



ETHICS AND VALUES MATTER: ALIGNING YOUR DECISIONS AND ACTIONS IN PRACTICE

2023 Oregon City/County
Management Association Summer
Conference

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Overview

- Effective and Responsive Local Government is the Basis for Our Profession
- Fundamental Values Underpin ICMA's Code of Ethics
- While it is Easy to Ascribe to These Values, It's Often More Difficult to Meet the Challenge of Demonstrating These Values in Practice



In Today's Session We Will:

01

Review Key Values on Which the ICMA Code of Ethics and the Profession are based.

02

Discuss Why Meeting the Challenge of These Values Is Often Difficult.

03

Suggest Ways to Assist You in Navigating the Challenges of Upholding these Values in Practice.

THERE IS
NO RIGHT WAY
TO DO
A WRONG THING.



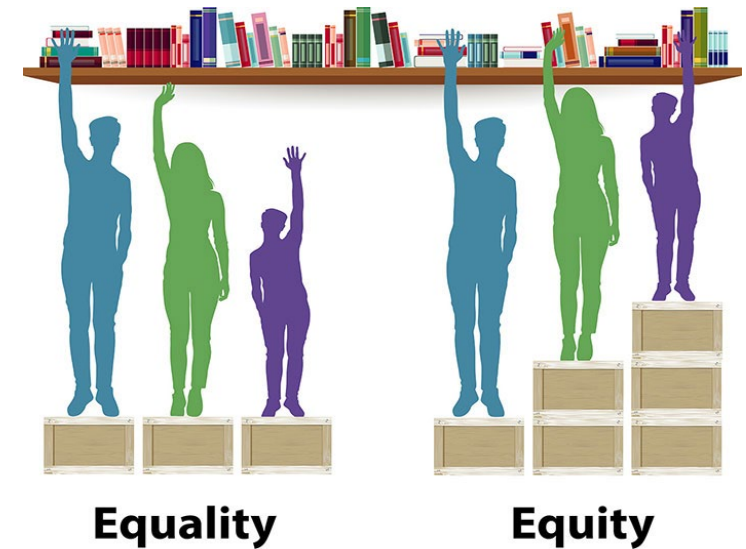
Key Values

- Equitable policy implementation and delivery of services.
- Preventing Political Interference.
- Making Personnel Decisions Solely on Merit.
- Respecting Democratic Values and Maintaining Public Confidence.
- Avoiding Conflicts of Interest.
- Demonstrating Ethical Conduct and Integrity.

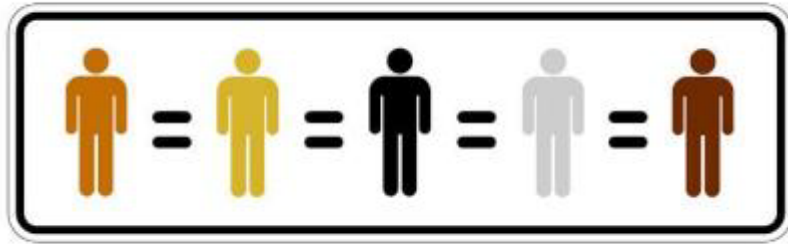
Equitable Public Policy Implementation

The Challenge:

- Equity requires a commitment to fair and just implementation of public policies and services with attention to the most vulnerable underserved members of the community.
- It requires that we ensure fairness, equal treatment and access, by creating a level playing field, where everyone receives the same opportunities and resources.



Equity in Policies, Resources, and Practice



- **Equality = SAMENESS**, it promotes fairness and justice by giving everyone the same thing.
- **BUT** it can only work if everyone starts from the same place.
- **EQUITY = FAIRNESS**, it's making certain that all people get **ACCESS** to the same opportunities and services.
- Differences in where people come from or history, can create barriers to participation or access.
- Ensuring **EQUITY** first, allows everyone to enjoy **EQUALITY**

Preventing Political Interference

The Challenges:

- One or more elected officials attempting to influence administrative matters
- Managers wanting to stay in the “Good Graces” of elected officials
- Fear of employment ramifications including potential termination
- Often not a “Clear Line” between policy and management



Preventing Political Interference

The Strategies:

Take the time to thoughtfully consider where “Your Line” Is- based on Charter/Ordinances/Form of Government

Determine in advance your thresholds for political interference

Discuss with elected officials in advance of a specific issue the reason for keeping politics out of service delivery/administration

Realize the impacts of incremental decisions that cause fundamental problems.



