
10. **Treat your colleagues with respect and courtesy.** Employees deserve your best self, as do your colleagues in the profession. Let administrators in other communities know if their elected officials or staff have contacted you for advice.
11. **Ask for advice, and encourage your staff to ask for advice.** You can call ICMA staff or a trusted colleague for advice if you are wrestling with a difficult issue. Do your employees know whom to contact if they need advice?
12. **Share your passion for public service and its stewardship responsibilities.** If you can inspire those you work with, your contributions will multiply to leave your community in better shape than you found it.

—Elizabeth Kellar  
Deputy Executive Director  
ICMA

# Flow Chart

As local government employees, we are often confronted by situations that truly challenge our abilities as leaders and managers, but none more than ethical dilemmas, as they straddle complex boundaries that are difficult to define and regulate. The first hours or days of an ethical event are of importance, and may well set the stage for how well your organization responds in both internal and external arenas.

This visual guide is designed to prompt broad thought on your part before you begin to make any decision, regardless of the situation. It facilitates the broader concept of trust, which has been tainted to some degree by the situation you must now begin to manage from your position in the organization. The guide simply supports a logical series of important questions, designed to aid the decision making process in the preliminary phases of any situation.





## Top Ten List

### Ten Commandments of Local Government Ethics To Prevent, Manage, and Recover From an Ethical Crisis

1. **I**mplement internal controls, standard procedures and a Code of Ethics.
2. **I**nstitute checks and balances at all levels of the organization.
3. **R**otate responsibilities and duties — change personnel assignments.
4. **P**lace professional and ethical responsibility over personal friendships.
5. **E**mpower your employees to do “right.”
6. **A**ct upon — do not ignore — ethical violations.
7. **C**ollaborate — involve all appropriate personnel and authorities in an ethics investigation.
8. **C**ommunicate — internally and externally — with all of those who need to know.
9. **B**e transparent. Cover-ups damage trust and credibility.
10. **L**earn from the incident — as individuals, as an organization.



# Ethical Tool Box Checklist

Local elected and agency officials – and the agencies in which they serve – face a complex array of ethics-related laws. While some of these requirements may seem intuitive, others can be fairly characterized as traps for the unwary public official. Moreover, missteps, even inadvertent ones, can seriously undermine the public’s trust and confidence in their local government and those associated with it. What steps can the well-intended official take to make sure that his or her agency is maximizing the prospects for compliance and minimizing the likelihood of missteps?

Just as no local government today would think of acting without a formally adopted emergency response procedure, providing a clear chain of command, authority, and guidance in the event of a severe man-made or natural disaster; so too it is critical to have an ethical response system adopted in the event a serious ethical problem occurs designed to ensure authority to act and reassure the public. The most effective way to recover from an ethical crisis is to be ready before it happens. It is not just about addressing ethical violations perpetrated by the employees below you...how will you address ethical violations that involve elected officials or even top level organization managers? Let’s start by having a process in place to report, review, assess and enforce ethical violations before one happens. Ethical behavior should be a stated rather than assumed part of the core competencies of all people that represent the organization. It is essential not to assume that everyone is an expert in ethical behavior. Unknown circumstances can sometimes cause a person who would otherwise be a model individual to take actions that may compromise themselves and the organization at the same time however, don’t assume that everyone is inherently unethical.

**I**n 1932 during the Great Depression, a businessman in Chicago by the name of Herbert J. Taylor, who was in a local Rotary Club, faced bankruptcy for his company. Rather than looking to see how he could cut corners to “just get by”, he looked inward and as recounted by Mr. Taylor, he said: *“To win our way out of this situation, I reasoned we must be morally and ethically strong. I knew that in right there was might. I felt that if we could get our employees to think right, they would do right. We needed some sort of ethical yardstick that everybody in the company could memorize and apply to what we thought, said, and did in our relations to others. So one morning I leaned over on my desk, rested my head in my hands. In a few moments, I reached for a white paper card and wrote down that which had come to me – in twenty-four words.”*

**Is it the Truth?**

**Is it Fair to all concerned?**

**Will it build Goodwill and Better Friendships?**

**Will it be Beneficial to all concerned?**

These simple words were ultimately adopted in his own Club, then the U.S. organization, and now around the



# Checklist

## What to Consider Before a Violation Occurs



### Stakeholders

Identify the stakeholders and participants and work to establish a culture of ethical behavior.

- Establish a listing of all classes of employees, boards and commissions, whether appointed or elected, and require that all members of the organization participate in table top exercises designed to strengthen understanding. The exercises should be engaging and pertinent.



### Education for all

- Have in place a basic set of written cannons that will reinforce behavior for its elected officials, boards, and employees which will make the organization world class. These cannons and policies should include the identification of a chain of command with respect to the parties involved, considering among other things:



Whether the problem/issue is legal or ethical;

Who are the party or parties involved;

Who will be in charge;

Who must be involved in the process;

What is the nature of the violation and the potential sanctions or penalties;

What authority is available, and what options are available.

- Provide elected officials and employees with informational ethics materials at orientation explaining:

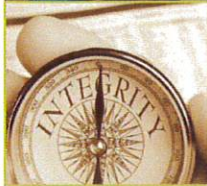
Obligations under public service ethics laws.

Unique ethical obligations and values associated with public service. A part of this education should include periodic self-assessment activities.





# Checklist



- Adopt a code of behavior.
- Adopt an ethics policy/ordinance.
- Establish a formally agreed upon process to authorize an investigation and action in the event of a serious ethical violation.
- Establish a process to be invoked when the potential infraction involves constitutional officers or other elected officials.
- Develop an effective method for regularly monitoring compliance with ethics laws and laws governing the use and expenditure of public funds.
- Adopt a policy that clearly explains procedures for reporting and investigating allegations of misconduct and protection of those who report perceived misconduct.
- Establish a policy to guarantee protection and positive reinforcement for bringing truthful, but sometimes unwelcome, unpopular, or difficult, information to the attention of relevant decision-makers.

