
Code of Ethics

South African society is characterised by inequality. At the birth of our new democracy in 1994, the government committed itself to redressing inequality and improving the lives of all people. This commitment requires a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process. We believe that government will not be able to implement effective reconstruction and development without strong, informed and effective NGO's. We therefore commit ourselves to strengthening the sector, to improving the quality and impact of our services and delivery, and to contributing to a vibrant and dynamic society. As organisations we therefore agree to adhere to this Code of Ethics.

1. ValuesAs diverse as our activities are, we have common value systems. Based on the desire to advance and improve people's lives, and combat poverty and inequality, we are committed to the following fundamental values that underpin the mission and objectives of signatories. We therefore commit ourselves to:

- Being responsive to the needs and welfare of the people of South Africa.
- Accountability and transparency.
- Participatory democracy.
- People-centred development.
- Respecting the rights, culture and dignity of all people within the framework of the Bill of Rights, as enshrined in the South African Constitution, and enhancing race and gender equity (adhering to the spirit of 'Ubuntu').
- Ensuring the organisation remains true to its mission and objectives.
- Promoting voluntarism, and active volunteer involvement at all levels.
- Mutual co-operation, collaboration and networking with other agencies around issues of mutual concern.
- Striving for excellence, including efficient and effective service provision at all levels.

2. GovernanceThe effectiveness of our work depends on the organisation's governance structures. As professional organisations, we recognise the importance of establishing and maintaining able bodies that will govern the internal functioning of our individual organisations. Committed, experienced and responsible individuals are a critical ingredient for this. To this end we will:

- Ensure the organisation has a clear vision, mission, objectives and policies, and adheres to them.
- Specify the frequency of governance structures' meetings, quorums, and the role and powers of the governance structure.
- Develop a policy that prohibits direct or indirect conflict of interest by members of the governance structure, members, employees and volunteers.
- Ensure that members of the governance structure and staff excuse themselves from decisions where they have, or are perceived to have, a vested interest.
- In the case of an independent Board or Trust, adopt a policy that discourages members from submitting tenders to the organisation or applying for staff positions within the organisation. This policy must stipulate that if they desire to do either, they must resign from governance structure.
- Ensure the governance structure approves the annual budget, appoints independent auditors and receives audited statements.
- Ensure the governance structure understands and is responsible for overall policy-making and accepts ultimate responsibility for governance of all aspects of the organisation.
- Within financial constraints ensure the governance structure reflects the race and gender composition of South African society and the various target constituencies that the NGO works with, with regard to both their composition and their geographic spread.

3. Accountability Our commitment to promote democracy is enshrined in a culture of participation and complete accountability within our organisations. Transparency in all the work we do is key. To this end we will:

- Develop mechanisms to enable all our stakeholders to be involved in planning programmes that directly affect them.
- Provide opportunities for regular evaluations and updating of programmes that include stakeholder and community input.
- Hold an Annual General Meeting with full, open and accurate disclosure of relevant information concerning goals, programmes, finances and governance.
- Hold regular strategic planning sessions to which relevant stakeholders are invited to contribute.

4. Management & Human Resources Human capacity and skilled leadership are a critical component of the effectiveness of our work. We shall endeavour to follow the best management practices appropriate to the organisation's mission, operations and governance structure. To this end we will:

- Periodically reassess the organisation's mission, objectives and operations, in the light of changing context and constituents' needs.
- Critically analyse our own practices and our organisational culture and implement those changes necessary to build a culture that encourages creativity, diversity, responsibility and respect that will recognise all cultural groups as equal partners in developing the organisation.
- Develop clear, well defined written policies and procedures to be followed, which relate to all employees, members and volunteers. Such policies must adhere to the Labour Relations Act and other relevant legislation and must protect the rights of employers, employees, members and volunteers.
- Establish and maintain disciplinary and grievance procedures with clear lines of authority and accountability.
- Have clear and transparent procedures for employing new staff, and disengaging existing staff.
- Have clear staff development policies that seek to empower all staff volunteers to increase their skills in order to enable them to move to greater levels of responsibility.
- Develop adequate and acceptable systems of assessing skills, experience and qualification, levels of responsibility and performance, and remunerate on this basis.
- Encourage management to adopt interactive leadership styles and an 'open door' policy to facilitate good communication between staff and themselves.

5. Finance NGO's need to prioritise the development and maintenance of proper financial management strategies. Our finances shall be managed to ensure appropriate use of funds and accountability to members and donors. To this end we will:

- Comply with accepted business accounting and auditing practices, including voucher and authorisation processes.
 - Set up appropriate financial systems and employ qualified persons to administer and manage these systems.
 - Conduct annual audits for incomes exceeding R50,000.
 - Have clear policies on loans and staff advances.
 - Develop a policy regarding the receipt of outside honoraria and/or remuneration in order to avoid 'double' or inappropriate payment.
 - Set up mechanisms for purchasing goods and services that are free from vested interests of individuals in our organisation and that are cost effective.
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- Prepare realistic project or organisational budgets, then monitor and adhere to them. In instances where it becomes necessary to make changes, the appropriate consultations should be undertaken and any amendments recorded.
 - Formally and publicly charge members for any attempt at fraud, theft or misappropriation.

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- Wherever possible, ensure that the funding base of the organisation is diversified.
 - Keep fundraising and administration costs to a minimum.
 - Ensure that funds provided are only used for the intended purpose.
 - Ensure that tenders and contracts called for encourage the participation of small and emerging business, in particular those owned by previously disadvantaged sectors of our society.
 - Provide clear and transparent accounting to the broader membership and/or constituency of the organisation.

6. Resources We need systems to manage organisational assets in a sustainable and cost-effective manner. This is a vital tool towards the sector maintaining its original values of being effective and efficient in our work. To this end we:

- Develop internal procedures and control mechanisms and implement these to ensure the proper use of the assets of the organisation and to clearly separate organisational use from private use.
- Develop and implement mechanisms to monitor the use of staff time.
- Conduct periodic cost-benefit analysis of projects and review resource allocations in the light of these.