



Policy Toolbox v 1.0

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I. Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

Synopsis

A code of ethics and professional conduct outlines the ethical principles that govern decisions and the behaviors that are acceptable and encouraged by the organization. They give general outlines for how members should behave, as well as specific guidance for handling issues like harassment, safety, and conflicts of interest.

This is a sample that an all-volunteer grassroots group might use. Policies that a more formal nonprofit organization might use are included in Section III of this Policy Toolbox.

1. Be inclusive.

We welcome and support people of all backgrounds and identities. This includes, but is not limited to members of any sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, social and economic class, educational level, color, immigration status, sex, age, size, family status, political belief, religion, and mental and physical ability.

2. Be considerate.

We all depend on each other to produce the best work we can. Your decisions will affect colleagues, and you should take those consequences into account when making decisions.

3. Be respectful.

We won't all agree all the time, but disagreement is no excuse for disrespectful behavior. We will all

experience frustration from time to time, but we cannot allow that frustration to lead to personal attacks. An environment where people feel uncomfortable or threatened is not a productive or creative one.

4. Choose your words carefully.

Always conduct yourself professionally. Be kind to others. Do not insult or put down others. Harassment and exclusionary behavior aren't acceptable. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Threats of violence.
- Discriminatory jokes and language.
- Sharing sexually explicit or violent material via electronic devices or other means.
- Personal insults, especially those using racist or sexist terms.
- Unwelcome sexual attention.
- Advocating for, or encouraging, any of the above behaviors.

5. Don't harass.

In general, if someone asks you to stop something, then stop. When we disagree, try to understand why. Differences of opinion and disagreements are mostly unavoidable. What is important is that we resolve disagreements and differing views constructively.

6. Embrace differences as strengths.

We can find strength in diversity. Different people have different perspectives on issues, and that can be valuable for solving problems or generating new ideas. Being unable to understand why someone holds a viewpoint doesn't mean that they're wrong. Don't forget that we all make mistakes, and blaming each other doesn't get us anywhere. Instead, focus on resolving issues and learning from mistakes.

(Adapted from <https://www.betterteam.com/code-of-ethics-and-professional-conduct>)

II. Adapted from “27 Best Practices of High Performing Volunteer Organizations”

Synopsis

All-volunteer organizations, and many nonprofit organizations, could improve their impact and results, foster more nurturing relationships, and build stronger legacies by adopting many, or all, of these best practices from high performing organizations.

1. Clearly (and frequently) **communicate your mission and vision**.
2. Take the time to **authentically welcome** new volunteers and orient them to your mission and vision.
3. Ensure that everyone knows exactly **what’s expected** of them. If possible, provide clearly-written **job descriptions** and **agreements**.
4. Start new volunteers off **small**. Don’t scare them off with too huge of a commitment too soon.
5. Keep **workloads as manageable as possible**.
6. Communicate **progress being made** on a regular basis. We all need to see that our efforts are having impact!
7. When there are **setbacks or breakdowns**, learn from them — and share these learnings.
8. Be **prepared**, so you don’t waste people’s time.
9. Create a **trusting environment** that ensures open communication, teamwork, and respect for diversity.
10. Keep everyone on your team **informed** of any inevitable changes (i.e. direction, timelines, goals, etc.).
11. Provide opportunities for team members to **switch to different roles** they might find more enjoyable.

12. Give and receive **feedback** (both formally and informally).
13. Provide opportunities for all members of the team to **learn and grow**.
14. **Honor your commitments and agreements** (and if, for any reason, you cannot — renegotiate these).
15. Give team members the opportunity to **take breaks** from the project.
16. Make sure team members know that they can **say “no”** if they are overextended or overwhelmed.
17. Enthusiastically **acknowledge successes**, especially “small wins,” and **celebrate** your successes as you go.
18. Be **kind and respectful** in all your interactions.
19. Do your best to make sure everyone is **enjoying the process** of participating.
20. **Respond** to input, questions, and feedback as soon as possible. Don't leave people hanging.
21. Build some **interpersonal chat time** into your meetings and conference calls.
22. Support volunteers in leadership positions to **delegate**.
23. Even when you are stressed or behind deadline, take the time to make sure your emails have a **feeling of warmth** to them.
24. Complete some type of **Project Report** on all projects you have completed and share these with the team and with other community members affected.
25. Conduct **exit interviews** when a volunteer ends their participation or is asked to step aside.
26. **Share your learnings** from exit interviews with others on the team.
27. Follow the **Golden Rule**: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