## E Education Specific to Elected Officials

### Governing Bodies

The level of education required will depend on whether there is party affiliation or not. Upon election, and prior to taking office, the newly elected officials should be advised about ethics laws, including conflict of interest, incompatible offices and governmental transparency requirements that will be relevant to their service.

### Appointed Boards, Committees and Commissions

These individuals must also be advised of their duty to perform the mission of their committee in the same manner as the body that appointed them.

### Constitutional or Row Officers

Often times the state or professional associations will provide minimal training with respect to certain compliance requirements however, these officials are administrative in nature and may or may not subscribe to the human resource policies and procedures established by the governing body for the general employee. This does not preclude them from complying with the same employment laws that govern public employment generally.

# Exercise Caution With Creative Workarounds

Bending the Rules Can Have Ethical Implications | BY KEVIN DUGGAN, ICMA-CM

**No doubt we have all encountered** organizational rules, policies, and procedures that we believe are unnecessary, cumbersome, inefficient, or unfair. And we certainly have a lot of policies and regulations in government recognizing that because public resources are at play there will be heightened scrutiny as we undertake our work on behalf of the public.

When we encounter a rule, policy, or procedure that we don't agree with, or don't think is reasonably applicable to the circumstances we are dealing with, it is often tempting to try to find a creative way to achieve our intended goal while "working around" the organizational constraint. Oftentimes, there may well be a creative alternative to achieve the desired outcome.

Achieving a goal through an alternative means is not in and of itself problematic. However, is there a risk of being a bit too creative? Can we inadvertently stray into unethical conduct as we attempt to achieve what we believe is an appropriate and reasonable outcome?

## Creative Alternatives Can Cause Problems

Recent news reports concern a questionable practice undertaken by a federal government official where

creativity, even if it was pursued for a good reason, went too far. A *USA Today* article, "Report: Pentagon Gave \$280K in Bogus Pay," tells of a senior Pentagon human resources official who authorized what were described as "fraudulent bonuses" (\$40,000 each) to officials in her agency.

Early retirement buyout incentives were in place and could be authorized by this senior HR official for a large number of non-senior officials. These same incentives were available to senior staff as well, but required a higher level of authorization (by the undersecretary of defense). However, the process of getting this higher-level approval was described as "onerous" and "slow."

The HR official in question described the situation as follows: "The juice ain't worth the squeeze on this." She developed what she believed was a creative workaround to this issue, advising retiring senior staff members to downgrade their positions for one pay period in order to allow them to qualify for her approval of the incentive.

However, once this approach became known, it resulted in a two-year investigation by the inspector general's office that involved 16 witnesses and the review of 31,000 emails. The HR official in question justified her actions by saying she believed "she was acting legally and



**KEVIN DUGGAN,**  
ICMA-CM, is  
director, ICMA  
West Coast Region,  
Mountain View, CA  
(kduggan@icma.org)  
and a former manager  
of Mountain View.

# ICMA

International City/County  
Management Association

icma.org

June 2019

Public Management (PM) (USPS: 449-300) is published monthly except February by ICMA (the International City/County Management Association) at 777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002-4201. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. The opinions expressed in the magazine are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of ICMA.

COPYRIGHT 2019 by the International City/County Management Association. All rights reserved. Material may not be reproduced or translated without written permission.

REPRINTS: To order article reprints or request reprint permission, contact pm@icma.org.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: U.S. subscription rate, \$46 per year; other countries subscription rate, \$155 per year. Printed in the United States. Contact: 202/289-4262; subscriptions@icma.org.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Public Management, ICMA, 777 N. Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20002-4201.

ARTICLE PROPOSALS: Visit icma.org/pm to see "Editorial Guidelines" for contributors.

For more information on local government leadership and management topics, visit ICMA.org.

## Public Management (PM)

icma.org/pm

ICMA  
777 North Capitol Street, N.E.  
Washington, DC 20002-4201

EDITORIAL OFFICE:  
pm@icma.org

ADVERTISING SALES:  
202-367-2497

Tilman Gerald  
The Townsend Group, Inc.  
tgerald@townsend-group.com

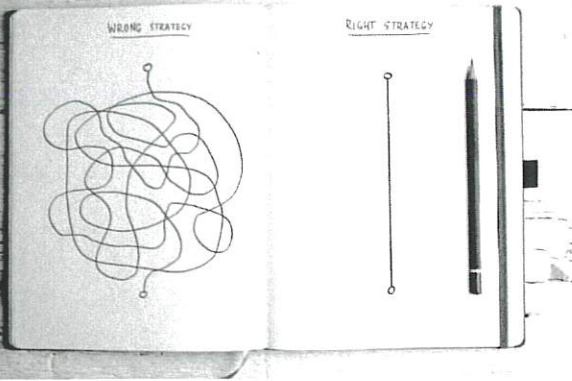
ICMA MEMBER SERVICES:  
800.745.8780 | 202.962.3680  
membership@icma.org

## ICMA

Creating and Supporting Thriving  
Communities

ICMA's vision is to be the leading association of local government professionals dedicated to creating and supporting thriving communities throughout the world. It does this by working with its more than 12,000 members to identify and speed the adoption of leading local government practices and improve the lives of residents. ICMA offers membership, professional development programs, research, publications, data and information, technical assistance, and training to thousands of city, town, and county chief administrative officers, their staffs, and other organizations throughout the world.