Making Personnel Decisions Solely on Merit

The Challenges:

- Fairness and impartiality should guide all personnel matters and decisions
- Emotion or bias clouds your judgement when elected officials comfortable urging you to hire friends or family
- Trying to curry favor with union leaders by heeding unsolicited personal recommendations for promotional opportunities

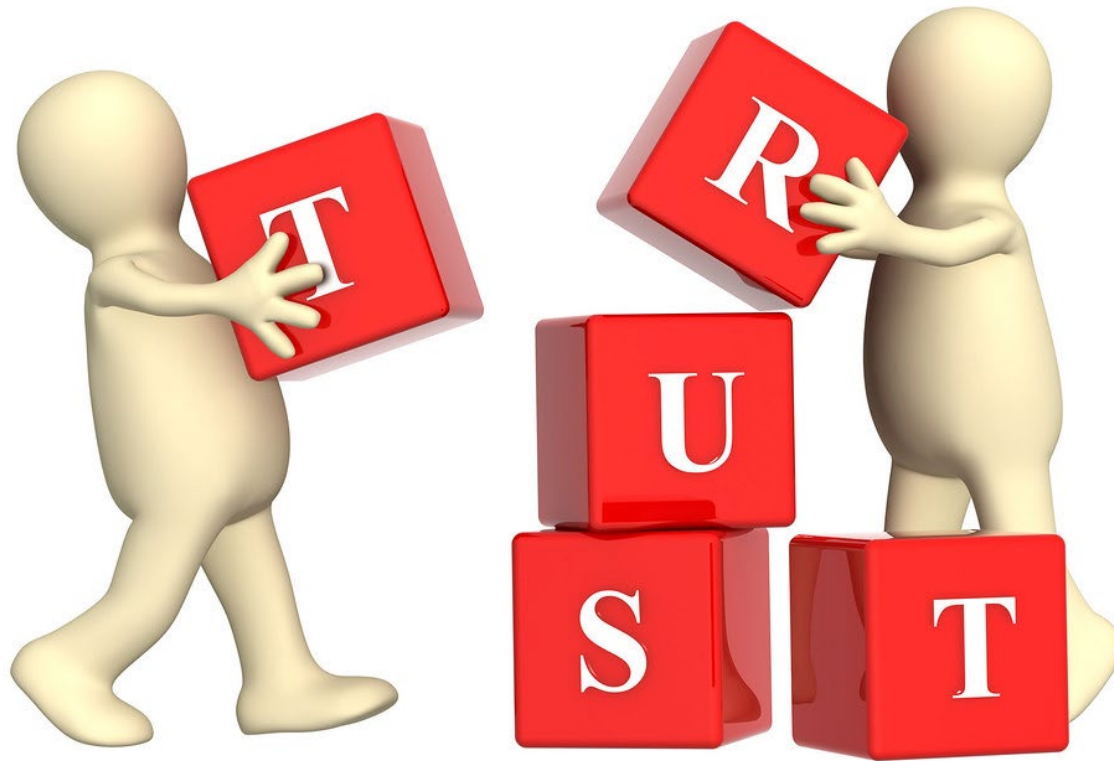


PERSONNEL DECISIONS BASED ON MERIT

The Strategies:

- Stand up against any outside encroachment or quid pro quo in all personnel matters.
- Hire and promote for values.
- Ethical leadership creates an environment where the goals and values of those working in the organization align with the mission.
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion are key considerations in the recruitment and retention of a talented and effective workforce reflecting the community being served.





Respecting Democratic Values and Maintaining Public Confidence

The Challenges:

- Skepticism about public institutions
- Misalignment of staff or Governing Board goals with residents/stakeholders
- Short circuiting public participation/input in decision making
- Poor responsiveness to public concerns or demands
- Limited staffing and funding
- Half-hearted policy direction implementation

Respecting Democratic Values and Maintaining Public Confidence

The Strategies:

- Fully appreciate the culture of the organizations in which you serve
- Understand and appreciate WHY the “System” was designed the way it is
- Be clear that the “Ends” cannot ever be separated from the “Means”
- Remember that the **process** is often the **product**
- Deliver on the promise of excellent public service and responsiveness





Avoiding Conflicts of Interest

The Challenges:

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

Avoiding Conflicts of Interest

The Strategies:

- **Values and principles are overarching** to avoid conflicts at the intersection of personal interests or loyalties and professional obligations.
- Aligning your decisions and behavior with your values help to avoid conflicts in practice and appearance.
- The stakes are high when your reputation is on the line.



