



## Durham Convention & Visitors Bureau Code-of-Ethics & Conduct

### Preface

Ethics relate to professional principles and standards of conduct based on the values of the organization and community. What does that mean to DCVB? Primarily these things:

- . Accurate, trustworthy, and fair dealings with each other and all stakeholders.
- . Integrity of performance reports and all business processes which are clear, complete, concise, and correct.
- . Respect for each other.
- . The absence of intent to deceive or obfuscate through omission, quibbling, half truths, technicalities or evasive statements.
- . Taking direct accountability for what goes right and what goes wrong.

### A Pledge of Professional Conduct:

- . **Constructive creative conflict** – This means facing into controversial issues with good faith and constructive disagreement and pushing back against convention and the *status quo*.
- . **First loyalty:** The concept means that your first loyalty is to the mission and principles of the organization, not to a single person, idea or constituent.
- . **One voice:** Decisions are often made by teams and they often involve compromise. However, once made, assuming principles are not compromised and the authority to make the decision is assured, you own the decision. Support it from that point onward.
- . **Four Way Test:** Is it the Truth? Is it Fair to all concerned? Will it build Good Will and Better Friendships? Will it be Beneficial to all concerned?

As a professional, I acknowledge and agree to honor my ethical obligations to my colleagues, stakeholders, strategic partners and to the public. I promise to comply with the Bureau's Code of Conduct, to treat everyone fairly and with dignity. I promise to go beyond the letter of our policies and the law and conform to the spirit and intent as well. I promise to take personal accountability for what I do right and wrong. And I promise not to take credit for the work of others but rather to freely give credit and honor the contributions of others.

**The Code is also promise to -**

- . Conduct myself in a manner which reflects great credit on the Bureau, my colleagues, on destination marketing and myself.
- . Speak the truth with no intent to deceive or mislead by technicalities or omissions.
- . Ensure performance reports are accurate and honest and include progress, problems, and plans.
- . Never disparage competitors or competitive destinations.
- . Refrain from behavior that harms the public's perception of the Bureau.
- . Honor all agreements I make with colleagues and stakeholders.
- . Ensure that proprietary information of the Bureau is kept proprietary.
- . Avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest and, if in doubt, to openly disclose and discuss my concerns.
- . Take *personal accountability* for actions – for success and failure.
- . Take *personal responsibility* for recognizing and reporting breaches of the Code.
- . Discharge my responsibilities with dedication to achieving the Bureau's mission and in line with the Bureau's principles.
- . Serve *all constituents* of the DCVB impartially, and provide no special privilege to an individual constituent or organization.
- . Do not accept *special personal compensation* from an individual constituent beyond the limitations established by principle or policy, which include full disclosure and arm's length dealings.
- . Comply with all levels of *governmental regulations* using only legal, ethical and moral means when attempting to influence legislation or regulations.
- . *Disclose information* that belongs in the public domain freely and completely but protecting that information which is confidential (generally related to business plans, activities in the marketplace, and personal information relating to character and competence of people within the organization or stakeholders).
- . Issue no false or deliberately misleading statements or advertisements concerning DCVB or other destination marketing organizations or any other community or destination to the media, the public or any other persons, either affiliated with or unrelated.
- . Actively encourage diversity of thought and background through the inclusion of qualified people from diverse backgrounds including ethnic or racial minorities, women, and refuse to engage in and or sanction discrimination on the basis of race, gender, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, physical appearance, or disability.
- . Refuse to engage in and or sanction activities for personal gain at the expense of the Bureau.
- . Strive to build collaborative relationships with other destination marketing professionals and others for the advancement of the profession of visitor related economic development.

I have read, understand, and agree to abide by this Code of Conduct as an employee of the Durham Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Signed, co-signed and date:

Signer \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Co-signer: \_\_\_\_\_

## **The Basic Tenets**

Everyone at DCVB is required to observe the highest standards of honesty and integrity in dealings with each other, others in the business community, and internal and external stakeholders. The principles and policies that follow also incorporated into the Employee Handbook and other DCVB core values, define these responsibilities.

### **A description of Ethics, Values and Integrity**

**Ethics:** In this context, ethics defines what is right and wrong, good and bad, acceptable and unacceptable. Ethics define moral obligations to all those with whom we interact, to the Bureau and to all stakeholders. DCVB's ethics and values are the principles of conduct governing us as individuals and as an organization and they conform to accepted proper professional and personal standards of conduct as well as "public policy" using the legal and morale definition of a "reasonable person."

**Values:** Values are our belief system. They are what we believe to be fundamentally important to the DCVB in terms of how we conduct ourselves and the Bureau's business. They are the personal and professional characteristics that form the bedrock and foundation of this organization.

### **DCVB Code of Conduct Values:**

**Accountability, transparency and integrity** and obfuscation, evasiveness, and half-truths meant to mislead or, even worse, to deceive are unacceptable.