Public Management (PM) aims to inspire innovation, inform decision making, connect leading-edge thinking to everyday challenges, and serve ICMA members and local governments in creating and sustaining thriving communities throughout the world.



that there was no law or policy that prohibited her from temporarily downgrading senior officials to hasten their buyout packages.” Additionally, she reported that she had conducted similar downgrades at another government agency and that other employees told her the process was “not prohibited.”

However, the article interviewed subject-matter experts who variously described the conduct as “gross mismanagement,” “improper use of government resources,” and a “shell game.” While this HR official is still employed at the Pentagon (apparently not in her former position), final disposition of this issue is ongoing; at a minimum, this official’s career and reputation have been irreparably damaged.

### Ethical Lessons Learned

This example offers some clear ethical lessons:

- **Even if your intent is to achieve an authorized and appropriate outcome, how you achieve that outcome is critical.** It is not only important that the goal you are attempting to achieve is consistent with policy intent, but also that the techniques you use to achieve the goal are consistent with organizational expectations and values.

- **Avoid the temptation to conclude that something is OK simply because there is no rule against it.** Our employers, including the public, have higher expectations of us in regard to our conduct and the use of public resources than simply those covered explicitly by a law, rule, or regulation.
- **One of the most discredited, but still often cited, rationales for questionable behavior is “other people have done it or are doing it.”** We all need to be responsible for determining the appropriateness of our own conduct, not setting the bar based on examples we can find in others.
- **Always measure a potential action based on the assumption that it will be made public.** Are you comfortable taking the action even if you knew it would eventually become public knowledge? When working for the public, assume that anything you do will.
- **When evaluating a potential action to take, consider all the various stakeholders that legitimately can weigh in on the appropriateness of your action.** Those other than yourself or your immediate coworkers will likely judge your actions. Could other stakeholders possibly reach a different conclusion regarding the correctness of your conduct?

The constraints of working in the public sector, and with public resources, can often seem (and may often be) time-consuming and even onerous. While it is appropriate to attempt to work creatively within those restrictions to achieve goals efficiently, it requires careful consideration regarding when creativity can transition into inappropriate conduct.

The next time you are frustrated by a procedure or regulation, thoughtfully reflect on what is the reasonable level of creativity you can use to address the challenge. **PM**

#### 2018–2019 ICMA Executive Board

**PRESIDENT**  
Karen Pinkos\*  
City Manager, El Cerrito, California

**PRESIDENT-ELECT**  
Jane Brautigam\*  
City Manager, Boulder, Colorado

**PAST PRESIDENT**  
David Johnstone  
City Manager-Retired, Candiac,  
Quebec, Canada

**VICE PRESIDENTS**  
**International Region**  
Frans Mencke  
City Manager, Hoorn, Netherlands  
Tim Anderson  
Chief Administrative Officer, Waterloo,  
Ontario, Canada  
Sue Bidrose  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Dunedin City Council, New Zealand

**Midwest Region**  
Patrick Klein  
Director of Aviation, Kansas City, Missouri

Wally Bobkiewicz\*  
City Manager, Evanston, Illinois  
Clint Gridley\*  
City Administrator, Woodbury, Minnesota

**Mountain Plains Region**  
James Jayne  
County Manager, Coconino County, Arizona  
Heather Geyer  
City Manager, Northglenn, Colorado

Michael Land\*  
City Manager, Coppell, Texas

**Northeast Region**  
Stephanie Mason\*  
Township Manager, Doylestown,  
Pennsylvania

Matthew Hart\*  
Town Manager, West Hartford, Connecticut  
Christopher Coleman  
Assistant Town Manager, Needham,  
Massachusetts

**Southeast Region**  
Edward Driggers\*  
City Administrator, Greer, South  
Carolina

W. Lane Bailey\*  
City Manager, Salisbury, North  
Carolina

Laura Fitzpatrick\*  
Deputy City Manager,  
Chesapeake, Virginia

**West Coast Region**  
Martha Bennett\*  
Chief Operating Officer,  
Metro Council, Portland, Oregon

Maria Hurtado  
Assistant City Manager,  
Hayward, California  
Edward Shikada\*  
City Manager/General Manager of  
Utilities, Palo Alto, California

\*ICMA Credentialed Manager  
(ICMA-CM)



**ICMA Executive Director** Marc Ott  
**Director, Member Publications** Lynne Scott lscott@icma.org  
**Newsletter Editor** Kathleen Karas kkaras@icma.org  
**Art Director** Erika White ewhite@icma.org  
**Design & Production** picantecreative.com





Home / Blog Posts

# Four Tips for Mission and Values Statements in Local Government

Local governments need a mission and values statement that guides employee behavior, from the front lines of the organization to the manager's office.

BLOG POST | Nov 11, 2019

by Leisha DeHart Davis, professor of public administration and government, School of Government, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

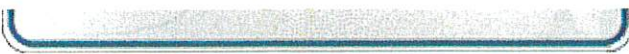
At the School of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC), we have a mission statement that includes the phrase *improving the lives of North Carolinians*. Our faculty and staff talk constantly about this mission: at meetings, in annual reports, during graduation ceremonies. Our School of Government mission infuses everything we do, steering and empowering us to be a force for good in the state of North Carolina.

Then there is the values statement by the town of Chapel Hill: RESPECT, which stands for Respect, Equity, Safety, Professionalism, Ethics, Communications and Teamwork. RESPECT is plastered in posters all over the town and laminated on the back of employee IDs badges.



Adobe Stock





Mission and values statements are powerful tools for local government organizations. Designed and implemented effectively, mission and values statements can guide decision-making, inspire and motivate employees, and set organizational culture.

