

Partnership Ethics

Partnerships in NRM PROSPECT Course



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DEFINITION OF ETHICS

Merriam – Webster

Ethics: *What is good and bad with moral duty.*

Moral principles that govern a person's behavior



ETHICS

Why good people do bad things

“Decades of evidence shows us that situations can persuade even the most ethical and compassionate people to betray their own values”

-Phil Zimbardo, PhD, founder of HIP and Social psychologist who conducted the famous Stanford Prison Experiment 1971



Objectives

- Understand ethical standards and legal responsibilities
- Be aware of key considerations that help determine whether there is an ethics issue:
 - Solicitation
 - Roles and memberships with partner organizations
 - Working with partners who are fundraising
 - Acceptance of contributions and donations

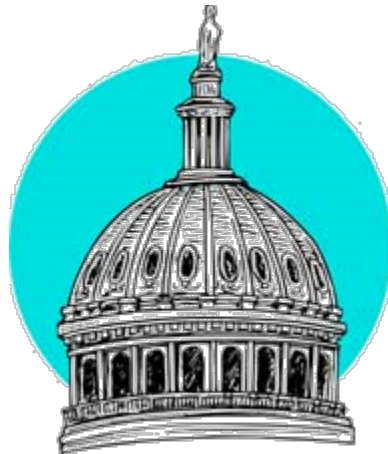


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As a Federal Employee ...

...your first responsibility is to represent the interests of the government. This should be reflected in all your actions.



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As a Public Agency Partner ...

... you must understand that the public expects a high level of transparency and accountability.



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Regulations and Policies

A partnership does not allow the Corps to circumvent applicable legal requirements in areas such as:

- Procurement
- Personnel or labor laws
- Printing, publishing or audiovisual production
- Issuance of special use permits
- Real estate licenses and leases
- Fiscal responsibility
- Environmental regulations

Bottom Line: Regulations and Policies
MUST BE FOLLOWED !



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Why Bother with Ethics and Conduct?

- Administrative action
- Criminal prosecution
- Violation of public trust



When in doubt...

Contact your supervisor or your ethics counselor in Office of Counsel!

It is best to involve your Office of Counsel at an early stage in the development of your partnerships.



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Ethics Issues

- Can I be a member (or officer) of a partner organization?
- How do I work with partners who are fundraising for project support?
- Can I accept a gift or donation from a partner?
- What is the proper way to recognize partners for their contributions?



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Can I be a member (or officer) of a partner organization in an *official* capacity?

Yes, a USACE Employee may serve as:

- Official Liaisons
- Technical Advisors
- Committee Chairpersons
- General (Simple) Membership



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Serving in an *Official* Capacity Means...

- Assigned by a supervisor
- Working on official time
- Should be reimbursed for travel
- Could be using a government vehicle
- In official uniform
- May be either on federal premises or invited to participate elsewhere as a result of your official position.



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As a Corps Employee May I:

- Participate in a fiduciary role as officer, director or trustee unless authorized by statute or waiver?
- Participate in partner operations, e.g. budget, fundraising, membership drives, by-laws, lobbying, or “for profit” activities?
- Endorse products or services?
- Accept compensation for official duties performed with partner?
- Utilize appropriated funds to conduct activities through a partner that violates USACE authorization?

NO, to all of the above



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Exceptions To The Rule

- **Widely attended gatherings:** When there has been a determination that your attendance is in the interest of the agency, you may accept an unsolicited gift of free attendance at all or appropriate parts of a widely attended gathering.
 - Need prior approval to accept travel costs (airfare, lodging, etc)

USACE employees may accept:

- discounts and similar benefits that are offered to the public, other groups that you belong to, or to all government employees,
- gifts based on outside business or employment relationships,
- awards and honorary degrees,
- literature and trinkets from a political organization
- gifts based on a personal relationship.

Be Careful! Perception is Reality.



