

CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT FOR THE URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING PROFESSION

1. Introduction

The principles of the Code is derived both from the general values of society and from the planning profession's special responsibility to serve the public interest. In our quest to serve public interest there are a set of key principles that guide our actions and behavior. Such principles set both aspirational and mandatory standards. The aspirational standards describe the conduct that we strive to uphold as professionals. Although adherence to the aspirational standards is not easily measurable, conducting ourselves in accordance with these is an expectation that we have of ourselves as professionals—it is not optional. The mandatory standards establish firm requirements, and in some cases, limit or prohibit how professionals should behave in the public domain.

This code will be:

- A measure of attainment of societal values in pursuit of the public interest goal
- A measure of good and bad behavior
- A measure of our commitment to the planning profession
- A measure of our accountability to the public we serve

1.1 Purpose

The art of planning requires that we commit ourselves as members of this profession to doing what is right and honorable. The purpose of the Code is to :

- Set high standards for ourselves and aspire to meet these standards in all aspects of our lives—at work, at home, and in service to our profession.
- Describe the expectations that we have of ourselves and our fellow professionals in the global village of urban and regional planning community.
- Articulate the ideals to which we aspire as well as the behaviors that are mandatory in our professional and volunteer roles.
- Instill confidence in the urban and regional planning profession and to help planners to become better professionals. We do this by establishing a profession-wide understanding of what is collectively agreed upon as appropriate behavior.
- Promote collective rational interest as opposed to rational self interest
- Assist planners to make appropriate decisions when confronted with difficult situations where we may be tempted to compromise our integrity or our values.
- Create a model that will serve as a catalyst for others to study, deliberate, and write about ethics and values.
- Build a strong foundation that will grow our profession.

1.2 Applicability

The Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct applies to all categories of membership of SACPLAN as prescribed by the Act and or its amendments from time to time.

1.3 Structure of the Code

The Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct is divided into sections that contain standards of conduct which are aligned with the values that seem to cover the ideals of the urban and regional planning profession and the mandatory directives which are punishable if contravened.

1.4 Methodology followed in compiling the policy document

Much work has been done on the subject the world over. It was found imprudent not to try and reinvent the wheel. Australian, Canadian, American, British and the Project Management Institute experiences have contributed greatly to the document. However to make our document speak to our circumstances there have been additions and subtractions so as to customize it to our environment.

1.5 Aspirational and Mandatory Conduct

Each section of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct includes both aspirational standards and mandatory standards. The aspirational standards describe the conduct that we strive to uphold as professionals. Although adherence to the aspirational standards is not easily measured, conducting ourselves in accordance with these is an expectation that we have of ourselves as professionals—it is not optional. The mandatory standards on the other hand establish firm requirements, and in some cases, limit or prohibit and direct professional behavior.

2. KEY PRINCIPLES FOR ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR

Members of the South African Council of Town and Regional Planning are expected to comply with the following principles in their quest to serve public interest.

2.1 Integrity

Planners need to act with integrity and propriety. Integrity refers not only to knowing what the right thing to do is, but having the moral strength and courage to act on one's convictions and on principle rather than expediency. Propriety is to behave correctly in accordance with your duties and roles.

2.1.1 Inspirational Standards

2.1.1.1 To be true to the profession

2.1.1.2 To uphold a universal planning moral higher ground

2.1.1.3 To become an example of virtue

2.2 Responsibility

Description of Responsibility

Responsibility is the duty to take ownership for the decisions we make or fail to make, the actions we take or fail to take, and the consequences that result.

2.2.1 Responsibility: Aspirational Standards

As practitioners in the Urban and Regional Planning community:

2.2.1.1 We must make decisions and take actions based on the best public interests of society, safety, and the environment.

2.2.1.2 We must accept only those assignments that are consistent with our background, experience, skills, and qualifications.

2.2.1.3 When bidding for jobs, we only bid on work that our organization is competent and qualified to perform and we assign only qualified individuals to perform the work as per urban and regional planning competencies approved and registered by a competent authority.

2.2.1.4 When we allocate jobs, we must consider the urban and regional planning competencies approved and registered by a competent authority.

2.2.1.5 We must fulfill the commitments that we undertake – we must do what we say we will do.

2.2.1.6 When we make errors or omissions, we must take ownership and make corrections promptly. When we discover errors or omissions caused by others, we must communicate them to the appropriate body as soon they are discovered. We must accept accountability for any issues resulting from our errors or omissions and any resulting consequences.

2.2.1.7 We must protect proprietary or confidential information that has been entrusted to us.

2.2.1.8 We must uphold this Code and hold each other accountable to it.

2.2.2 Responsibility: Mandatory Standards

2.2.2.1 We must inform ourselves and uphold the policies, rules, regulations and laws that govern our work, professional, and volunteer activities.

2.2.2.2 We must report unethical or illegal conduct to appropriate management and, if necessary, to those affected by the conduct.

2.2.2.3 We do not engage in any illegal behavior, including but not limited to: theft, fraud, corruption, embezzlement, or bribery.

2.2.2.4 We do not take or abuse the property of others, including intellectual property, nor do we engage in slander or libel. As practitioners and representatives of our profession, we do not condone or assist others in engaging in illegal behavior.

2.2.2.5 We must take responsibility to protect our members and informants who could be victimized for reporting wrong doing as per applicable statutes in our country.

2.2.2.6 We only file ethics complaints when they are substantiated by facts.

2.2.2.7 We must institute disciplinary action against individuals who knowingly make false allegations against others.

2.2.2.8 We must pursue disciplinary action against an individual who retaliates against a person raising ethics concerns.