(Adapted from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/mitch-ditkoff/best-practices-volunteer-organizations_b_2624967.html)

III. Policies for Employee Conduct

Synopsis

Personnel policies define the treatment, rights, obligations, and relations of people in an organization. They are the blueprints by which the organization runs - the rules and procedures that protect workers (and the organization) from being abused, and keeps them from making errors that will hurt the organization or others within the organization. These policies contain instructions and rules for dealing with issues and overcoming obstacles that may present themselves both during normal working days and under extraordinary circumstances. These sample policies represent those that primarily deal with conduct and professional behavior. See the "Additional Resources" section of this document for links to more policies and employee handbooks.

1.00 CONDUCT AND CONSEQUENCES

1.01 INTRODUCTION AND NORMS

People who work together have an impact on each other's performance, productivity, and personal satisfaction in their jobs. In addition, how our employees act toward constituents, volunteers, members, donors, and vendors will influence whether those relationships are successful for the organization.

Because your conduct affects many more people than just yourself, we expect you to act in a professional manner whenever you are conducting organization business or representing the organization at business or social functions.

Although it is impossible to give an exhaustive list of everything that professional conduct means, it does, at a minimum, include the following:

- following all of the policies of your organization that apply to you;
- refraining from rude, offensive, or outrageous behavior;
- refraining from ridicule and hostile jokes;
- treating coworkers, constituents, volunteers, members, donors, and vendors with patience, respect, and consideration;
- being courteous and helpful to others; and
- communicating openly with supervisors, managers, and coworkers.

Your on-the-job professional behavior, appearance, and attitude do much to ensure high morale,

effective working relationships, and ongoing positive interactions at all levels. We are always striving to create and maintain an atmosphere of professional behavior that allows all individuals to be proud to be associated with this organization, the Transition Movement, and the larger community.

Consider observing the following norms:

- Work in a team atmosphere and assist colleagues when necessary.
- Take initiative and be self-directed as much as possible within the scope of your job or role.
- Store work-related information in an appropriate manner so that it may be suitably accessed by others.
- Clean up after yourself and keep your shared workspace generally tidy, especially your own work area.
- Continue learning, and enrich and enhance your knowledge of current issues with regard to resource depletion, energy conservation, climate change, community development, relocalization, and other topics related to the vision and mission of the Transition Movement and the unique aims of your local effort.

1.02 GENERAL STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Being an employee of this organization carries certain responsibilities for good conduct. We expect employees to follow rules of conduct that will protect the interests and safety of all employees. It is not possible to list all the forms of behavior that are considered unacceptable in the workplace. The following examples are types of conduct which are not acceptable and may be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including immediate dismissal.

- Use, possession or sale of illegal drugs or alcohol on the organization's property, or being impaired by legal or illegal drugs during working hours. Limited amounts of alcohol may be consumed at organization-sponsored events; during such events, you are responsible for controlling the amount of your consumption to avoid intoxication.
- Theft, damage, or misuse of the organization's or another employee's personal property.
- Abuse of the organization's time.
- Fighting, threatening, or harassing others, using abusive language, or other disorderly conduct.
- Falsifying or altering the organization's records, including time cards and expense reports.
- Possession of weapons or firearms on the organization's property, or any act which might endanger the safety of others, including repeated violation of this organization's safety rules.
- Disclosure of this organization's confidential information to unauthorized persons.
- Violation of the organization's equal employment opportunity or harassment policies. This

includes reprisals or threats against employees who exercise their rights under these policies.

