

ETHICS SURVEY

Take the Ethical Climate Survey

Ethical decision making in government is essential to a community's health, vitality, and democracy. Ethical behavior and decisions maintain citizen trust and ensure effective and efficient use of resources. Yet an ethical environment does not happen overnight. Successful local government managers and leaders, as well as setting the pace for ensuring an ethical organization, also provide the necessary tools and establish the climate.

The first steps toward building and maintaining an ethical organization are to assess the current environment and identify any changes that are needed. How do you know where to start? What actions are most critical? Do employees think the local government is ethical?

To address these critical questions, Stephen Bonczek, managing director of Reading, Pennsylvania, and coeditor of ICMA's book *The Ethics Edge*, developed an ethical climate survey. ICMA has included this survey in its new training package, *Ethics in Action*. Take the survey, and begin to assess your local government's ethical needs.

Circle the appropriate response below each question or statement, using the following categories:

SD = Strongly disagree D = Disagree A = Agree
SA = Strongly agree DK = Don't know

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. Ordinarily, we don't deviate from standard policies and procedures in my department</p> <p>SD D A SA DK</p> <p>2. My supervisor encourages employees to act in an ethical manner.</p> <p>SD D A SA DK</p> <p>3. I do not have to ask my supervisor before I do almost anything.</p> <p>SD D A SA DK</p> | <p>4. Around here, there is encouragement to improve individual and group performance continually.</p> <p>SD D A SA DK</p> <p>5. The employees in my department demonstrate high standards of personal integrity.</p> <p>SD D A SA DK</p> <p>6. My department has a defined standard of integrity.</p> <p>SD D A SA DK</p> |
|--|--|

7. Individuals in my department accept responsibility for decisions they make.

SD D **A** SA **DK**

8. It is wrong to accept gifts from persons who do business with my jurisdiction, even if those gifts do not influence how I do my job.

SD D A SA DK

9. It is not usual for members of my department to accept small gifts for performing their duties.

SD D A SA **DK**

10. Members of my department do not use their positions for private gain.

SD **D** **A** SA **DK**

11. Members of my department have not misused their positions to influence the hiring of their friends and relatives in the government.

SD D A SA **DK**

12. I would blow the whistle if someone in my department accepted a large gift (\$____or more in value; this amount varies by local government) from a person who does business with the government.

SD D A SA **DK**

13. Promotions in my department are based on what you know or how you perform on the job, rather than on whom you know.

SD D A SA DK

14. I trust my supervisor.

SD D A SA **DK**

15. The jurisdiction has implemented a code of ethics.

SD D A SA DK

16. There are no serious ethical problems in my department.

SD D A SA DK

17. Coworkers in my department trust each other.

SD D A SA DK

18. My superiors set a good example of ethical behavior.

SD D A SA DK

19. I feel that I am a member of a well-functioning team.

SD D A SA DK

20. All employees have equal opportunities for advancement.

SD D A SA DK

21. Performance evaluations accurately reflect how employees have done their jobs.

SD **D** **A** SA **DK**

22. Performance evaluations address ethical requirements as well **as** other measures.

SD **D** **A** SA DK

23. Employees share negative information with supervisors without **the** worry of receiving a negative reaction from them.

SD **D** **A** SA **DK**

24. Supervisors are concerned with *how* employees achieve successful results, rather than just with the results themselves.

SD **D** **A** SA DK

25. When there is a disagreement between employees and supervisors on how best to solve a problem, the employees' ideas are listened to and considered.

SD **D** **A** SA DK

26. When employees feel that they are being asked to do something that is ethically wrong, supervisors work with them on alternative ways to do the task.

SD D **A** SA DK

27. In this organization, it is much better to report a problem or error than it is to cover it up.

SD D **A** SA DK

28. When something goes **wrong**, the primary goal is to fix the problem and prevent it from happening again, rather than to find someone to blame.

SD D **A** SA DK

29. The **organization's** decisions on how people are **treated** are clear and consistent.

SD D **A** SA DK

30. The **organization's** expectations concerning productivity, **quality**, and ethics are consistent.

SD D A SA DK

31. The same set of ethical standards is used in dealing with citizens, employees, and others.

SD D A SA DK

32. You can rely on the accuracy of the **organization's** information about what will or **won't** happen.

SD D A SA DK

33. The organization publicly recognizes and rewards ethical behavior by employees when it occurs.

SD D A SA DK

34. Doing what is right around here is more important than following the rules.

SD D A SA DK

35. **Ethical** standards and practices are routinely discussed in employee meetings.

SD D **A** SA DK

36. If there is suspicion that some employees may be violating ethical standards, the situation is dealt with openly and directly.

SD D A SA DK

37. Employees are aware of where to obtain assistance when they need to resolve an ethical dilemma.

SD **D** **A** SA DK

38. If one employee is doing something unethical, the other employees in the group will usually try to correct the situation before management gets involved.

SD D A SA DK

39. Employees are encouraged to report their work results accurately even when the results are less than satisfactory.

SD D A SA DK

40. Employees maintain the same ethical standards even when no one is observing their actions.

SD D A SA DK

Use the **scale** below each statement to **respond** to the following **items**; circle the number that most closely represents your response.

41. My ethical standards are

Very low

Very high

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

42. The ethical standards in my department are

Very low

Very high

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Circle the answer that best represents your response to this statement:

43. My behavior as a public employee is regulated by state law.

Yes

No

Don't know

Components of an Ethical Framework

Crucial components of an **organization's** ethical framework include:

- Leadership
- Organizational values and norms
- Ethical guidelines, including a code of ethics
- Human resource systems
- Ethics counselors and advisers

Source: **Ethics** in Action: **Leader's** Guide published by **ICMA**, Washington, D.C.

Ethical Framework

Your answers to the survey should begin to give you a framework that can help guide your next **steps** and actions. You also may find it helpful to give a survey like this to all members of your staff. This could provide you with more information and further guide your ethical actions.

This survey is only the beginning. The **ICMA** University's new *Ethics in Action* training package is a tool designed to help managers create an ethical environment. This self-contained training course will enable you to increase the awareness and importance of ethics, to help staff make ethical **decisions**, and to help them build an ethical framework. All of the examples, case studies, and content are geared toward local government managers and staff.

For a free preview package, contact the ICMA University, 777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20002-4201; fax, **202/962-3500**; or e-mail, jflores@icma.org.

Coming in June: In next month's issue of **PM**, find out how to determine what the ethics survey results mean using a survey **analysis** that links your answers to seven values, including trust, fairness, **integrity**, and honesty.