2.2.2.9 We must bring violations of this Code to the attention of the appropriate body for resolution

2.3 RESPECT

Description of Respect

Treat others with respect at all times. This means not using derogatory terms towards others, observing the rights of other people, treating people with courtesy and recognizing the different roles others play in local government decision-making. Respect is our duty to show a high regard for ourselves, others, and the resources entrusted to us. Resources entrusted to us may include people, money, reputation, the safety of others, and natural or environmental resources. We promote this because an environment of respect engenders trust, confidence, and performance excellence by fostering mutual cooperation. Where there is respect, diverse perspectives and views are encouraged and valued.

2.3.1 Respect: Aspirational Standards

As practitioners in the urban and regional planning community:

2.3.1.1 We inform ourselves about the norms and customs of others and avoid engaging in behaviors they might consider disrespectful.

2.3.1.2 We listen to others' points of view, seeking to understand them.

2.3.1.3 We approach directly those persons with whom we have a conflict or disagreement.

2.3.1.4 We conduct ourselves in a professional manner, even when it is not reciprocated.

2.3.1.5 We rise above gossips and negative remarking meant to undermine other people's reputation.

2.3.1.6 We desist from attacking colleagues in other disciplines in their absence for us to look good.

2.3.2 Respect: Mandatory Standards

As practitioners in the urban and regional planning community, we require the following of ourselves and our fellow practitioners:

2.3.2.1 We negotiate in good faith.

2.3.2.2 We do not exercise the power of our expertise or position to influence the decisions or actions of others in order to benefit personally at their expense.

2.3.2.3 We do not act in an abusive manner toward others.

2.3.2.4 We respect the property rights of others.

2.4 FAIRNESS

Description of Fairness

Fairness is our duty to make decisions and act impartially and objectively. Our conduct must be free from competing self interest, prejudice, and favoritism. We should make decisions solely on merit and in accordance with our professional and elected obligations.

2.4.1 Fairness: Aspirational Standards

As practitioners in the urban and regional planning community:

2.4.1.1 We demonstrate transparency in our decision-making process.

2.4.1.2 We constantly reexamine our impartiality and objectivity, taking corrective action as appropriate.

2.4.1.3 We provide equal access to information to those who are authorized to have that information.

2.4.1.4 We make opportunities equally available to all our planners.

2.4.2 Fairness: Mandatory Standards

As practitioners in the urban and regional planning community, we require the following of ourselves and our fellow practitioners: Conflict of Interest Situations

2.4.2.1 We must proactively and fully disclose any real or potential conflicts of interest to the appropriate stakeholders.

2.4.2.2 We must avoid the conflict of interest fate by constantly searching for potential conflict of interest situations and having them resolved. When we realize that we have a real or potential conflict of interest, we refrain from engaging in the decision-making process or otherwise attempting to influence outcomes, unless or until: we have made full disclosure to the affected stakeholders; we have an approved mitigation plan; and we have obtained the consent of the stakeholders to proceed. A conflict of interest occurs when we are in a position to influence decisions or other outcomes on behalf of one party when such decisions or outcomes could affect one or more other parties with whom we have competing loyalties.

2.4.2.3 We do not hire or fire, reward or punish, or award or deny contracts based on personal considerations, including but not limited to, favoritism, nepotism, and or bribery.

2.4.2.4 We do not discriminate against others based on, but not limited to, gender, race, age, religion, disability, nationality, or sexual orientation.

2.4.2.5 We apply the rules of the organizations, without favoritism or prejudice.

2.5 HONESTY

Description of Honesty

Honesty is our duty to understand the truth and act in a truthful manner both in our communications and in our conduct. We must act with honesty. This means obeying the law; following the letter and spirit of policies and procedures; observing codes of conduct; fully disclosing actual or potential conflict of interests and exercising any conferred power strictly for the purpose for which the power was conferred.

2.5.1 Honesty: Aspirational Standards

As practitioners in the urban and regional planning community:

2.5.1.1 We earnestly seek to understand and find the truth.

2.5.1.2 We are truthful in our communications and in our conduct.

2.5.1.3 We provide accurate information in a timely manner.

2.5.1.4 We make commitments and promises, implied or explicit, in good faith.

2.5.1.5 We strive to create an environment in which others feel safe to tell the truth.

2.5.2 Honesty: Mandatory Standards

As practitioners in the urban and regional planning community, we require the following of ourselves and our fellow practitioners:

2.5.2.1 We do not engage in or condone behavior that is designed to deceive others, including but not limited to, making misleading or false statements, stating half-truths, providing information out of context or withholding information that, if known, would render our statements as misleading or incomplete.

2.5.2.2 We do not engage in dishonest behavior with the intention of personal gain or at the expense of another.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODE OF ETHICS

This code will be implemented through the compilation of a code of conduct that will have to be signed by all members. The contents will be binding to all members.

The Disciplinary Committee will hear and adjudicate all cases. A set of rules and procedures will have to be drawn on how to report cases, how they will be conducted,

the rights of defendants and plaintiffs as well as the right to appeal. The Appeal Board will hear all appealed cases.

The code should, after adoption by council, be made available to the members for comment before being published in the SACPLAN website and any other avenue available to SACPLAN. The comments will have to be worked into the final document and a notice to promulgate prepared. A final document will then be published in a Government Gazette wherein date of effect will be announced.

It should also be noted that the regionalization of the implementation structure and its financial implication will have to be decided upon if the centralization model fails to serve the clients better.

Prepared by: Tshisamphiri Madima for Education and Training Committee.