

CODE OF CONDUCT



Transparency Maldives, the National Chapter of Transparency International in The Maldives, is a non-partisan organization that promotes collaboration, awareness and undertakes other initiatives to improve governance and eliminate corruption from the daily lives of people. Transparency Maldives views corruption as a systemic issue and advocates for institutional changes that will punish and prevent corruption.



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Code of conduct is individual and specific to an organization and requires ownership and endorsement of the code across different stakeholders in an organization. The scope and details of the code of conduct also varies across organizations, depending on its operations, type of organization and culture. The following is a guideline on how to write a code of conduct including definitions of key terms and the key steps organizations need to undertake in the process of developing a code of conduct. Annex 4 provides a Dhivehi translation of the guideline on how to write a code of conduct.

HOW TO WRITE A CODE OF CONDUCT

WHAT IS A CODE OF CONDUCT?

A code of conduct is a policy which outlines the values, standards, guidelines for behavior and best practices that all members and employees and/or third parties acting on behalf of an organization must follow.

The terms code of conduct and code of ethics are sometimes used interchangeably but both these terms have different meanings.

Code of ethics is a standard of moral value by which an organization makes decisions about what is right or wrong, whereas a code of conduct is a body of rules and regulations that explain the acceptable behavior in a specific situation.

WHY IS A CODE OF CONDUCT IMPORTANT?

- ▶ A code of conduct provides a guideline for expected behaviors within the workplace and in business operations of an organization. The code of conduct can be a central reference point when addressing any issue of ethics. Further, building awareness around expected behaviors opens up avenues for dialogue and engagement.
- ▶ A code of conduct demonstrates the organization's commitment to its values and principles, adherence to best practice, thereby contributing to strengthening the organizations' credibility and legitimacy.
- ▶ A code of conduct provides a clear criterion against which the behavior and performance of the management, members, employees, volunteers can be reviewed and can be a useful guide to align actions with the organization's goals or values.

- ▶ A code of conduct demonstrates that ethics and standards are important for the organization and will increase the trust of members, employees, volunteers, partners, donors/funders towards the organization. Adherence to ethics and best standards demonstrated by a code of conduct also contributes to an increase in performance of the organization and satisfaction of members, employees and volunteers.
- ▶ A code of conduct also acts as a guideline to prevent unethical or corrupt acts which can pose reputational and financial risks for the organization.

STEPS TO FOLLOW WHEN DRAFTING A CODE OF CONDUCT

a. Identify who will be included in the process of developing the organization's code of conduct

Using an existing internal policy making process or practice (if available), determine who will be included in the process from the governing board, management, members, employees, volunteers and other stakeholders in order to develop the code of conduct. You can also extend who you include in the process to donors, beneficiaries and other partners. Broad organization representation and collective input will allow acceptance and effective implementation.

b. Examine past ethical issues, expected standards and behaviors from your stakeholders

Before drafting the code of conduct, consider all of the past ethical issues the organization has experienced and consider possible areas where ethical violations may occur in the course of duty or business. Following consideration of risk areas, identify how ethical conflict and issues can be prevented, what behaviors can be practiced and what standards should be upheld.

c. Outline of code of conduct

Develop a draft code of conduct based on the following sections:

- ▶ The **scope** of the code of conduct;
- ▶ The **fundamental values and principles** that the organization identifies as most essential to accomplishing the goals and objectives of the organization; this should include values that are key to uphold business integrity such as **integrity, transparency, and accountability**.
- ▶ Indicate the organization's expectation that the governing board, management, members, employees **comply with** relevant laws and regulations.

- ▼ **Disciplinary action on violations** should be included. Disciplinary action can include verbal warnings, written warnings, suspension, or termination. Disciplinary action rules prescribed in relevant employment laws and regulations can be used as guidelines in taking disciplinary action against individual associates of the organization who are not employees.
- ▼ **Procedure on reporting violation of the code** should be included. Reporting procedure guides members, employees, volunteers and other stakeholders on how to report violations of the code of conduct.
- ▼ Identify the compliance areas you will include in your code of conduct. The following is a suggested list of **compliance areas** that can be included:
 - ▷ Conflicts of interest.
 - ▷ Asset protection.
 - ▷ Gift policy.
 - ▷ Organizational culture.
 - ▷ Whistleblowing and reporting.
 - ▷ Confidentiality.
 - ▷ Proactive disclosure.
 - ▷ Sexual and general harassment and discrimination.
 - ▷ Substance use.
 - ▷ Privacy policy.
 - ▷ Equal opportunity.

Once you have chosen the areas to include, outline each section with the information you feel is most appropriate to your organization.

d. Consultation

Once the outline is developed, a consultation should be held with members and/or employees in order to provide them an opportunity to comment and deliberate on its contents. An in-house committee of representation from the governing board, members and employees can also be mobilized to develop and review the code of conduct. Where possible, beneficiaries and other stakeholders can also be invited to provide their input.

e. Communicate the code of conduct

The code of conduct should be communicated to all members, employees and volunteers. The code of conduct can be communicated in the form of sessions during induction/orientation programs or can also be part of a membership application form.