The Challenges:

-

Authentic Ethical Conduct and Integrity

- Don't confuse **Legal** for **Ethical**
- Be aware of the ethical implications of your decisions
- Potential negative consequences do not relieve you of your ethical obligations
- Counter “blind spots” through self-reflection and seeking input from others
- Understand that as a leader, you will be judged by many observers
- Appreciate your 3 levels of ethical responsibility
- The ICMA Code of Ethics: 12 Tenets and Guidelines



Ethics Resources

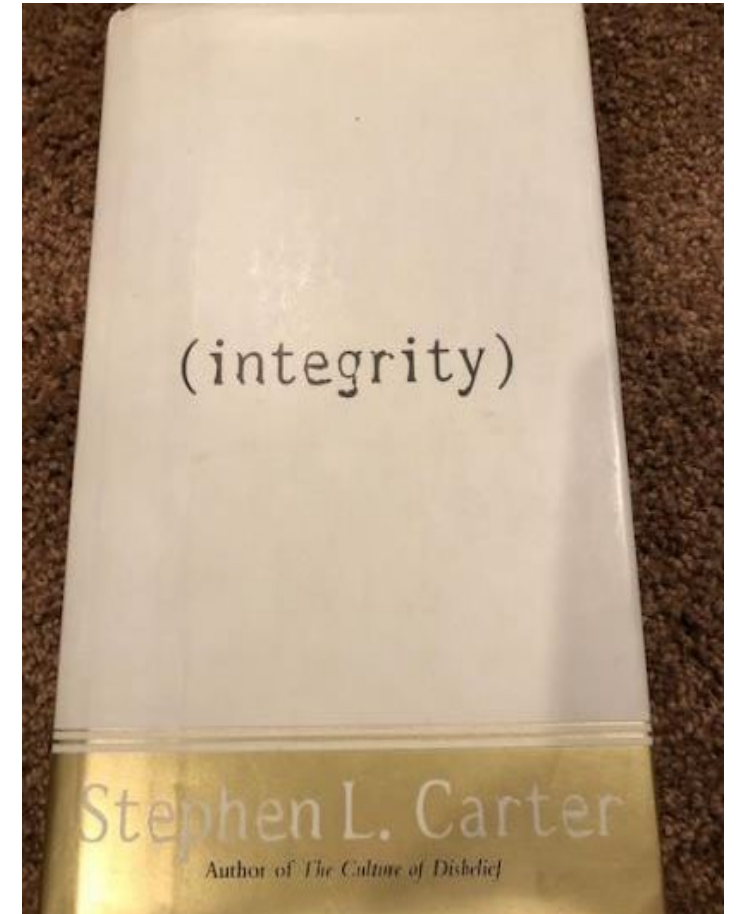
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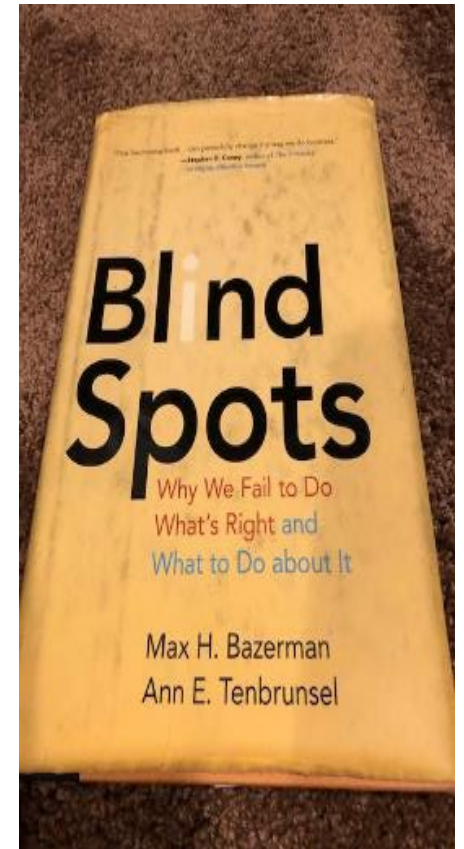
Integrity: Stephen Carter

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



Blind Spots: Max Bazerman & Ann Tunbrunsel

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



The Honest Truth About Dishonesty

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