- Failure to notify your supervisor within two hours of the start of your work day for each day of absence or lateness.
- Insubordination or refusal to perform reasonably assigned duties.
- Excessive tardiness or absenteeism, or sleeping or loafing on the job.
- Unsatisfactory work performance or interfering with another employee's work performance.
- Violations of safety rules or failure to report such violations.
- Engaging in other practices and behaviors that may be inconsistent with the ordinary, reasonable, and common sense rules of conduct necessary to the mutual welfare of this organization and its employees.

This listing isn't intended to be exhaustive and you should be guided by common sense in all your activities.

1.03 OPEN DOOR POLICY

Good communications are important. We believe that many problems can be avoided and that most can be resolved if all parties involved have the facts, as well as a clear understanding of the matter. In addition, please observe high standards of business and personal ethics in the conduct of your duties and responsibilities. It is the responsibility of all employees to comply with the organization's policies, as well as with State and Federal laws, and to report violations or suspected violations in accordance with this Open Door Policy.

Bring to management's attention issues or concerns regarding your job, work issues, working conditions, or relationships with other employees. This includes reporting suspected violations of Federal or State law and providing truthful information in connection with an inquiry or investigation by a court, agency, law enforcement, or other governmental body. If you feel you have a problem at work or you have a concern that warrants management's attention, you should discuss it first with your supervisor. Because your supervisor is closest to the situation, s/he is in the best position to resolve the problem. The discussion will be considered confidential to you and your supervisor, except that the views of higher management may be sought by the supervisor for resolution.

If that discussion fails to resolve the problem or you think it is inappropriate to discuss it with your supervisor, you should contact the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is not able to resolve the problem, or if the Executive Director is your direct supervisor, you may discuss the issue with your Board President or Human Resources Consultant.

Your concern will be investigated promptly and in a manner intended to protect confidentiality, consistent with a full and fair investigation. The investigating parties will notify the concerned individuals of their findings. Through this process, we hope to solve any problem you may have quickly and satisfactorily.

This organization expressly prohibits any form of retaliation, including harassment, intimidation, adverse employment actions, or any other form of retaliation against employees who raise suspected violations of law or cooperate in inquiries or investigations. Any employee who engages in retaliation will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

It must be emphasized that you are encouraged to discuss any situation that you believe requires correction or needs resolution by management. You can be assured you will not be criticized nor will your position be jeopardized for doing so. This approach to problem resolution is our "open door" policy.

1.04 UNLAWFUL HARASSMENT

This organization will not condone unlawful harassment of any employee. This includes harassment on the basis of gender, race, religion, disability, gender identification or preference, national origin, or any other protected category. It specifically includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature where:

1. submission to advances is a term or condition of employment;
2. submission to or rejection of advances is used as the basis for making employment decisions; and
3. such conduct interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Examples include the following behaviors. These are only examples, and it is impossible to define every action or all words that could be interpreted as unlawful harassment:

1. unwanted sexual advances;
2. offering employment benefits in exchange for sexual behaviors, and/or making or threatening reprisals after a negative response to sexual advances;
3. visual conduct: leering, making derogatory gestures, displaying of suggestive or derogatory objects or pictures, cartoons, or posters;
4. verbal conduct: making or using derogatory comments, epithets, slurs, and jokes;
5. verbal sexual advances or propositions;
6. verbal abuse of a sexual nature, graphic verbal commentaries about an individual's body,

degrading words used to describe an individual or an individual's race, religion, or other protected characteristic, suggestive or obscene or derogatory letters, notes, or invitations;

7. physical conduct: touching, assault, impeding, or blocking movements.

Harassment is against the law. If you feel you are a victim of unlawful harassment in the workplace (by a manager, a co-worker, a representative of this organization, a customer or vendor, or a representative of an organization doing business with this organization), you should take the following actions:

1. if harassment occurs, you should feel free to tell the person to stop the behavior. Many times, the person may not realize the advances or behaviors they are engaged in are offensive or unwelcome. Then:
2. you should report it immediately to the Executive Director, your supervisor, a member of the Board of Directors, or to any member of management with whom you feel most comfortable. The complaint should include details of the incident(s), names of individuals involved and any witnesses. Supervisors and managers must immediately refer all harassment complaints to the Executive Director.
3. this organization will not retaliate against any employee who opposes unlawful harassment, files a complaint, testifies, assists, or participates in any manner in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing conducted by this organization, its management or representatives, or Federal or State reporting agencies.