An effective mission and values statement captures an organization's purpose and identifies how it will pursue that mission. Because there is no standard format, you will find a wide variety among local governments. Almost all will include a purpose and values; others incorporate philosophy; still others embed a vision for the organization. Some even have multiple missions, such as the [ice cream giant Ben's and Jerry's](#), which has a product mission (related to quality ice cream), a social mission (about improving quality of life), and an economic mission (pertaining to sustainable economic growth).

Some local governments have community mission statements that were designed by the governing body. This is fine, but you also need a mission and values statement that guides employee behavior, from the front lines of the organization to the manager's office.

Maybe your local government has a mission and values statement that needs revamping. Or maybe your city or county has never had a mission or values statement and is starting from scratch. Either way, here are some tips for getting you there.

## Identify why you are creating or revising your mission and values statement

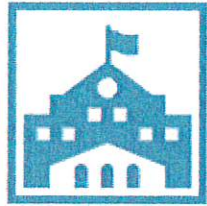
Is it to inspire and motivate employees? Promote shared values? Provide common direction? Guide decision-making? Research suggests that knowing why you are creating a mission and values statement helps you to design content that achieves your intended goals.

## Keep the mission short

There is no standard length, although shorter mission statements are easier to remember; some research even suggests that longer mission statements coincide with weaker financial performance and worse employee attitudes. If you have a long mission statement, look for memorable excerpts to put into practice.

## Involve employees

Doing so is critical for employee buy in and effectiveness: the more employees own the mission and values statement, the more likely they are to work toward it. Employee survey data from our UNC [Local Government Workplaces Initiative](#) suggests that when employees understand the mission, they are more likely to look forward to going to work and to want to spend the rest of their careers at their city or county.



80%

OF EMPLOYEES WHO UNDERSTAND THE  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT MISSION,  
SAY THEY WOULD BE HAPPY TO SPEND  
THE REST OF THEIR CAREERS WITH THEIR  
ORGANIZATION.

Source: Local Government Workplaces Initiative Data,  
UNC School of Government

Before it developed its mission statement, the town of Zebulon, North Carolina, worked with employees to create a set of core values that would guide the pursuit of its mission. Manager Joe Moore facilitated small groups of employees, who identified the values they thought were important. Zebulon selected values that emerged as common across groups, which result in the selection of honesty and integrity, family, dependability, respect and teamwork. Zebulon values are posted in all departments, used to onboard employees, and incorporated in performance reviews of managers.

## Incorporate your mission and values into organizational practice

This means talking about your mission at staff meetings, referencing the mission in performance management systems (like employee evaluations), and posting your mission in visible locations. To illustrate, the city of Albemarle, North Carolina, has a leadership and values statement—including teamwork, respect and humility—that it uses to onboard new

employees, hire department heads, and recognize departments and employees in the city's newsletter.

Think of your local government's mission and values statement as a lighthouse that guides your organization's path. By identifying your rationale, involving employees, and incorporating your mission into practice, you greatly increase the likelihood that your mission and values statement will be meaningful and effective.

## ICMA Blog

Get more content like this in your mailbox!

Subscribe via email

Subscribe to the latest from ICMA

[About](#)

[Contact](#)

[Join ICMA](#)

[Donate](#)



[Privacy Statement](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Sitemap](#)

© ICMA 2019 All Rights Reserved

[Get a Demo](#)[Return to Blog](#)

# Importance of Accountability in Local Government

**What you need to ensure an ethical, accountable local government.**

[✉ Email](#)

March 15, 2018

## Article highlights

---

The importance of ethics in government accountability.

---

Ways to create a culture of accountability in local government.

---

Accountability is an important part of any organization, but it's especially important in local government.

Governments must responsibly use their resources to provide services that meet the needs of constituents. Local governments answer to state and federal laws and guidelines for effective operations.

But most of all, they answer to the people they serve.

## Get a Demo

Governments have many different departments, and there can be a wide variance in standards between them.

Accountability measures help departments meet goals and work together. Plus, organizations that emphasize accountability can recognize problems and continually improve.

However, accountability in local government is about more than just efficient internal operations. Ultimately, government accountability is about maintaining the trust between government officials and citizens.

## The Importance of Ethics in Government Accountability

Local governments not only need to operate lawfully and ethically, but they need to work hard to avoid even the appearance of impropriety.

Accountability should be a concern for all local government employees, not just elected officials.

Governments won't be able to fulfill their roles if citizens don't trust all government employees to make decisions that serve the best interest of the community.

Even the appearance of questionable behavior can hurt public trust.

Therefore, accountability in local government requires strict standards and procedures to promote ethical behavior. As [a report by City Ethics](#) points out:

*"Because we cannot know the character or motivations of those who manage our communities, and because we cannot know how much their personal obligations affect their decisions, we can judge them, and hold them accountable, only by their actions and their relationships as they appear on their face.*

*"In other words, in government ethics, appearances are what matters most. Motivations, feelings, and character are irrelevant."*

Get a Demo

## Values-driven leadership

Integrity and accountability must be deeply ingrained in the culture of local government. This starts at the top.

Local governments should focus on ethical values. **Government agencies should teach leaders and supervisors to lead with those principles at the center of everything they do.**

As Brent Gleeson wrote in [an article](#) in *Forbes*:

*"[Values-based leadership] just means leading the team and evaluating performance – both your own and the team's – based more so on the organization's set of values rather than specific metrics and milestones.*

*Managers still have to oversee their team member's ability to execute and be accountable for their role in mission success, but values-based evaluations can't be an afterthought."*

For local governments, core values such as integrity, equality, and transparency should provide the foundation for every decision and policy.

Citizens won't care if the government achieves results if government employees do it through misusing funds, cutting corners, or accepting bribes.

People need to be able to trust their local government to act responsibly. This makes transparency and public disclosure especially important.

