



City of Atlanta Ethics Office 2012-2013 Work Plan

The Interim Ethics Officer, in conjunction with the City of Atlanta's Board of Ethics, proposes a two-year work plan for the calendar years 2012 and 2013. This work plan seeks to execute faithfully the duties of the office as established by city law, create a culture of ethics in the City, and assure that the City enjoys the full credit and trust of its citizens as a government that conducts itself in an ethical manner.

Operations

- Provide an orientation process for newly appointed members of the Board of Ethics. Require new members to attend an ethics workshop during the first year of their term.
- Improve knowledge and skills of staff by attending professional conferences, researching policies in other jurisdictions and participating in ethics organizations.
- Establish the position of Ethics Officer at the senior management level and upgrade the associate ethics officer position to a pay grade equivalent to the assistant city attorney position.
- Develop a "score-card" to present at all Board meetings specifying number of cases opened, closed, number of investigations, outcomes of investigations, etc.

Training

- Conduct ethics workshops within twelve months for newly elected officials and senior management in the executive branch.
- **Increase the number of citywide ethics training workshops for city employees, board members, appointed city officials, and neighborhood planning unit officers.**
- **Develop a continuing ethics education series possibly using film clips to illustrate ethical dilemmas and lunch & learn segments.**
- **Complete development of an online ethics training course for employees.**
- Attend city-sponsored workshops for vendors seeking to do business with the City to explain how the Code of Ethics applies to them.
- **Enact a policy mandating ethics training for all city officials and employees that requires active city employees to attend an ethics workshop within three years and requires new city employees and board members to attend an ethics workshop within their first six months.**

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Rendering Advice

- Maintain current response rate for integrity hotline calls and other requests for advice.
- Report to the Board annually on informal advisory letters and other written advice given by the Ethics Office to employees and officials. Use that report to identify recurring questions to use in training, in publications, and to consider changes needed in city-wide policies.
- Establish and maintain a database of all advisory opinions written to date. Use that in conjunction with the Report to the Board listed above and to identify recurring ethics issues within the City.
- Identify additional topics for the Board to address in formal advisory opinions, an example being an ethics advisory on gifts and gratuities.

Public Education and Outreach

- New *Integrity at Work* campaign promoting honesty and integrity. Campaign includes new posters and brochures. Continue to use other media such as public service announcements.
- Inform new employees about the Code of Ethics and require them to sign the Employee Pledge to Abide by the Ethics Code. Notify them if they're required to file a financial disclosure statement.
- Notify employees about the post-employment rule and financial disclosure filing requirements. Require departing employees to sign the Employee Pledge to Abide by the One-Year Cooling Off Period and financial disclosure law.
- Continue to disseminate literature outlining conflicts of interest targeting specific populations such as City Employees or Elected City Officials.
- Continue to publish the e-newsletter, *Ethics Matters*, three times a year.
- **Link the new Board of Ethics website to the City of Atlanta's website for quicker public access to all the features of the new Ethics webpage.**
- Create an annual ethics award to recognize extraordinary acts by those who comply with the city's ethical standards.
- Prepare a guide on conflicts of interest for neighborhood and civic groups to influence city policy, planning, and development.
- Report each year to the Mayor, City Council, and Atlanta citizens on the state of ethics in city government.

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Investigations and Enforcement Actions

- Conduct timely, thorough, and fair investigations of all ethics complaints.
- Establish standard procedures for investigating complaints in areas of joint jurisdiction with departments such as with misuse of city property.
- Improve the ethics enforcement process by:
 - **Using the board's subpoena power**
 - Establishing guidelines to assist the Board in imposing fair and consistent punishments
 - **Aggressively prosecuting ethics violators in Municipal Court**
 - Strengthening relations with investigators and law enforcement agencies, and
 - Amending the code to strengthen the board's authority to impose and enforce appropriate penalties.
- Encourage timely investigations of Integrity Line complaints and consistent discipline among departments.
- Report to the Board annually on complaints, investigations, and enforcement actions. Evaluate closed cases to find patterns and recurring problems to address in training classes and public education.
- Establish a system for monitoring compliance with the city's laws on conflicts of interest, including developing a checklist and a scorecard for departments to evaluate their policies and rate their compliance, and auditing one department's policies and practices.

Financial Disclosure

- Continue efforts to increase filing rates of financial disclosure statements and bringing enforcement cases to a close in a timely manner.
- **Audit city financial disclosure statements and notify filers and department heads about potential conflicts of interest disclosed in reports.**
- Report to the Board annually on timely filers, late filers, and nonfilers of the financial disclosure statements and the gift, travel, and conflict of interest reports.
- Increase the filing of other city disclosure forms by notifying employees and officials about the filing requirements for all disclosure reports.
- Enhance the Electronic Disclosure System by posting online, if not otherwise available, the campaign contribution disclosure reports filed by candidates for municipal office as required under state law.

Legislation and Lobbying

- Strengthen ethics enforcement laws to provide adequate civil remedies for enforcing Board decisions, including:
 - Collection of fines imposed by the Board in a civil action

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- Automatic removal from office of any board member who fails to file an annual financial disclosure statement and
- Full compliance with all financial disclosure laws as a precondition to a person's appointment or election to a board or NPU.

- Seek compliance with the state law requiring registration of local lobbyists.

- **Seek mandatory ethics training through legislation or an administrative order.**