An investigation will be conducted. The investigators will work to keep it confidential, with information being provided on a need-to-know basis only. The investigation will be as objective and complete as possible, and those who are known to have information on the matter will be interviewed. A determination will be made and the results will be communicated to the complainant and the alleged harasser.

If the charges are proven to be accurate, prompt and effective remedial action will be taken. The complainant will be informed of the actions. Steps will be taken to prevent any other unlawful harassment and to address any loss the complainant may have suffered.

Unlawfully harassing others will be grounds for immediate disciplinary action, up to and including termination. In addition, if an employee is found to be guilty of unlawful harassment, s/he may be personally liable for monetary damages. This organization will NOT pay damages assessed against the employee personally.

1.05 ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

Our computer and phone systems, email, and voicemail services are ubiquitous. Each person working on Transition efforts should act responsibly and ensure that they use these services in an effective, ethical, and lawful manner. The following guidelines are intended for all who use computers, email, voicemail and the internet through this organization's network, even if access is gained by connecting from offsite.

- Ensure that all voicemail, email, etc. used to facilitate organizational business, and all messages you send or compose, are respectful and professional.
- Store all of the documents you create or receive in the course of your work on your organization's servers and not on your computer's hard drive or on other storage media, unless agreed to ahead of time.
- These services are to be used to conduct organization business and are not for your personal use. The organization understands that, on occasion, limited personal use may be acceptable (for example: if immediate family members may need to leave messages on one of these services for you). This organization is willing to accommodate such personal use of the system to a limited degree. However, any use that interferes with your work performance will not be tolerated.
- Messages on any of the services are to be accessed only by the intended recipient and by others at the direct request of the intended recipient. However, organization management reserves the right to access messages on any of the services at any time. Any attempt by persons other than the intended recipient or management to access or delete messages or files in any of the services will constitute a serious violation of organization policy.
- Any attempt to access or delete files that are not within your established directory and authority level will constitute a serious violation of organization policy.
- Email, voicemail, and internet transactions are subject to the same laws, policies, and practices that apply to the use of other means of communication, such as telephones and paper records. These policies include non-disclosure of the organization's confidential information, as well as other personnel policies and practices, including those policies governing a supervisor's access to employee work files.
- You are responsible for your image on the Internet as well as the image of this organization when you access the internet on organization business. Any employee who has internet access is expected to comply with these guidelines, as well as the generally-accepted practices of cooperation and professionalism that govern regular business and internet transactions.

- Fraudulent, harassing or obscene messages and/or other materials must not be sent, transmitted, downloaded or received. These inappropriate messages include, but are not limited, to the following:
 1. messages sent under an assumed name or modified address with the intent to obscure the origin of the message.
 2. messages that harass an individual or group because of their sex, race, religious beliefs, national origin, physical attributes, or sexual preference.
 3. messages that contain obscene or inflammatory remarks directed toward an individual or group.
- You may not use any of these services to directly initiate negotiations with others for personal financial gain.

1.06 EMPLOYEE APPEARANCE AND DRESS

We ask all employees to use common sense when they dress for work. Please dress appropriately for your position and job duties, and please make sure you are neat and clean at all times. It is important to remember that this is a professional organization; employees must reflect this professionalism in their demeanor and appearance. Casual business attire is appropriate on those days where clients are not expected; more formal business attire is appropriate for business meetings, client appointments, and public appearances.

If you have any questions about the proper attire for your position, please contact your supervisor. We will try to reasonably accommodate an employee's special dress or grooming needs that are the result of religion, ethnicity, race, or disability.

1.07 DRIVING WHILE ON BUSINESS

If you drive on organization business, you are required to obey all traffic regulations in the area in which you are driving. In addition, you must follow state road rules and driving laws and not engage in other distracting activities (such as eating, writing, or grooming) while you are driving. If you want to engage in any of these activities while driving on organization business, you are to safely pull off the road, stop the vehicle, and finish the activity prior to resuming driving.