Citizens should be able to see how the government is spending their tax money, what services the government is providing, and how government officials are working to improve the community.

## Get a Demo



The [International City/County Management Association](#) encourages local governments to focus on the fundamentals to build an ethical foundation.

*"If the organization lacks a code of ethics or statement of values, implement a process that engages elected officials, staff, and residents in the definition of core values and acceptable conduct. If you have a code of ethics, is there clarity and agreement on the core values that drive critical decisions? Organizations or teams with shared values produce the best results."*

*"Use council orientations and goal-setting sessions to encourage elected officials to understand how their conduct and commitment to public service values contribute to ethical government."*

### **Ethics training**

Most employees don't set out intending to act unethically. Employees may be intent on an end goal – completing a project within budget, hiring someone they trust, meeting a deadline – and just overlook a potential ethical problem in the equation.

As the [National Conference of State Legislatures](#) points out, "Many ethics violations occur when people are unaware or ignorant of the law as it pertains to their position."

Of course, ethics is more complex than just following the rules. Laws can't cover everything. And some have loopholes.



### Get a Demo

violations can violate public trust.

Ethics in government is different and more complex than personal ethics. Often, ethical accountability in local government has to do with the conflicts between the responsibilities of the government and an employee's personal obligations.

It's important for government employees to remember that they represent the government, so they need to uphold the integrity of the institution as a whole.

Of course, values-based leadership will help employees keep this in perspective. But ethics training is also an essential part of accountability in local government.



Ethics training should include discussions about values and standards for ethical behavior. The training makes employees aware of common ethical issues. And it gives them tools for making ethical decisions when faced with gray areas where laws may not clearly apply.

Ethics training is especially important for employees in certain areas.

For example, employees working in procurement, finances, permitting, and zoning positions may face ethical issues more than other employees.

### Get a Demo

annual retraining.

City Ethics has a list of [good resources for ethics training](#).

### Written policies and procedures

Part of accountability in local government is setting expectations in writing, and then consistently applying and enforcing those policies.

We've written before about why [policies and procedures are important](#) for every organization.

## Subscribe to Our Newsletter

**Stay on top of the latest trends in local government and policy management.**

Subscribe Now

Policies and procedures help employees know how to do their jobs properly and effectively. They establish roles, acceptable behavior, and the responsibilities of each department and employee.

Policies and procedures also provide a framework for a culture of accountability and formalize accountability measures. But policies and procedures alone don't ensure accountability.

Government leaders and administrators must have a way to make sure employees read and understand policies. [Policy management software](#) can help with this.

## Get a Demo

of ethics.

The code of ethics may cover things like conflicts of interest, nepotism, and endorsement.

It should lay out the disciplinary actions for employees or officials who violate the code of ethics. It should also establish procedures for reporting unethical behavior and establish measures to protect whistle-blowers.

Of course, this also starts with a culture of accountability in local government.

**When the agency's culture is based on values and accountability, employees will feel safe to report bad behavior.** And citizens will know that government officials will be held accountable for unethical actions.

For a good place to start in crafting a code of ethics, see [City Ethics' Model Code of Ethics](#).

## Independent ethics commission or officer

To promote accountability in local government, the people overseeing the ethics program need to be independent of the government itself.

[The City Ethics report](#) highlights why this is important:

*"Since government ethics is all about conflicts, it is crucial that there not be any conflicts in the ethics program itself. In practice, this means that no official under the jurisdiction of an ethics program should have any special role in the program.*

*"In addition, the selection of ethics commission members by high-level officials makes it look to the public like they control the program. This undermines trust in the program and means that citizens don't bother filing complaints."*

The makeup of an ethics program may look different depending on the size and needs of a particular local government.

Small governments may not have the budget to hire an ethics officer. But they could consider teaming up with nearby cities or counties to create an ethics program that covers a broader area.

## Get a Demo

They should initiate investigations into potential violations and make sure the government follows through on proper disciplinary measures if an employee has acted unethically.

The [Office of Government Ethics](#) is a good place to find more information and training resources.

### **Accountability audits and assessments**

To achieve a culture of accountability, local governments need to be aware of areas where there is a lack of accountability.

An accountability audit assesses how local governments use public funds and resources.

It evaluates whether the government has proper controls in place to make sure employees aren't misusing resources. And it ensures that the government is following laws, regulations, and internal policies and procedures.

### **Some states require accountability audits.**

For example, [the state of Washington](#) requires audits at least once every three years. But even if a local government isn't legally obligated, performing regular self-audits or assessments is a good way to identify issues or potential concerns so they can be corrected.

Audits can be done internally or by the independent ethics council or officer.

Accountability in local government is more important now than ever before.

Ultimately, local governments are accountable to citizens, and they must show that they are worthy of trust.

Creating a culture of accountability will help local governments build trust with citizens, operate more effectively, and better serve the public.

2018 ELECTIONS: Ratings & Analysis for Every State's  
Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State & Legislature  
Race

## 26-Year-Old Massachusetts Mayor Arrested for Fraud That Financed a Lavish Lifestyle

by Tribune News Service | October 11, 2018

By *Scott J. Croteau*

A Mercedes, jewelry, designer shoes and trips to casinos; the young mayor of Fall River was living the high life, but federal investigators say it was done with stolen cash.

Jasiel F. Correia II, a Democratic two-term mayor, was arrested Thursday at his home and charged with multiple counts of wire fraud and filing false tax returns in connection with alleged theft of money from people who invested in his business app. He is facing charges in federal court in Boston Thursday morning.

Correia founded a company called SnoOwl in late 2012 to develop an app designed to connect local businesses with their target consumer market.

The 26-year-old, who was elected mayor in November 2015, was re-elected to a second two-year terms in November. Authorities allege money he stole from investors was used to help his "burgeoning" political career.