**Personal responsibility** for what happens right and what happens wrong and hiding behind organization or team accountability is unacceptable.

**Personal and organizational integrity** to be counted on to do what is right because it is right versus finding the self-serving solution.

**Creativity and innovation** – finding new ways to accomplish the mission rather than reheating what used to work yesterday.

**Respect the messenger** – the challenger of the *status quo*, the creator, and innovator and the reporter of things gone awry. DCVB rewards the prudent risk-taker with the fortitude to change what needs to be changed and to report what needs to be acted upon and addressed. .

**Integrity:** Integrity refers to an unwavering adherence to a high standard of personal conduct, beliefs or set of values in all activities and under all circumstances. Integrity precludes resorting to hedging, quibbling, evasive or misleading behavior, or statements.

## **Areas to which the code of conduct applies:**

**Public Policy, Compliance and Laws:** Employees are expected to obey all Federal, state and local laws in their personal lives and in meeting their responsibilities as members of the staff of the Bureau. This includes adherence to laws and public policy prohibiting sexual or other forms of harassment or discrimination. More importantly, everyone is expected to follow the spirit of the law – its principles and intent – even more than the letter of the law.

**Principles vs. Policy:** Specifically, we are driven by *principles* and not just by the “policies” designed to accomplish them. That is, we acknowledge that we are not a bureaucratic organization subject to rules but rather an organization of thinking people who will take prudent actions to accomplish the mission, while at the same time, stay the course of ethical conduct.

## **Conflicts of Interest**

**Conflict of Interest** or the appearance of conflict of interest: All decisions, activities and affiliations are to be undertaken in the best interest of the Bureau and the public good without the possibility of creating a hint of impropriety. In this regard, we are not meant to look after the best interest of any single person, stakeholder, or constituent, but rather the organization’s mission and principles, a concept called “first loyalty” to the organization’s mission and principles.

**Outside employment:** Employees may with approval of Bureau management work for themselves or others while a full time employee of the organization but this is subject to a number of specific safeguards. The major provisions are:

- . The outside employment must be arm’s length, fully disclosed, and approved by supervisors and the CEO in advance.
- . The outside work may not distract from the employee’s primary responsibilities to the Bureau.
- . Employees may not use proprietary or confidential information that belongs to the bureau without the written permission of the CEO.
- . Employees may not work in a field which would be compromising or embarrassing to the Bureau.
- . Employees may not use Bureau resources such as computers, software, telephones, copiers, or fax equipment without authorization.
- . Outside work may not be conducted on Bureau property or on Bureau time without written authorization.
- . Employees may reveal that they are members of the Bureau staff, but not in a way that would result in awkwardness or embarrassment for the Bureau.

If the Bureau determines that an employee’s outside work interferes with his or her performance or ability to meet the job requirements, he or she may be asked to terminate the outside employment or to resign from the bureau.

**Gifts and Special Treatment:** Transactions between the Bureau and outside organization that includes or appear to include an unusual gain, favors, gifts, special price breaks, kickbacks or other individual benefits to employees is not allowed.

**Employment of Relatives:** This is permitted provided that the relationship is fully disclosed and arm’s length, with no favorable treatment, and subject to the same screening and employment standards of

others. In addition, relatives may not work in a direct reporting relationship or deal with the confidential information relating to each other.

**Books and Records:** Official organizational records will be maintained in a manner that accurately reflects all Bureau financial transactions, performance history and activities. Falsification of Bureau records regardless of motive is strictly prohibited including personal and organizational accountability for end-results, total transparency from the standpoint of accurately reflecting “what happened”, and integrity in the process in that it fits together and makes sense.

Falsification, obfuscation, or intent to deceive or mislead through organization records regardless of motive is unacceptable.

**Zero Tolerance:** All breaches of ethical conduct will have a measured response based on the nature of the offense, 100% of the time. (This does not mean automatic termination, but it does mean a full investigation, and if found guilty, a punishment equal to the nature of the offensive, **including civil or criminal prosecution if warranted.**

**Personal Behavior:** This requires treating each other with respect and dignity; telling the truth, without quibbling or evasive statements; resolving conflict directly and quickly; making decisions and taking action using the highest standards of honesty and ethics. It means listening to each other, respecting each other’s ideas and respecting and honoring the diversity of opinions. Personal behavior also includes appropriate actions to maintain a business atmosphere.

## **FRAUD ASPECTS OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

DCVB’s position on fraud, misappropriation and similar acts is one of zero tolerance. These acts may result in immediate termination or suspension, pending an internal or legal review of the facts. Everyone at DCVB is duty-bound by obligations to each other and to stakeholders to prosecute illegal acts and to require restitution, in the belief that it is not appropriate to allow the organization to suffer the consequences of acts of malfeasance or misfeasance by members of the organization.

