Working Together for a Better World

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for tools and guidance

Through Strategy, Teamwork, and Leadership

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Worksheets for Ethics and Trust

Meaningful ethics are essential to gain the trust and support of donors.

Questions before implementation

1. What is your assessment of your organization's current practice in ethics, transparency, and accountability for trustworthiness?

2. What are the findings from surveys of your current donors, lapsed donors, and others?

3. How will you use the model codes from InterAction, MANO, NCVO, IFRC, Rhode Island, ICFO, evaluation agencies, the Association of Fundraising Professionals, and other organizations?

4. What can you do when a board member, staff member, or volunteer violates your code of ethics?

> ### Meaningful Ethics
> 1. **A code of ethics with rules and expectations**
> 2. **Operational explanations of the obligations**
> 3. **Assessing compliance on a regular basis**
> 4. **Procedures for complaints of non-compliance**
> 5. **Reliable verification by relevant experts**
> 6. **Procedures for sanctions for non-compliance**
> 7. **Communication of all this to constituents**
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> **These seven imperatives make ethics meaningful.**
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Drafting a meaningful code of ethics (or code of conduct) for your organization

This is the action step for nonprofit ethics and building trust for your organization. Situations vary, but this can be an outline of some of the key steps to take. The process of developing (or strengthening) a code of ethics for a nonprofit should follow these proven approaches:

1. Collect stories of nonprofits' shortcomings and scandals in your own country or sector of activity to give you an actual and relevant baseline for action.

2. Gather information about what other nonprofits and their associations have as a code of ethics, code of conduct, code of behavior, or standards including advice from relevant watchdog nonprofit associations and resource centers.

3. Make your case that you need to establish a code or expand a current code to increase trustworthiness, which will help your organization increase fundraising success.

Developing Meaningful Ethics to earn the trust of donors

4. Remind everyone that greater success in fundraising enables an expanded program with greater results.

5. Recruit allies within your organization especially the executive director, finance director, program director, key board members, and others to support your initiative.

6. Communicate how a code of ethics can show that your organization is responsible and accountable, prevents problems and improves work, gains donor trust and more funding, and provides a defense if needed.

7. Secure formal endorsement from executive leadership and the board to develop a code as a key step to involving other staff.

8. Create a small drafting team to assure broad-based and ongoing involvement in the process and to generate important participation and relevant suggestions.

9. Reference the examples in this book and customize your code of ethics to fully and accurately represent your nonprofit.

10. Build your work on proven steps for developing standards including identifying problems, assuring shared values, obtaining broad participation, being reasonable, and aiming high.

11. Conduct confidential interviews or surveys of current and potential donors, staff, board members, long-term volunteers, and other stakeholders to collect their views on important behavior they expect from you.

12. Be completely transparent about the process and share the plans, ideas, and drafts within the organization and repeatedly ask for suggestions and actual wording to use.

13. Provide time for participants to reflect and develop consensus on appropriate standards and terminology and to include suggestions from others wherever appropriate. A participatory process results in greater ownership.

14. To create a meaningful code of ethics, include key topics such as organizational integrity and good behavior, informed and independent governance, transparency and accountability, truthful fundraising appeals, use of funds according to donor expectations, sound and professional financial management, well planned and measured program effectiveness, fair and honorable treatment of employees, adherence to best practices in all aspects of work, accurate and timely reports, avoidance of even an appearance of conflict of interest, prohibition against discrimination, abuse, and harassment, and steps for self-assessment, external review, and possibility of sanctions. Review other organization's codes of ethics, codes of behavior, or codes of conduct for other important topics to include.

15. Secure management and board approval to adopt a meaningful code of ethics and the commitment to monitor and validate compliance of your nonprofit's code of ethics.

16. Communicate the code widely within the organization including discussions at staff meetings and recruitment and orientation for new staff and board members.

17. Implement the code with care including phasing it in over a reasonable time period, if needed, providing opportunity for feedback and conducting periodic assessments and enforcement.

18. Build a culture of accountability through personal example, reinforcement, discussion in staff meetings, a recognition and reward system, and annual plans and evaluations.

19. Verify compliance with the standards annually by staff, volunteers, and board members and conduct periodic audits to assure accountability.

20. To ensure a strong code of ethics, support it with self-assessment, peer review, external monitoring, and application of sanctions to demonstrate full commitment to meaningful ethics, good behavior, and full accountability.

21. Review the code periodically and make improvements based on feedback on issues and concerns, suggestions for improvements, and your own evaluations.

22. Include the code on your website and in your statements to the public along with your nonprofit's vision, mission, values, culture, and positioning as key elements of trustworthiness.

23. Keep in mind that a strong code of ethics is critical in order for donors to recognize that your nonprofit is worthy of their trust – and their donations.

24. Share the code with other nonprofits and NGO associations as a model and encourage them to adopt their own tailored code of ethics.

Key point: In all your planning and all your implementation, please do remember to focus on creating an awesome experience for both donors and beneficiaries. They will love you.

WORKSHEET: Develop your own code of ethics for your organization	
Steps to success:	**Who will do what and when:**
Research issues and report	
Involve everyone in the process	

Review other codes for guidance	
Draft the code	
Circulate and improve the code	
Adopt and confirm the code	
Share and publicize the code	
Assess compliance annually	
Have external verification	
Include clear sanctions	
Step up to lead other NGOs	
Report to stakeholders	