



LETTER FROM BOARD CHAIR & PRESIDENT

We set a high bar for organizational integrity at the Ethics Resource Center (ERC), in order to model the high ethical standards and practices we encourage other organizations to adopt. In so doing, we believe that it is the duty of all who represent ERC to act with Integrity, Honesty, Respect, Trust, and Excellence when we make decisions and act on behalf of our organization. It is important that all directors and employees understand these values and how they apply to ERC's business. This Code of Conduct defines each of our five core values and helps us understand how to apply these values through the use of our standards and policies (from the Board Governing Policies and Employee Handbook).

The following Code of Conduct also includes other helpful information such as a model for ethical decision-making, reporting mechanisms, and roles and responsibilities of ERC board members, leaders, and employees. The standards that follow apply to the Board of Directors, employees, consultants and subcontractors of our organization.

We recognize that this Code of Conduct should not be the only source of ethical guidance for ERC stakeholders. We encourage ERC staff members and consultants to seek advice from their supervisor or Ethics Officer, and we encourage our board members to seek the guidance of their Chair, Committee Chairs, or peers. If misconduct should occur, this document outlines a process for reporting the situation to management. We encourage all directors, employees and stakeholders to raise ethics-related concerns whenever necessary – only through such a process can we maintain our commitment to high ethical standards.

With the creation of the Code of Conduct, the Ethics Resource Center is renewing its commitment to ethical practices and values. We should hold ourselves to the highest standards and aim to be an exemplar to other non-profit organization as well as to the private and public sectors.

Sincerely,

Michael Oxley
Chair, ERC Board of Directors

Patricia Harned, Ph.D.
President, ERC



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PREAMBLE

The following is a declaration of the Ethics Resource Center’s core values, operating principles, and the policies which detail our standards for business conduct. It is necessary to comply with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations, as well as to our own policies and procedures. However, our commitment to “doing the right thing” must exceed the minimum requirements set by these laws, policies, etc. In order to succeed, we must all be guided by common values and principles – those have defined the ethical culture of the Ethics Resource Center.

It is important to note that this code of conduct is meant to be a guide and is not intended to describe every encouraged or prohibited act. ERC relies on the good judgment of its directors and employees.

Our Mission

Founded in 1922, the Ethics Resource Center (ERC) is a private, nonprofit organization devoted to independent research and the advancement of high ethical standards and practices in public and private institutions. For more than 85 years, ERC has been a resource for institutions committed to a strong ethical culture.

ERC’s expertise also informs the public dialogue on ethics and ethical behavior. ERC researchers analyze current and emerging issues and produce new ideas and benchmarks that matter – for the public trust.



VALUES

The Ethics Resource Center (ERC) is dedicated to fostering ethical practices. Honesty, Respect, Trust, Excellence and Integrity are fundamental to our work. We strive to live these values in our daily interaction with the Board of Directors, coworkers and other ERC stakeholders.

Integrity

Integrity is adhering to high moral and professional standards. It helps us to preserve an environment where Honesty, Respect, Trust and Excellence can thrive and be consistently practiced.

To foster integrity, we will:

- Demonstrate our values
- Adhere to our values in relationships with stakeholders
- Encourage principled behavior
- Support each other in making ethical decisions
- Integrate personal and organizational values with professional standards

Policies that guide us as *directors* to work with Integrity:¹

- [Anti-harassment Policy](#): ERC will not tolerate harassment of anyone, including any Director, employee, vendor, client, customer or visitor.
- [Conflict of Interest](#): It shall be the policy of ERC that no member, while serving ERC in a leadership capacity, either as an officer or Director or in another type of leadership capacity, will take personal advantage of his or her leadership role by allowing a situation to exist that may be reasonably construed as a conflict of interest situation. This policy is intended to supplement but not replace any applicable state laws governing conflicts of interest applicable to nonprofit and charitable corporations.
- [Corporate Relations](#): ERC will protect the integrity of the organization when considering corporate sponsorships or partnerships. No gifts, contributions, or grants that in any way compromise the mission of ERC shall be accepted.
- [Board Compensation & Travel Reimbursements](#): The ERC shall not issue compensation to any member of the ERC board, including officers, for performing duties for which he or she was elected.