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Partners Recognizing USACE Employees

- Partners who recognize agency employees are bound by ethics guidelines set by law.
- Employees may accept tokens such as plaques, certificates, trophies and cards.
- Non-cash awards valued at \$200 or less from sources not affected by employee or agency are permitted (non-prohibited).
- Employees may receive gifts valued up to \$20 per occasion, up to \$50 in any single year from a prohibited source.



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A Prohibited Source is an Entity That...

- Seeks official action from USACE
- Conducts or seeks to conduct business with USACE
- Conducts activities regulated by USACE
- Seeks to influence USACE policies or regulations
- Has interests that may be substantially affected by your official duties (performance or non-performance)
- Hopes to use your position as a USACE employee to benefit or further its efforts or mission



Can I be a member (or officer) of a partner organization in a *personal* capacity?

YES!...Participation in a nonfederal organization in an unofficial, personal capacity must occur on personal time, not on official work time.

Informing supervisors is encouraged to ensure that federal policies are being followed.



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A Word of Caution !!!

Participating in a personal capacity must not compromise an employee's first responsibility to represent the interest of the Federal government.

Again... when in doubt,
consult your Office of Counsel



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How do I work in an official capacity with partners who are fundraising for project support?

- Attending fundraising events in an official capacity is permitted – BUT restricted to approved and official remarks.
- Participation may not appear to endorse the fundraising effort or the organization; this includes asking for money.



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Things Employees “Need To Know” When Attending Partner Fundraising Events:

- Can be named on invitation as speaker, but not shown as sponsor
- May wear uniform, but limit remarks to programs, projects or subjects related to the agency’s mission
- Cannot ask for money, support or receive donations on behalf of partner
- May not use title, position or authority to support fundraising efforts
- You may NOT be co-chair of a fundraising committee or actively participate in the fundraising activities.



Fundraising Displays and Materials



The Corps may allow the non-intrusive display or distribution of materials on its projects to educate visitors about an authorized fundraising partnership or activity.



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Fundraising Website Connections

The Corps may authorize links from Corps websites to partner websites that provide opportunities to make electronic contributions provided that such linkages conform to Corps information technology management and security policies, including those pertaining to websites, and are authorized by the written agreement between the Corps and partner.



JOIN

By joining the Corps Foundation, you become a partner with the largest Federal provider of outdoor recreation facilities, helping with the stewardship of millions of acres of land and water managed by the Army Corps of Engineers. Be involved with your local community and a wider national community while funding important cultural, recreational and environmental projects for the enjoyment of all Americans.

All **membership fees** and **donations** are processed securely via PayPal (major credit and debit cards accepted) and are tax-deductible. **All memberships with the exception of the Lifetime membership are annual.** Thank you for helping

DONATE

Your financial support helps Corps projects and their friends groups connect, grow, and increase their capacity to fulfill the Corps' natural resource education mission on lakes and waterways across America.



Recap Questions

TRUE or FALSE?

Your cooperating association is having a fund raising event and has asked for your assistance in being a co-chair of the planning committee.
It is okay for you to do this.

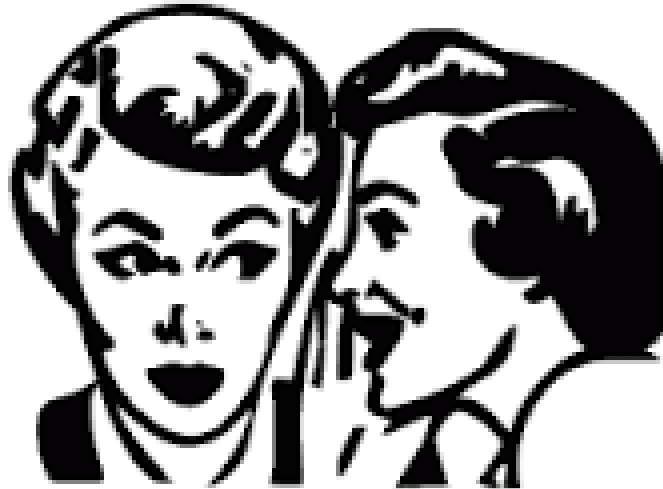
False



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CONFESSIONS?



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