

## American Society of Association Executives Standards of Conduct

**As a member of the staff of AELE, I pledge myself to:**

1. Maintain exemplary standards of personal and professional conduct.
2. Actively model and encourage the integration of ethics into all aspects of management of the organization which employs me.
3. Maintain loyalty to the organization that employs me, and pursue its objectives in ways that are consistent with the public interest.
4. Recognize and discharge my responsibility and that of the organization that employs me to uphold all laws and regulations in implementing the policies and conducting the activities of the organization.
5. Strive to continually advance my knowledge and achieve higher levels of excellence in association management.
6. Serve all members fairly, and realize no personal gain from a member, except with full disclosure and with the knowledge and consent of the elected leadership of the organization which employs me.
7. Maintain the confidentiality of all privileged information, except when so doing becomes an ethical or legal breach of conduct.
8. Refuse to use my position with the organization that employs me to engage or sanction activities for personal gain.
9. Refuse to engage in or sanction activities for personal gain at the expense of the organization which employs me, or its industry or profession.
10. Actively encourage diversity through the inclusion of qualified people from diverse backgrounds including but not limited to women, ethnic and racial minorities, senior citizens, and disabled persons, and refuse to engage in or sanction discrimination on the basis of race, gender, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, physical appearance, or disability.
11. Communicate all association internal and external information to the elected leadership and membership of the organization which employs me in a truthful and accurate manner to facilitate timely execution of their fiduciary responsibilities.
12. Strive to build collaborative relationships with association executives and others for the advancement of the profession of association management.

13. Use every opportunity to improve public understanding of the profession of association management and the positive impact of associations on our society.

*The Code of Standards of Conduct for members of the American Society of Association Executives was adopted to promote and maintain the highest standards of association service and personal conduct among its members. Adherence to these standards is expected from members of the society, and serves to ensure public confidence in the integrity and service of association executives.*

### **Narrative Description of Standards of Conduct Provisions**

1. ***Maintain exemplary standards of personal and professional conduct.***

As with an elected official, an association executive's personal and professional conduct is held up to public scrutiny due to the dual obligation to serve both the association's members' interests as well as the public's interests, requiring the association executive to be a leading citizen of the community. Maintenance of this code requires an unwavering commitment on the part of the association executive to live a life above reproach.

2. ***Actively model and encourage the integration of ethics into all aspects of management of the organization which employs me.***

Association executives fulfill an important leadership role. In this role, they have the opportunity to enhance the ethical awareness of their members. They have the obligation to actively apply ethics throughout the activities of the association, and simultaneously throughout the management of the association.

3. ***Maintain loyalty to the organization that employs me, and pursue its (their) objectives in ways that are consistent with the public interest.***

An association executive has a primary and fundamental responsibility to loyally serve the interests of the association and the members of the association. Where an association executive believes that the direction of the association may be in conflict with the public interest, there is a responsibility to notify the governing body of the association of this opinion.

4. ***Recognize and discharge my responsibility and that of the organization that employs me to uphold all laws and regulations in implementing the policies and conducting the activities of the organization.***

An association executive has a responsibility to be familiar with the basic principles of law and regulation, which affect the association. As a leader of the association, the executive has a responsibility to help members understand the legal framework within which they operate in the association, and to make sure that all policies of the association are formulated, and all activities are conducted within this framework.

5. ***Strive to continually advance my knowledge and achieve higher levels of excellence in association management.***

Association executives have a responsibility to keep current with the best thinking in the field of association management and to apply their best management ability in all of the affairs of the association.

6. ***Serve all members fairly, and realize no personal gain from a member, except with full disclosure and with the knowledge and consent of the elected leadership of the organization which employs me.***

By virtue of position, association executives may find themselves in a position to grant special favors to members, vendors, and others. Association executives have a responsibility to make the best possible management decisions in the interest of the association without regard to personal gain. Therefore, executives should take special care to avoid either the fact or the appearance of personal gain in decision-making. Association executives have a responsibility to represent the interests of all members fairly and should avoid incurring an obligation to a single individual or some fraction of the membership.

7. ***Maintain the confidentiality of all privileged information, except when so doing becomes an ethical or legal breach of conduct.***

Association executives frequently have access to privileged information, and are expected to exercise discretion in handling it. If association executives find themselves the recipients of information, which potentially places the association and/or the association executive at risk legally, they should seek to protect the association and/or themselves while recognizing the confidentiality of the information.

8. ***Refuse to use my position with the organization that employs me to engage or sanction activities for personal gain.***

By virtue of position, association executives have the ability to leverage their position to receive special favors, either as opportunities or gifts, for personal gain, that would also impact impartiality in decision-making for the association. Therefore it is imperative that association executives recognize that either the fact or appearance of personal gain will have a negative impact on members' perception of the executive's loyalty to the association.

9. ***Refuse to engage in or sanction activities for personal gain at the expense of the organization which employs me, or its industry or profession.***

Again by virtue of position, association executives are often approached with opportunities and / or gifts that would bring them personal gain. The full spectrum of opportunities/gifts is extremely wide; however, the common element is that all such activities need to be viewed through the ethical framework of whether this is an opportunity that benefits the organization that employs the executive, or the executive directly.

10. ***Actively encourage diversity through the inclusion of qualified people from diverse backgrounds including but not limited to women, ethnic and racial minorities, senior citizens, and disabled persons, and refuse to engage in or sanction discrimination on the basis of race, gender, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, physical appearance, or disability.***

Association executives have a unique opportunity to lead their members in actively developing diversity programs and demonstrating intolerance for any type of discrimination. As leaders in both personal and professional communities, association executives through their visibility have an obligation to advance policies of inclusiveness.

11. ***Communicate all association internal and external information to the elected leadership and membership of the organization which employs me in a truthful and accurate manner to facilitate timely execution of their fiduciary responsibilities.***

The essence of effective communication is credibility. The association executive has a responsibility to maintain credible lines of communication both within the association and between the association and its publics. All communications should represent honest, clear, and unimpeachable statements of fact, and recommendations and opinions when expressed should be clearly stated as such.

12. ***Strive to build collaborative relationships with association executives and others for the advancement of the profession of association management.***

Theodore Roosevelt said, "Every man owes a part of his time and his money to the profession which supports his way of life." Association executives have an ethical responsibility to work cooperatively with association executives and others both in the interest of the profession itself and in the interest of establishing a model of cooperative behavior for society at large. Association executives who do not actively take part in the affairs of their own professional association are in a weakened posture to influence their own members to participate in their associations.

13. ***Use every opportunity to improve public understanding of the profession of association management and the positive impact of associations on our society.***

The role of associations in our society is little known or understood. Yet, the contributions associations make, and the impact they have, are extremely significant. All too often, the public only learns of an association's activities in some negative way. The positive story of the contributions made to improve the fabric of American life needs to be told more effectively. Association executives should be ambassadors to the general public and work to improve its understanding of the constructive role played by associations and association executives.

September 10, 2003

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This document was customized to apply to AELE.