Integrating Ethics into your work with Staff and Volunteers

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“Once regarded as a compass, pointing out true good with the inexorable pull of magnetic north, ethics actually work much harder but less precisely – more like a gyroscope that keeps rebalancing and centering individuals in situations of confusion, conflict and morality. Not a fixed and final point, ethics are instead a journey.”

Dalla Costa, 1998
Ethical Behavior

- Most people agree it is necessary, but not everyone does it.

- Why is it difficult to behave ethically?

- How do people justify unethical behavior?
Individual Options for Action in the Workplace

- Ignore the situation
- Acknowledge it but don’t push
- Confront and attempt compromise
- Confront and take a stand
- Quit or be fired

CCVA 2015
“An ethical person often chooses to do more than the law requires and less than the law allows...There is a big difference between what you have a right to do and what is right to do.”

Justice Potter Stewart
Ethical Organizations...

- Are accessible to diverse groups
- Operate ethically with all stakeholders
- Strive for excellence
- Maintain the public trust
- Sustain a helping environment
- Are at low risk for legal actions against it
Types of Ethics

- Personal
- Organizational
- Professional
Related Terms

- **Moral**: a personal conscience related to right and wrong
- **Belief**: a conviction or opinion
- **Value**: a core belief that guides action
- **Principle**: a standard of moral or ethical decision-making
Related Terms

- **Policy**: a guideline or rule for behavior in a specific situation

- **Collective standards (standards of conduct)**: agreed-upon methods of practice

- **Code of ethics**: formal rules which govern behavior of a group
Developing a Code of Ethics

- Involve board, staff, and volunteers

- Start by identifying core values
  - What values are unique to our organization’s mission?
  - What values should every nonprofit organization and society in general uphold?
  - What values should guide the decisions and behavior of staff, board, and volunteers?

- Develop an organizational statement of values.
Developing a Code of Ethics

- Develop a set of principles about how to put those values into practice.
  - Broad principles, not detailed operational procedures
  - Look at sample codes from other organizations
  - Check for consistency with your values statements
  - Invite all stakeholders to review the draft

- Secure approval of the code by the Board
EXAMPLE:

Value Statement: “We believe that all staff and volunteers should be treated fairly and equitably.”

Ethical Principles:

• “Grounds for termination or dismissal will apply equally to paid staff and volunteers.”

• “Volunteers and staff will be recognized and rewarded for providing high quality service to our clients.”
Nonprofit Sector Values

- Commitment beyond self
- Obedience of the laws
- Commitment beyond the law
- Commitment to the public good
- Respect for the worth and dignity of individuals
- Tolerance, diversity, and social justice
- Accountability to the public
- Openness and honesty
- Responsible stewardship of resources

Source: “Obedience to the Unenforceable”, Independent Sector
CCVA 2015
Universal Core Values

Six Pillars of Character:

- Citizenship and Philanthropy
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Caring
- Justice and Fairness
- Trustworthiness

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Ethical Dilemma vs. Yucky Situation

- Am I having difficulty determining the “right” course of action?
- Are values and beliefs involved?
- Are there contradictory voices in my head?
- Is there a downside to making the “correct” choice?

CCVA 2015
Ethical Decision-Making Steps

- Identify the facts.
  - Evidence
  - Situational context
  - Multiple perspectives
  - Relevant policies

- Determine the ethical issue.
  - Which ethical values & principles are involved?
  - Where is the conflict?
  - Who will be most affected by your decision?
Ethical Decision-Making Steps

- Explore the options.
  - Harms and benefits
  - Legal implications
  - Policy implications
  - Connection to org. mission and values
  - What is the path of least harm?

- Make a decision and test it.

- Act, with confidence and courage.
Testing Your Decision using the C.L.I.C.K. Method

Consequence
Legal
Image
Culture
Knot

Source: Gardenswartz, Rowe & Digh for Florida Power Corp.
Exploring Real-Life Scenarios

- What is the real issue here? Where is the conflict between ethical values or principles?
- What additional information is needed before responding or taking action?
- What might we learn from this situation? How could it be prevented in the future?
Ethics as a Management Tool

- Managing diversity with fairness
- Balancing passion and policy
- Maintaining public reputation and trust
- Walking the talk (integrity)
- Sustaining a culture of service
Ideas for “Exercising” Ethics

- Develop or revisit an organizational code of ethics
- Discuss ethics at staff and volunteer orientations
- Use scenarios as a discussion starter
- Devote time at staff or board meetings to focus on each ethical principle
- Convene a training on ethical decision-making, and practice on examples from fellow professionals.
- Find colleagues to serve as a “sounding board”
Related Resources

Independent Sector *(sample codes)*
www.independentsector.org

“Obedience to the Unenforceable: Principles for Good Governance and Ethical Practice”, Independent Sector

“Professional Ethics in Volunteer Administration”
Free download, www.cvacert.org

How Good People Make Tough Choices: Resolving the Dilemmas of Ethical Living, Rushworth M. Kidder

Josephson Institute of Ethics,
www.josephsoninstitute.org
Less effective leaders are often preoccupied with upholding the social order, and pleasing others.

Effective leaders are willing to take responsibility for their actions and proceed with conviction along a chosen path.
“Moral courage is the quality of mind and spirit that enables one to face up to ethical dilemmas and moral wrongdoings firmly and confidently, without flinching or retreating.”

Rushworth Kidder
Institute for Global Ethics