Policies that guide us as *employees and contractors* to work with Integrity:²

- [Harassment Policy](#): ERC is committed to maintaining a work environment that is free of harassment or intimidation.
- [Problem Resolution](#): Employees who feel that they have a work-related problem, or who would like to seek advice and counsel are encouraged to discuss problems with ERC's Leadership Team without fear of reprisal or recrimination.

¹ All policies are abbreviated in this document. For full detail of policies applicable to the Board of Directors, please see the ERC Board Governing Policies.

² All policies are abbreviated in this document. For full detail of policies applicable to employees and contractors, please see the ERC Employee Handbook.



- [Software Usage](#): Unauthorized copying of any licensed software used to support the ERC's activities is prohibited.
- [Computer Download](#): The ERC generally allows staff to download programs and similar freeware that is appropriate and useful in the context of business.
- [Instant Messaging](#): Staff members are permitted to utilize Instant Messaging for the primary purpose of maintaining professional relationships.
- [Internet Usage](#): The ERC permits staff to access the Internet during office hours.
- [Blog Policy](#): ERC prohibits employees from discussing the name of the organization, work related activities, clients, confidential information to the organization's research, survey activity, client work or other projects on blogs.
- [Photocopying of Copyrighted Material](#): ERC employees are expected to comply completely with all applicable laws and regulations concerning copyright protection.
- [Destruction of Confidential and Proprietary Materials](#): ERC employees are to properly dispose of confidential and sensitive materials.
- [Gift Policy](#): All gifts over a value of \$20 received from clients, vendors or others by ERC employees in the context of their employment become the property of the ERC, and as a rule the ERC does not give potential clients or donors "gifts."
- [Reimbursement and Travel Policies](#): All expenses over \$20.00 must be accompanied by original receipts.

Honesty

Honesty is being forthcoming and truthful when we interact with others and ourselves. It ensures sincerity in our relationships both internally and externally.

To promote Honesty, we will:

- Speak our minds freely but considerately
- Be direct and transparent
- Acknowledge our errors

Policies that guide us as *directors* to work Honestly:

- [Board Compensation & Travel Reimbursements](#): The ERC shall not issue compensation to any member of the ERC board, including officers, for performing duties for which he or she was elected.
- [Financial Reporting and Operations](#): ERC will conduct and make available on request an annual report; ERC will supply on request complete financial statements; ERC will prepare a detailed annual budget; appropriate ERC officers will deposit funds belonging to ERC; appropriate ERC officers will issue checks, etc.; and ERC may accept donations, contributions, gifts or bequests from private or public sources.
- [Investment Policy](#): In managing and investing the funds of ERC, Directors have a duty of loyalty as well as a duty to investigate. As such, Directors should exercise appropriate due diligence to ensure the accuracy of the information used in making investment decisions.



- [Media Relations](#): ERC disseminates information to domestic and international media organizations to deepen the understanding of integrity and character development issues worldwide.

Policies that guide us as *employees and contractors* to work Honestly:

- [Personnel Records](#): Any false, misleading, or materially incomplete statements in an employee's application or resume may be grounds for immediate termination of your employment.
- [Gift Policy](#): All gifts received from clients, vendors or others by ERC employees in the context of their employment become the property of the ERC, and as a rule the ERC does not give potential clients or donors 'gifts.'
- [Reimbursement and Travel Policies](#): All expenses over \$20.00 must be accompanied by original receipts.

Respect

Respect is treating others with dignity and mutual consideration. It builds an organization that encourages individuals to relate openly and to fulfill their potential.

To promote Respect, we will:

- Appreciate uniqueness
- Be compassionate
- Show courtesy
- Graciously accept the mistakes of others
- Listen to understand

Policies that guide us as *directors* to work Respectfully:

- [Anti-harassment Policy](#): ERC will not tolerate harassment of anyone, including any Director, employee, vendor, client, customer or visitor.
- [Diversity](#): ERC reaffirms its historical commitment to non-discrimination in the workplace and to the recruitment of qualified employees and Directors without prejudice to their gender, race, religion, color, national origin, sexual orientation, disability or other classification protected by law. ERC is proud of its diversity and encourages members of these groups to seek employment and representation on its Board.
- [Directors and Officers Liability Insurance](#): ERC shall purchase and maintain directors & officers liability insurance to indemnify itself and its directors and officers.

