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# pm_logoEthics

## How Ethical Are You?

Test your ethics and knowledge of the ICMA Code of Ethics with this short quiz. See answers on pages 3 and 4.

1. The guideline encouraging ICMA members to commit to at least two years of service applies in which of the following situations:
   1. Only to the city or county manager.
   2. All positions in local government, including assistants, department heads, and management analysts.
   3. To a promotion even if you have been in the organization for more than two years.
2. It’s okay to use your personal credit card and obtain those nice perks such as miles or points for which of the following expenses:
   1. Nominal business expenses such as meals, travel, books, and professional development fees.
   2. Any local government expense, including police cars, fuel, landscaping.
   3. None of the above.
3. The chair of the county’s Republican Party invites the manager to attend a social gathering—the party’s fifth annual pizza and politics get-together—to talk about her vision for the future of the region. The manager should:
   1. Reject the invitation because it comes from a political party.
   2. Attend because it’s vital to share information with prominent community leaders.
   3. Attend but only after confirming that it’s not a fundraiser or candidate event.
4. An offer of employment is binding when:
   1. You announce at the end of the interview that you would love to work for the organization.
   2. After negotiating, you give your verbal or written acceptance, or both, and agree to the terms of the contract.
   3. Council formally votes to approve the hiring and your employment agreement.
5. The CEO of a major corporation headquartered in your local government shares many of your interests: serves on the board of your alma mater, donates to community projects, and loves sports. In the course of working together, you have actually become good friends and golfing buddies. He offers you a seat in his corporate jet to attend the homecoming game. You:
   1. Accept the offer without any worries because he is a friend and this isn’t about work.
   2. Accept the offer but disclose the “gift” to the governing body and on your financial disclosure form.
   3. Decline the offer.
6. Which of the following activities does Tenet 12 of the ICMA Code of Ethics—Seek No Favor—allow members to do:
   1. Make any real estate or other investments in their jurisdictions that they can afford.
   2. Date subordinate employees.
   3. Write a letter of reference for a talented firm that performed well for the local government.
   4. Award a contract to your spouse’s management consulting firm to advise the local government on public safety staffing.

**ANSWERS**

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**1. B.** The significant investment organizations make in time and money to recruit staff and the time it takes even the most talented individual to make a real contribution lead to the recommendation that a commitment of two years is both reasonable and professional. Exceptions to the two-year tenure include severe personal problems, a significant change in the terms or conditions of employment, a vote of no confidence, or when a shorter length of tenure has been negotiated in advance between the manager and a member in transition, an assistant, or a department head.

**2. A.** Credit cards serve a valid purpose by reducing the transaction costs for purchasing goods and services. But without adequate policies to guide their usage and monitoring they can be everyone's nightmare!

It's okay to use a personal credit card and then seek reimbursement for routine business expenses even if you accrue some minor benefit in the process. Some prefer this approach as it prevents the mishap of inadvertently charging personal expenses to the local government credit card.

If you charge to your personal credit card expenses that are ordinarily charged to a local government account or paid by check and it appears that the intent in doing so is to gain personally, that is problematic. Charging patrol cars to your personal credit card will raise a red flag!

**3. C.** Managers can accept invitations from groups, even political parties, if the purpose is to talk about local government matters, not politics. Avoid any event that is a party or candidate fundraiser or has been organized for the purpose of promoting candidates for elected office.

If you are a speaker at a party event, you should make it clear that you are politically neutral with respect to candidates and excuse yourself from any portion of the meeting that may be devoted to party matters or politics.

**4. B.** The guideline on appointment commitment under Tenet 3 states that a verbal acceptance of a bona fide offer is binding. When you negotiate the terms of employment and say "yes," you are committed to take the position once the hiring and agreement are officially approved.

**5. C.** Public service doesn’t require that you shelve your social life. But accepting a flight on a corporate jet from an individual who has a business in the community is a really, really bad idea. Although it's fine to play golf and socialize based on mutual interests, draw the line at any offer so generous that it might call into question your judgment or whose interests you are representing when that individual or business has official business with the local government.

**6. C.** Members can write a letter of reference for vendors. Members, however, are not permitted to endorse commercial products or services by agreeing to the use of their photograph, endorsement, or quoted remarks in ads or marketing, whether they get paid or not. For a wealth of advice on avoiding investments that conflict with your official duties, conflicts of interest, gifts, and outside employment, members are encouraged to review the guidelines in Tenet 12.