

Ethics

Hitting the Interview Jackpot



Q. The city manager felt as if she had hit the lottery. After months of looking for a new job, she found that she was a finalist for two positions and the interviews are scheduled within two days of each other. A different executive search firm was handling each job search so the recruitment personnel were unaware of the competition. The city manager could see herself in either community and intends to interview for both openings. Are there any ethical considerations?

A. It is a good idea for the city manager to let the search firms know that she will be interviewing with two communities. She can expect that her interviews become public knowledge as interviews are usually publicized. By taking the initiative to alert the search firms of her interview plans, she demonstrates professional consideration. A guideline for Tenet 3 addresses the manager's obligations regarding a job search and employment offer:

Appointment Commitment. Members who accept an appointment to a position should not fail to report for that position. This does not preclude the possibility of a member considering several offers or seeking several positions at the same time, but once a bona fide offer of a position has been accepted, that commitment should be honored. Oral acceptance of an employment offer is considered binding unless the employer makes fundamental changes in terms of employment.

To avoid making mistakes in the interview process, ICMA offers these tips:

- Do your homework. Be sure that you understand the political environment in the community, including when council elections are held. Some managers accept a position only to discover that the majority that hired them must stand for election in less than a year's time. Look at the cost of housing so you factor that reality into salary negotiations.
- Involve your family. Be sure that your family will support the decision to move to the new community should you accept the new job. Your new employer has a reasonable expectation that you will check with your family before you make a commitment.
- Give yourself time to consider the employment offer. If you want to be sure that you have a minimum of six months severance pay and certain benefits, be sure that that you have these understandings in writing.