Seven people invested \$363,690 in Correia's project, but federal investigators say more than half that money went to fund the mayor's "lavish lifestyle, burgeoning political career, and he needs of his other business ventures."

A federal indictment accuses Correia of spending at least \$231,447 of the investors' money on himself.

"Within weeks of receiving his first investor money in January 2013, Correia bought himself a Mercedes," the federal affidavit said.

The theft of investor cash took place between 2013 and 2015, authorities say.

Tens of thousands of dollars in jewelry, designer men's shoes, women's clothing, trips to casinos, adult entertainment, plane tickets and even donations to charities were paid for through stolen money, investigators say.

Correia knew he was under investigation for his SnoOwl venture in 2017. Authorities claim he instructed an accountant to amend 2013 and 2014 personal tax returns and was not assessed any taxes for the investor money he alleged stole.

Correia "actually received a refund from the IRS in June 2017," authorities said.

Correia began seeking investors in January 2013. People gave him cash in return for equity in the company.

He told people he was a successful tech entrepreneur who previously sold another app, FindIt Networks, for a large profit. Correia told investors he would not take a salary for SnoOwl.

Two other unnamed people agreed to formally start SnoOwl in December 2012. A bank account for the company was opened a month later in Rhode Island.

Correia allegedly told one associate that compensation for himself or the associate would be "off the table" and no salaries or hourly pay would be given, authorities say.

The second associate joined SnoOwl in exchange for equity in the company. Neither associate was ever paid any money for their work.

Correia's investors included an orthodontist in Massachusetts who gave the future mayor \$145,000 between 2013 and 2015. A month after receiving a payment from the orthodontist, Correia bought a 2011 Mercedes C300 AWD Sport Sedan, authorities said.

Correia is accused of telling the investor the app was going well, but in May 2014, he allegedly told the investor that SnoOwl was "in a lot of trouble."

Other investors included a business owner in Rhode Island, who met Correia at a Fall River Chamber of Commerce event while Correia ran for city council.

There was also a small business owner living in Florida and Massachusetts who gave money to the business.

"To date, no SnoOwl investor has received any return or interest on his investment, and the business of SnoOwl is essentially worthless," authorities said.

Federal records say Correia hid "his ill-gotten gains" from the IRS and hid another business from the IRS.

During his run for mayor, Correia touted his founding of the company, claiming it was one of his qualifications for the job, federal records say.

After becoming mayor in 2015, authorities say Correia was unresponsive to investors and software developers.

*(c)2018 MassLive.com, Springfield, Mass.*

Tribune News Service | @TribuneAgency

# Accused of Misusing State Computers, Georgia Ethics Chief Is Suspended

BY: [Tribune News Service](#) | January 10, 2019

By James Salzer

The state ethics commission suspended its director with pay Tuesday amid allegations that he misused state computers.

Stefan Ritter, who has been the commission's executive director since 2015, called allegations first reported Monday by the The Atlanta Journal-Constitution and Channel 2 Action News "untrue," adding that he had not seen the complaints against him.

"I certainly am not going to think this is appropriate," Ritter said when asked whether he planned to fight the allegations that he misused his state computer. "I haven't even seen any allegations. It's puzzling to me."

After an hourlong executive session, the commission voted to suspend Ritter, based, as Chairman Jake Evans said, "upon the allegations of improper workplace conduct." Evans will oversee an investigation and hire outside counsel to look into the complaints made against Ritter.

"They are serious enough to warrant an independent investigation," Evans said.

The chairman did not give a timetable for finishing the investigation into the allegations.

The agency, formally known as the Georgia Government Transparency & Campaign Finance Commission, is charged with collecting campaign finance, vendor gift and lobbying expenditure reports, registering lobbyists, issuing advisory opinions, and dispensing penalties for violations.

Ritter was an 18-year veteran of the Georgia Attorney General's Office when he was unanimously chosen over three other candidates to lead the agency. He had previously been the commission's counsel and was known as an expert on Georgia's sunshine laws.

Ritter took control of the commission at a tumultuous time. The agency had been without an executive director for months after the firing of Holly LaBerge, who was sanctioned and fined for her role in a whistleblower lawsuit filed by her predecessor.

In 2015, a Fulton County jury found that her predecessor, Stacey Kalberman, had been forced from her job for investigating the campaign of Gov. Nathan Deal, and it awarded her and her attorneys \$1.15 million. In June of that year, the state agreed to settle lawsuits with three other former commission employees who alleged abuse and political retaliation, bringing the total in legal fees to \$3 million.

After years of inaction, a backlog of more than 150 cases was finally cleared in 2017 -- just in time for the agency to handle a slew of new complaints filed by Georgia residents, watchdog groups and political adversaries.

Ritter's pay was increased from \$165,000 to \$181,500 in 2016 -- a much bigger raise than most other state employees received -- after the commission lauded improvement in the agency.

The commission put off making any decisions on a series of complaints made during the 2018 campaign, not wanting to influence the elections. So 2019 is expected to be a heavy year for the panel.

Stay on top of what's happening in Georgia government and politics at [ajc.com/news/georgia-government/](http://ajc.com/news/georgia-government/).

*(c)2019 The Atlanta Journal-Constitution (Atlanta, Ga.)*

This article was printed from: <http://www.governing.com/topics/politics/tns-georgia-ethics-commission-chief-suspension.html>



2018 ELECTIONS: Ratings & Analysis for Every State's  
Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State & Legislature  
Race

## **After 'Non-Frivolous' Complaint, Colorado Ethics Panel Will Investigate Governor's Travel Abroad**

by Tribune News Service | October 25, 2018

*By Conrad Swanson*

A complaint over Gov. John Hickenlooper's travels has merit and will be investigated, Colorado's Independent Ethics Commission has decided.

