



Ethics and integrity in the public sector

Guidelines

September 2019

Introduction

The Network for Integrity aims to develop an international culture of integrity, transparency and ethics in public life. With the current declining trust in government and democracy in general, citizens are asking for more ethical behaviors from public officials. Many organizations, such as the ones listed at the end of this document, have identified ethics and anti-corruption as critical to a country's successful development and good governance. This paper aims to provide some general guidelines on ethics and integrity that would apply to all public servants, regardless of their institution. It also includes a self-evaluation manual that can help public servants assess their institution's level of commitment to ethical values as well as their own.

● THE NETWORK FOR INTEGRITY

The Network for Integrity was launched at the end of 2016 and brings together 14 institutions from countries with different legal traditions but sharing similar values¹. These independent institutions are in charge of transparency, ethics and integrity of public officials. The objective of the Network is to further advance the fight against corruption and to contribute to a broader struggle against all forms of abuse of power at home and worldwide, through collaboration, exchange of best practices and advocacy.

¹Countries include Armenia, Cote d'Ivoire, Croatia, France, Georgia, Greece, Leetonia, Mexico, Moldavia, Peru, Romania, Senegal, South Korea and Ukraine. For more information, please visit: <http://www.networkforintegrity.org>

Guidelines

The guidelines are presented under principles of integrity, impartiality and objectivity, honesty and discretion.

INTEGRITY

- 1 Public servants should always act in accordance with norms they are subject to, including their own institution's regulations, the national norms regulating ethics and integrity in the public service, and international treaties their country is signatory to.
- 2 In the exercise of their duties, public servants should always favor the general interest and serve society.
- 3 Public servants should always act with a sense of justice, probity, institutional loyalty and discipline in the exercise of their duties, while also abiding by the rules, policies and guidelines pertaining to their institution.
- 4 Institutions are encouraged to make arrangements in order for public servants to know when and how they may accept gifts and invitations, as well as how to report and register them, if and when applicable.
- 5 Public servants should know and observe their institution's country's standards and code of conduct or ethics and/or national norms on ethics and conduct of civil servants in their country.

IMPARTIALITY AND OBJECTIVITY

- 6 Public servants should always act in an objective and impartial manner and avoid apparent or potential situations of conflicts of interest defined by the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation, for example, as a conflict between the public duty and the private interest of a public official, in which the official's private-capacity interest could improperly influence the performance of their official duties and responsibilities.
- 7 Public servants should refrain in the performance of their duties from intervening in the selection, removal or any other personnel matter relating to a family, friendship or business associate and should never request additional benefits for them, their relatives, or third parties with whom they have or have had any professional or business relationship.
- 8 Public servants should provide requested information, in conformity with institutional and national laws on transparency, and make decisions in a transparent and truthful manner, based on a rigorous analysis of available information.

- 9 Public servants should always act with a sense of responsibility, perform the entrusted tasks with due diligence and be committed to achieving the expected results, while reasonably using public resources for authorized public purposes.
- 10 Public servants should perform and execute their tasks with expertise and meticulousness in the area or topic.
- 11 Public servants should always act respectfully towards everyone in a professional setting, including colleagues, subordinates, stakeholders and the general public.
- 12 Public servants should always act with respect for human rights.
- 13 Public servants should strive to perform their duties in a sustainable and inclusive manner.
- 14 Public servants should not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, gender, age, marital status, sexual orientation or gender identity.
- 15 Public servants should not perform acts that would constitute harassment, sexual harassment or workplace violence.

HONESTY AND DISCRETION

- 16 Public servants should always document, inform and specify the use and destination of the resources assigned to them in the exercise of their duties.
- 17 Public servants should respect and promote the protection of personal data, as appropriate in their respective national legal norms and institutions.
- 18 Public servants should respect confidentiality and reserve duties with regard to information received and processed in the exercise of their public functions, keep track of information and documents, as appropriate, and avoid improper use, subtraction, destruction, concealment or disabling of said information.
- 19 Public servants should be encouraged to strive for continuous improvement and innovation to raise efficiency and performance in the exercise of their duties.
- 20 Public servants should always perform their duties in a way that remains respectful of their institution and should not adopt a behavior that would damage the image or reputation of their institution, missions or colleagues.

Self-evaluation

Public servants' self-evaluation of their degree of compliance with ethical values

- ✓ 01 – Do you know what ethics in public life is?
- ✓ 02 – Do you know what an ethical value is?
- ✓ 03 – Are you aware of the meaning of the word public servant?
- ✓ 04 – Are you aware of how your activity contributes to the realization of your institution's goals and priorities?
- ✓ 05 – Are you aware of the conduct that you need to adopt to comply with your functions?
- ✓ 06 – Can you define the consequences for your institution and the public of you failing to perform your duties efficiently and effectively?
- ✓ 07 – Do you know the main ethical principles framing the exercise of your duties as a public servant?
- ✓ 08 – If a recruitment or case that you handle or if you have to undertake an action that is or may be related to interests of your family members or friends, do you know what to do and who you should talk to?
- ✓ 09 – In what way would seeking personal benefit in the performance of public functions or favoring a private interest may affect your position, the impartiality, objectiveness and quality of your work?
- ✓ 10 – When you were hired for the position you currently hold, did you have knowledge of the salary and benefits?
- ✓ 11 – Do you know the main principles defining public procurement procedures?
- ✓ 12 – Do you know if there is a policy regulating gifts and invitations in your institution or country? And if so, do you know what you should do when you receive a gift or invitation?
- ✓ 13 – In what way would compliance with all the ethical values that are addressed here, contribute to the generation of better decisions, better institutional functioning and a better country?
- ✓ 14 – Do you know where to find information on all these aspects and on ethics in the public service or in your institution?
- ✓ 15 – Do you know who to talk to if you have any ethical dilemma or question in the exercise of your functions, within your institution or in your country?
- ✓ 16 – Do you believe it is important that society trusts public institutions? If yes, why?

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