Policies that guide us as *employees and contractors* to work Respectfully:

- [Equal Employment Opportunity](#): The ERC is committed to providing an equal employment opportunity to all applicants and employees in full compliance with all applicable laws.
- [Anti-Harassment Policy](#): ERC is committed to maintaining a work environment that is free of harassment or intimidation.



- [Proof of Eligibility for Employment](#): ERC will hire only those individuals who are authorized to work in the United States.
 - [Life-Threatening Illnesses](#): ERC will make reasonable accommodations in accordance with all legal requirements to allow qualified employees with life-threatening illnesses to perform the essential functions of their jobs.
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Trust

Trust is the result of promises kept. It yields the confident expectation that we can rely on each other and that our colleagues and stakeholders can rely on us.

To preserve Trust, we will:

- Maintain respectful and open communication
- Establish realistic expectations
- Commit thoughtfully
- Meet our obligations
- Offer the benefit of the doubt

Policies that guide us as *directors* to work with Trust:

- [Corporate Relations](#): ERC will protect the integrity of the organization when considering corporate sponsorships or partnerships. No gifts, contributions, or grants that in any way compromise the mission of ERC shall be accepted.

Policies that guide us as *employees and contractors* to work with Trust:

- [Personnel Records](#): Any false, misleading, or materially incomplete statements in an employee's application or resume may be grounds for immediate termination of employment.
 - [Confidentiality](#): Each employee will be required to read, sign and abide by the ERC Confidentiality Policy.
 - [Work from Home/Telecommuting](#): On occasion it is appropriate for an employee to work from home during a regular workday with advance approval from a supervisor.
 - [Problem Resolution](#): Employees who feel that they have a work-related problem, or who would like to seek advice and counsel are encouraged to discuss problems with ERC's Leadership Team without fear of reprisal or recrimination.
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Excellence

Excellence is the pursuit and achievement of exceptional quality. It inspires the integration of ethical practices within our organization and among those we reach.

To achieve Excellence, we will:

- Seek new knowledge
- Learn from our experiences
- Uphold professional standards



- Commit to outstanding programs, research, and services
- Always do our best

Policies that guide us as *directors* to work with Excellence:

- [Anti-harassment Policy](#): ERC will not tolerate harassment of anyone, including any Director, employee, vendor, client, customer or visitor.
- [Diversity](#): ERC reaffirms its historical commitment to non-discrimination in the workplace and to the recruitment of qualified employees and Directors without prejudice to their gender, race, religion, color, national origin, sexual orientation, disability or other classification protected by law. ERC is proud of its diversity and encourages members of these groups to seek employment and representation on its Board.
- [Conflict of Interest](#): It shall be the policy of ERC that no member, while serving ERC in a leadership capacity, either as an officer or Director or in another type of leadership capacity, will take personal advantage of his or her leadership role by allowing a situation to exist that may be reasonably construed as a conflict of interest situation. This policy is intended to supplement but not replace any applicable state laws governing conflicts of interest applicable to nonprofit and charitable corporations.

Policies that guide us as *employees and contractors* to work with Excellence:

- [Anti-harassment Policy](#): ERC is committed to maintaining a work environment that is free of harassment or intimidation.
- [Hiring of Relatives \(or Other Employee Household Members\) for Full-, Part-Time, or Temporary Help](#): Members of an employee's immediate family will be considered based upon their qualifications.
- [Confidentiality](#): Each employee will be required to read, sign and abide by the ERC Confidentiality Policy.
- [Punctuality and Attendance](#): Punctuality and prompt, regular attendance are expected of all employees.
- [Dress Code](#): Employees are expected to dress in business casual attire Monday through Friday.
- [Outside Employment](#): Outside employment for full-time employees is not encouraged, and the prior approval of your supervisor must be obtained before undertaking such a commitment.
- [Substance Abuse and Possession](#): ERC forbids the abuse of alcohol by any employee while on ERC property or while pursuing ERC business at other locations, and ERC also prohibits the illegal use, possession, sale or other distribution of any drugs.



ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING

While we strive for an ethical workplace, it is inevitable that all employees and trustees will come upon ethical challenges. The following decision-making model is offered to help address such challenges.

When considering any business problem, directors and employees should always ask themselves these four questions:

1. Are there any ERC policies and/or procedures which apply to this situation?
2. Are there laws and/or regulations that apply to this situation?
3. Do ERC's values apply to this situation?
4. Does my own sense of 'the right thing to do' apply here?

Answering "yes" to any of these four questions suggests that there is an ethics issue and that ERC's Code of Conduct should be considered when addressing the problem.

When considering a solution to such a business problem, directors and employees should ask themselves the following questions:

1. Who will be affected by this solution?
2. How will they be affected?
3. Is there a good business case for this solution?
4. Is this solution consistent with how ERC defines 'the right thing to do'?
5. Is this solution consistent with how I define 'the right thing to do'?
6. Will ERC's reputation and standing within the community be helped by this solution?

The answers to these questions help determine if the solution is consistent with ERC's ethical position and with the ethics of society in general and you, the decision-maker, in particular.

REPORTING MECHANISM

The president of the ERC has appointed a staff member to serve as Ethics Officer for the organization. ERC's ethics officer reports directly to the president on ethics issues, and speaks privately with the Chair of the Audit Committee of the Board of Directors on a quarterly basis. ERC's ethics officer also has full permission to contact the president or the board at any time as needed.

Employees and directors are encouraged to contact the ERC ethics officer with questions, concerns, or to report observed misconduct. All conversations will be held in strict confidence, unless consent is otherwise given by the individual approaching the ethics officer. Retaliation towards any individual who raises an ethics-related concern will not be tolerated.



- ❖ Employees should take ethics concerns to the Ethics Officer. Employees have the right to request for private counsel with the Ethics Officer. The Ethics Officer, if necessary brings concerns to the President or the Chair of Audit Committee of the Board.
- ❖ For guidance on ethical issues, employees should consult the Ethics Officer.
- ❖ The Ethics Officer is an employee who is not a member of Executive Management.

ERC's Ethics Officer: Skip Lowney (skip@ethics.org; 571-480-4403).

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Board Members:

- ❖ Share information with Co-Board Members and President in connection to organization policies and activities
- ❖ Keep promises and commitments to Co-Board Members and President
- ❖ Talk about the importance of workplace ethics and doing the right thing in the organization's work
- ❖ Set a good example of ethical behavior
- ❖ Support Co-Board Members and President in following organization's ethics standards
- ❖ Do not tolerate retaliation

President:

- ❖ Provide information to Board Members, Executive Management, Staff Members, and External Stakeholders (as appropriate) about what is going on in the organization
- ❖ Keep promises and commitments to Board members, Executive Management, Staff Members, and External Stakeholders
- ❖ Talk about the importance of workplace ethics and doing the right thing in the organization's work
- ❖ Set a good example of ethical behavior
- ❖ Support Board Members, Executive Management, and Staff Members in following the organization's ethics standards
- ❖ Do not tolerate retaliation

Senior Management:

- ❖ Provide information to Board Members, President, Staff Members, and External Stakeholders (as appropriate) about what is going on in the organization
- ❖ Keep promises and commitments to Board members, President, Staff Members, and External Stakeholders
- ❖ Talk about the importance of workplace ethics and doing the right thing in the organization's work
- ❖ Set a good example of ethical behavior
- ❖ Support Board Members, President, and Staff Members in following the organization's ethics standards
- ❖ Do not tolerate retaliation



Ethics Resource Center

Code of Conduct

Approved by the ERC Board of Directors

March 23, 2010

Staff Members:

- ❖ Adhere to the organization's values
- ❖ Seek guidance on ethical issues when appropriate
- ❖ Report violations of the Code of Conduct swiftly
- ❖ Carefully consider ethical issues when making work-related decisions
- ❖ Keep promises and commitments to Management, Coworkers, and External Stakeholders
- ❖ Set a good example of ethical behavior
- ❖ Support Management and Coworkers in following the organization's ethics standards