The commission reviewed the complaint, filed by the nonprofit Greenwood Village-based Public Trust Institute, during an executive session Monday. Aside from one commissioner who was absent, the group unanimously found the allegations to be "non-frivolous."

The complaint, filed earlier this month, accused Hickenlooper of traveling the globe in private jets and rooming in expensive hotels paid for by businesses in violation of state ethics laws.

Hickenlooper reiterated Tuesday the comment he made the day the complaint was filed.

"This is a political stunt aimed at influencing the upcoming election," he said in a statement. "Given the legal nature of the issue, we will not be commenting on the specifics of the allegations, but we're confident this will be resolved quickly and in our favor. We remain focused on doing the work that advances Colorado and improves our way of life."

The Public Trust Institute was established two days before the complaint was filed by Republican Frank McNulty, a former state House speaker who has often criticized the Democratic governor's policies.

Hickenlooper now has 30 days to comment on the allegations, commission Executive Director Dino Ioannides said. The commission will take those comments into consideration for its investigation.

People being investigated often ask for more time to comment, Ioannides said. The investigation will begin as soon as the commission receives that comment.

Colorado voters passed Amendment 41 in 2006, prohibiting the governor and other elected officials from accepting gifts worth more than \$59, with limited exceptions.

The complaint says Hickenlooper violated that law multiple times over the past year with flights to Italy, Connecticut, New Jersey and Wyoming. It also says he accepted meals, luxury activities, private tours and gift bags, among other things.

The commission's jurisdiction only spans one year. Violations alleged afterward still can be considered, though. A public official found to have violated the gift law can be held liable for twice the gift's value, Ioannides said.

The investigation is complicated, though, by Hickenlooper's departure from office in January. The commission will determine later, if the issue arises, whether it can investigate him after he leaves the governor's office, Ioannides said.

The matter is complicated further by potential conflicts of interest on the commission. Hickenlooper appointed two of the five members, and both contributed to his campaigns in past years, as did a third member.

One of them did not participate in the executive session discussion about the complaint.

The commission's code of conduct defines conflicts of interest as "a situation in which an individual's personal or financial interest conflicts with the individual's official responsibilities."

Ioannides said the commissioners "are very good at recusing themselves when it's necessary. It happens all the time." The group will discuss later whether one or more might need to recuse themselves, he said.

McNulty said the potential conflicts do raise a concern, but "the commission appears to be doing its job, which is the most we can expect."

The accusations also come as Hickenlooper explores a possible presidential run in 2020. He has traveled around the country for political appearances and to speak to groups.

McNulty said the commission's unanimous decision to investigate the complaint is a "direct rebuttal" of Hickenlooper's claim that the complaint was "frivolous and partisan. The commission spoke loud and clear that it isn't."

If Hickenlooper paid for the trips out of his own pocket beforehand, he does not have to report them and did not violate ethics. But if he reimbursed businesses after the trips, he is required to report those expenses.

This is the second complaint filed against Hickenlooper since he first took office in 2011. In 2014, the commission dismissed, on a 4-1 vote, a complaint filed against Hickenlooper in 2013 by Compass Colorado over his travel to the Democratic Governors Association meeting in Aspen.

But three of the five commissioners -- all of whom voted to dismiss -- had given money to Hickenlooper's campaigns and one, then-Mayor Bill Pinkham of Estes Park, joined him nine days after the dismissal at a campaign event.

McNulty said that during his days in the Statehouse, he and Hickenlooper often were at odds over policy.

In 2012, before the Supreme Court recognized the right of same-sex couples to marry, McNulty, as speaker of the Republican-led state House, blocked a Hickenlooper-backed proposal to let gay and straight couples enter civil unions. The standoff contributed to Democrats taking control of the House in the fall 2012 election.

In a 2013 profile of Hickenlooper by The New Yorker magazine, McNulty is quoted as saying, "The critique that many in Colorado have, particularly the ones who have worked with him, is there's a lack of leadership."

McNulty was speaker from 2010 to 2012, and he represented Highlands Ranch in the House from 2006 until 2014.

He now is founder and principal of Square State Strategy Group, a political consulting and lobbying firm based in Denver.

*(c)2018 The Gazette (Colorado Springs, Colo.)*

Tribune News Service | @TribuneAgency

---

# **D.C. Was Scammed Out of \$700,000. Now the Treasury Department Is Investigating.**

October 25, 2018

*By Alexa Lardieri*

Scammers posing as a city vendor were able to successfully steal almost \$700,000 from the city government in Washington, D.C.

The Treasury Department is investigating the theft, which happened in July, city officials told The Washington Post. The hundreds of thousands of dollars had been wired to the scammers' bank account. None of the money has been recovered.

David Umansky, spokesman for D.C. Chief Financial Officer Jeffrey DeWitt, said that the incident has led to stricter security protocols in DeWitt's office, such as now requiring additional confirmation before a vendor changes bank information. The investigation, conducted by the Treasury Department because bank fraud is a felony offense, is ongoing.

According to the Post, the scammers were able to impersonate the vendor Winmar Construction after a hacker created a fraudulent email address after gaining information from the vendor. The hacker altered one letter in the company's domain and used this address to communicate with the D.C. Department of General Services.

View Full Story From [U.S. News and World Report](#)

# Pleading Guilty to Corruption, Ex-Aide to Atlanta Mayor Faces 5 Years in Prison

BY: Tribune News Service | August 15, 2018

*By Dan Klepal and Scott Trubey*

Former Kasim Reed aide Katrina Taylor-Parks became the second high-ranking Atlanta official to plead guilty in the federal corruption investigation of City Hall Wednesday.