Everyone at DCVB is duty-bound to pro-actively find and report such acts – that this is not a passive injunction, but rather an obligation.

Actions are the personal responsibility of each member of the staff, regardless of position. That is, each person is positively and proactively required to recognize and report fraud and related areas of misbehavior, and that the Bureau is responsible for the investigation and resolution of issues related to suspected fraud, embezzlement, misappropriation and other similar irregularities.

The term “fraud” as used in this code of conduct includes misappropriation and other irregularities including dishonest or fraudulent acts, embezzlement, forgery or alteration of negotiable instruments, misappropriation of Bureau assets and employee, customer, partner or stakeholder assets. It also includes conversion to personal use of cash, supplies or any other assets, unauthorized handling or reporting of Bureau transactions, and falsification of records or financial reports for personal or other reasons.

Fraud also includes performance reports intended to mislead or deceive, whether or not the fraudulent reports result in payments based on a performance-based compensation plan. The above list is not inclusive but intended to be representative of situations involving fraud. Fraud may be perpetrated not only by Bureau employees, but by agents and other outside parties as well. All such situations require specific action by the DCVB.

The responsibility for detecting fraud in the Bureau is that of every member of the staff, but in particular, the head of Finance and the Chief Executive Officer who may delegate such responsibilities (but not accountability) for managing this aspect of DCVB's principles, policies, or practices. The Chief Executive Officer bears the primary responsibility, the head of finance and other management team members bears equal personal responsibility.

## **Responsibilities of the Staff, Investigation Procedure, and Disciplinary Measures**

### **Responsibilities of all staff members**

Every staff member has an ethical obligation to report breaches of this Code of Conduct without a misguided loyalty to any person who abuses the policy. Loyalty to an individual who would put the organization's reputation in jeopardy and do harm to other employees is a profoundly misguided act. If no action is taken upon reporting a violation, the staff member should make the report to the next level of management.

**Retribution:** It is a violation of this Code of Conduct and Bureau policy as well as public policy to intimidate or impose any form of retribution on an employee or agent who utilizes reporting procedures in good faith to report suspected violations.

**Disciplinary Measures:** The CEO or in the case of the CEO, the Tourism Development Authority will determine whether violations of the Code or the spirit or intent of the Code have occurred. All CEO decisions of code violation will be reported to the Tourism Development Authority. If so, they will determine the appropriate disciplinary measures to be taken. The disciplinary measures may include counseling, oral or written reprimands, warnings, probation or suspension without pay, demotions, reduction in salary, termination of employment, required restitution and the filing of appropriate civil or criminal charges. Restitution will be required in all cases.

**People subject to disciplinary measures:** The violator, others involved in the wrongdoing such as those who fail to use reasonable care to ensure the violation doesn't happen in the first place, those who should but fail to detect a violation, anyone who withholds material information regarding a violation, and supervisors who approve or condone the violations or attempt to retaliate against employees or agents for reporting violations or violators.

Loyalty is critically important to the principles and mission of the Bureau, but not to a single person or member of the Tourism Development Authority. If no action is taken upon reporting a violation, the staff member is obliged to report the incident to the next level of management.

**Whistle-blowing:** This Code-of-Conduct requires whistle-blowing and a failure to report incidents of fraud or major related incidents is cause for disciplinary action. Society often attaches a stigma to whistle-blowing or being a "tattle tail" (started in grade school), an inappropriate position which compromises and demeans the integrity of the organization and which puts an unfair and inappropriate burden on the other people in the organization. Said very specifically, each person in the organization has a pro-active obligation to recognize and report fraud or related breaches of ethical conduct.

It is a violation of these principles and this policy as well as public policy to intimidate or impose any form of retribution on an employee or agent who utilizes reporting procedures in good faith to report suspected violations. Appropriate action is required in this event involving an employee or agent whether or not such individual is one of the wrongdoers.

## **Investigation of Violations**

If the Bureau receives information regarding an alleged violation of this Code (such a sexual harassment, fraud, or similar actions) those persons authorized and appointed by the Chief Executive or in the case of the CEO, the Tourism Development Authority to investigating alleged violations will:

- . Evaluate such information as to the credibility and gravity of the allegations,
- . Undertake a formal investigation,
- . Prepare a report of the investigation results with recommendations as to the disposition of the issue, and
- . Disclose results to law enforcement agencies if warranted by the nature of the violation,
- . Ensure a complete resolution of the event in a timely manner.

### ***Persons Responsible***

The DCVB Tourism Development Authority has an explicit obligation to set the moral tone of the organization. The Tourism Development Authority usually accomplishes this by assigning explicit responsibilities to the chief executive, who will establish and communicate this Code-of-Conduct and expected standards to every single person in the organization. Staff members are obliged to report breaches – the CEO is responsible to investigate, resolve and close each incident. Each person on the management team and all others have explicit responsibilities for recognizing, reporting, and otherwise responding to such issues.