



Code of Ethics Review and Development



The Ethics Institute assists organisations in crafting unique codes of ethics that play an impactful role in establishing and maintaining an ethical culture.

What is a code of ethics?

A most important reason for an organisation to have a code of ethics is to provide clarity to all stakeholders on the ethical standards of the organisation. These standards should exist in the relationships and interactions between the organisation and all its stakeholders. Employees and other stakeholders have their own values and standards when they contract with an organisation. Their ethical values and standards may not be aligned with the ethical values and standards of the organisation. It is thus incumbent on the organisation to establish, and clarify, the expected ethical values and ethical standards that are required of employees and other stakeholders who act on behalf of the organisation.

Why develop or review a code of ethics?

Leading governance practice requires that organisations establish an ethical culture. Having a code of ethics is a key part of this process because it captures what the collective accepts as ethically desirable behaviour.

What does the development of a code of ethics entail?

The Ethics Institute provides an advisory service to organisations that do not have an existing code of ethics or wish to entirely replace their existing code. Our experts are actively involved in the development process and play an integral role in the ultimate outcome.

What does the process of development involve?

Ideally, code development follows on from an ethics risk assessment. In cases where this is not possible, we perform the following:

- *Interviews with key individuals*

The interviews identify the organisation's high-level ethics risks and clarify the purpose that the code is expected to fulfil, according to, for example, the organisation's:

- Chief executive officer,
- Board chairperson,
- Ethics committee chairperson, and/or
- Ethics officer.

- *Code design*

The code is developed, focusing on:

- Purpose, tone and format – does the code align with its intended purpose, as defined by the key individuals?
- Content – does the code address the main ethics principles associated with leading governance practices and does it include references to other useful ethics resources?

- Clarity – does the structure and language of the code promote understanding?
- Guidance for seeking advice and safe reporting – does the code provide guidance for seeking advice on ethical issues and reporting unethical conduct?
- Guidelines for ethical decision-making – does the code provide an easy understandable decision-making tool to assist stakeholder in making ethical decisions?

What does the review of a code of ethics entail?

The Ethics Institute provides an advisory service to organisations that have an existing code of ethics that is outdated, poorly understood, or perceived to have little impact.

What does the process of review involve?

A code review should consider both form and content aspects of the code against leading practice standards.

- *Code review*

The code is reviewed, focusing on:

Form aspects that include:

- Clarity of purpose - is the purpose of the code clear?
- Language - is the code written in language that is understandable to its intended audience?
- Tone - is the tone of the code aligned with the purpose and content of the code?
- Format - does the format of the code serve the purpose of the code?
- Architecture - does the code have a clear and understandable structure?
- Accessibility - is it easy to find what you are looking for in the code?
- Intended audience - is it clear to whom the code applies?
- Internal logical coherence - do the different parts of the code form a logical coherent document?

Content aspects that include:

- Comprehensiveness - what is covered by the code?
- Alignment with strategy - is the code aligned with the strategic objectives and identity of the organisation?
- Auxiliary content - which additional sources of information can support the code?

What happens next? The Ethics Institute provides a full report on the outcomes of the review or development process, including a revised or new code of ethics.

 For more information:
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