Taylor-Parks, Reed's former deputy chief of staff and a 23-year City Hall veteran, pleaded guilty to accepting \$4,000 in bribes from a city vendor and agreed to cooperate with the government's investigation. She faces up to five years in prison when sentenced in November.

"I'm being charged with using influence to benefit a vendor that would have been in conflict with my role with the city of Atlanta," Taylor-Parks told the judge. "At the time, I did not believe what I did was wrong."

Reed's former chief procurement officer, Adam Smith, is already serving a federal prison sentence after having pleaded guilty to accepting more than \$30,000 from another city vendor.

Separately, Rev. Mitzi Bickers, who served as Reed's director of human services, attended status hearing in a different courtroom for her case, which includes charges of conspiracy to commit bribery, money laundering, wire fraud, tampering with a witness or informant, and filing false tax returns.

Bickers was indicted in April and is free on \$50,000 bond. Her status conference was scheduled for July 9, but Bickers attorney requested a delay after receiving more than 1 million documents and 40 audio recordings as part of the potential evidence in her case.

The judge granted Bickers' legal defense team three more months to examine documents and other evidence related to her case.

"The discovery is voluminous in this case," attorney Drew Findling said after the hearing. "We've got to go through the documents."

Findling declined to comment on the strength of the government's case, but added:

"We believe in our client's innocence."

Four other defendants in the City Hall case -- including Smith, two contractors and a former low-level city employee who worked for Bickers -- pleaded guilty and agreed to cooperate with the investigation in exchange for reduced sentences.

At a press conference after the hearings, U.S. Attorney Byung J. "BJay" Pak urged other potential City Hall insiders to come forward.

"As you know, each step of this investigation probably causes them to lose sleep," Pak said. "They may worry the next knock on their door may be federal agents. To them, the question is not if, but when we're coming. So you can help yourself right now. If you're on the fence about coming in and cooperating with the government, I'd advise you to do it immediately."

*(c)2018 The Atlanta Journal-Constitution (Atlanta, Ga.)*

# Public Corruption Cases Are Harder to Prove Than Ever

BY: [Alan Greenblatt](#) | February 22, 2018

Suppose you hope to land a big government contract. Here's one way you might go about getting it: You hire a lobbyist, who just happens to be a longtime friend of the governor. He hands the governor \$10,000 in cash, maybe in a briefcase, like in the movies. The governor then picks up the phone, calls the head of the agency awarding the contract and you're in, ready to make your pitch.

Maybe that sounds like a corrupt arrangement. But that scenario, suggested by Randall Eliason, a George Washington University law professor, would be perfectly legal under current interpretations of ethics laws.

The recent mistrial and dismissal of charges against U.S. Sen. Robert Menendez made it clear that juries don't consider gifts between friends, no matter how valuable, to be proof of corruption. More importantly, the U.S. Supreme Court's 2016 ruling in a case involving former Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell has substantially increased the burden on prosecutors.

Since the McDonnell ruling, a number of high-profile corruption convictions have been thrown out -- notably those involving Dean Skelos, the former New York Senate majority leader; Sheldon Silver, the former New York Assembly speaker; and William Jefferson, a former Louisiana congressman who stored \$90,000 worth of bribe money in his office freezer.

Silver's new trial is scheduled to start on April 16. Skelos will be tried again in June. But prosecutors face a different task than they did during the original trials.

Prior to the McDonnell verdict, prosecutors could suggest, through circumstantial evidence, that an illegal quid pro quo had taken place. Now they have to show a much closer connection between moneys paid and favors made.

"From the outside, it looks like the government has to come close to proving an explicit quid pro quo," says Jonathan Jeffress, a white collar defense attorney in Washington. "If they don't have that, their evidence may come up short. That wasn't the case before."

McDonnell accepted more than \$175,000 in cash and prizes from Johnnie Williams, the owner of a dietary supplement company looking to do business with the state. McDonnell set up meetings and let Williams host a luncheon at the governor's mansion to launch a product.

But the Supreme Court vacated McDonnell's convictions, finding that while the governor might have helped Williams out, nothing he did constituted an "official act." Setting up meetings with subordinates doesn't count as an official act in the way that, say, a vote in the legislature would, or ordering an underling to make a decision.

Prosecutors looking to make corruption cases now have to prove that an official took some action that meets a strict definition of an "official act" in exchange for something of value. It seems like you'd almost have to go out of your way to get caught doing something explicitly, when you could make your desires clear to subordinates through unprosecutable hints.

"It's just going to be all understood rather than stated," Jeffress says. "It's a wink and a nod."

Prosecutors stress that public officials haven't been given a green light for corruption. A big question going forward, however, is how close in time payments have to be made in exchange for official

acts. Rather than handing over a sack of money when services are rendered, someone bribing an official might dole out gifts and payments over a period of months or years, essentially keeping the official on a kind of retainer.

Lower courts have accepted this "stream of benefits" theory and the judge in the Menendez trial explicitly said it's still valid, but the Supreme Court has never weighed in.

"What we're going to see over the next few years is the extent to which it's going to remain after McDonnell," says Daniel Richman, a Columbia University law professor. "Whether it does or not will make a big difference in how we assess McDonnell's effects."

In its McDonnell ruling, the Supreme Court expressed concern about public officials having to worry about possible prosecution every time they help a friend or a donor. In a world where politicians routinely pick up the phone on behalf of campaign contributors, where's the line between that and accepting a cash gift (particularly in states where politicians can put campaign funds to personal use)? Trading favors is part of the currency of politics.

All this means that a longstanding dynamic in politics now seems truer than ever: The scandal is what's legal, not what's illegal.

This article was printed from: <http://www.governing.com/topics/politics/gov-public-corruption-mcdonnell-conviction-court.html>