1.08 DRUG FREE WORKPLACE

This organization is committed to providing a safe, comfortable, and productive work environment for its employees. We recognize that employees who abuse drugs at work – or who appear at work under the influence of either legal or illegal drugs – harm both themselves and the work environment. As a result, we prohibit employees from doing the following:

- appearing at work incapacitated or impaired by drugs;
- conducting organization business while incapacitated or impaired by drugs (whether or not the employee is actually on work premises at the time);
- using illegal drugs on the worksite;
- using illegal drugs while conducting organization business (whether or not the employee is actually on work premises at the time);
- possessing, buying, selling, or distributing illegal drugs on the worksite; and
- possessing, buying, selling, or distributing illegal drugs while conducting organization business (whether or not the employee is actually on work premises at the time).

Illegal drug use includes more than just outlawed drugs such as cocaine or heroin. It also includes the misuse of otherwise legal prescription and over-the-counter drugs. Employees who violate this policy may face disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

We reserve the right to inspect employees, their possessions, and their workspaces to enforce our policy against illegal drug use.

1.09 CONFIDENTIALITY AND TRADE SECRETS

During your employment here, you will periodically learn sensitive information, either because you help to develop that information or because you need that information to do your job. It is important for the health of this organization that you keep information you learn through your employment confidential. Employees who improperly disclose sensitive information, confidential information, proprietary information, or trade secret information to anyone outside the organization will face disciplinary action, up to and including termination. After you leave this organization, you are still legally prohibited from disclosing sensitive, proprietary, trade secret, or confidential information. If you disclose such information, we will seek legal remedies. Employees are required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement as a condition of continued employment with this organization.

1.10 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

We expect all employees to devote their energies and loyalties to our organization. We do not allow employees to engage in any activities or relationships that create either an actual conflict of interest or the potential for a conflict of interest. Although we cannot list every activity or relationship that would create either an actual or potential conflict of interest, examples of activities that violate this policy include the following:

- working for an organization with whom we conduct business such as a vendor or an organization that competes with us for funding as a part-time employee, full-time

- employee, consultant, or independent contractor, or in any other capacity;
- using the resources of this organization for personal gain; and
- using your position in this organization for personal gain.

Employees who violate this policy face disciplinary action, up to and including termination. If you are unsure about whether an activity might violate this policy, or if you have any questions at all about this policy, please talk to your supervisor.

1.11 SOLICITATIONS AND DISTRIBUTION

Often employees have outside interests that they would like to promote in the workplace. These interests may range from charitable groups and activities, the sale of various products and/or services, and political interests and social causes. For this reason, this organization's policy prohibits both solicitation and distribution activities that do not directly involve this organization's interests and concerns. These activities must be curtailed on all organization property, with this organization's personnel and other parties, during all working hours.

In addition, non-employees are prohibited from solicitation and distribution on organization property. Any requests from outside persons or organizations to sell merchandise, solicit contributions, distribute literature, arrange displays or utilize organization facilities are to be referred to your supervisor.

1.12 DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES

It is our hope that disciplinary actions will never be necessary. However, to ensure that you clearly understand the consequences of unacceptable performance or behavior, we have prepared the explanation below:

As was explained in the section on "Introduction and Norms," discipline may be initiated for various reasons, including violations of work rules, insubordination, or poor job performance. The severity of disciplinary action generally will depend on the nature of the offense and on the employee's record, and may range from a verbal and/or a written warning to immediate dismissal.

IV. Additional Resources

Synopsis

There are a myriad of resources available for creating healthy policies. Here are a few that we found that could be helpful in your organizational journey from an all-volunteer, grassroots organization, to a more formal, structured and legal entity (should you decide to become one).

Human resources:

<https://www.betterteam.com/human-resources>

More on personnel policies:

<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/structure/hiring-and-training/personnel-policies/main>

Employee handbook template:

<https://www.betterteam.com/human-resources/tools-and-samples/employee-handbooks>

For building a nonprofit organization:

<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/structure/organizational-structure>

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TRANSITION UNITED STATES
www.transitionus.org

Transition US is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization whose mission is to catalyze and strengthen a national network of people-powered groups who are building local resilience through community action.

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