

## THE SEATTLE ETHICS & ELECTIONS COMMISSION

The SEEC is a seven-member, independent panel of citizen volunteers. The Commission and its staff are responsible for administering the City of Seattle Ethics, Elections, and Whistleblower Protection Codes. Three Commissioners are appointed by the Mayor, three by the City Council, and the seventh by the other six. They are confirmed by the City Council and serve overlapping three-year terms.

The Commission is supported by a staff of six employees who provide training, investigate complaints, and issue advisory opinions.

### TRAINING AND INFORMATION

Ethics training and brochures are available by request. Information is also available at the Commission website: <http://www.seattle.gov/ethics/>.

### COMMISSION MEETINGS

You are invited to attend any Commission meeting. Meetings are usually the first Wednesday of the month in the Seattle Municipal Tower.

Copies of the meeting agenda, including time and location, are in our office and on our Internet web site under Commission/Agendas & Minutes. You can also call 206-684-8500 for meeting times and locations.



This brochure highlights portions of the Seattle Ethics Code, SMC 4.16. The complete law is on the City Clerk's Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) web site, <http://clerk.ci.seattle.wa.us/~public/code1.htm>. Copies are also available in the SEEC office.

## ETHICS COMPLAINTS AND CONSEQUENCES

Anyone who feels a City officer or employee has violated the Ethics Code may complain to the Ethics and Elections Commission. Commission staff will investigate whether there is a Code violation.

If it is found that an employee or official violated the City's Ethics Code, the Commission may fine that person up to \$5,000 per violation plus costs and restitution. The Commission may also recommend disciplinary action, including suspension or discharge.

A complaint may be dismissed if there is no violation of the Code or if the violation is minor and inadvertent or has already been remedied.

### ADVICE

City employees and officers may seek advice on whether a planned action or activity raises issues under the City's Ethics Code.



## City Of Seattle ETHICS AND ELECTIONS COMMISSION

Seattle Municipal Tower  
700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 4010

Mon - Fri: 8am - 5pm  
Tel: 206-684-8500 Fax: 206-684-8590  
E-mail: [ethicsandelections@seattle.gov](mailto:ethicsandelections@seattle.gov)  
Postal mail: PO Box 94729, Seattle, WA 98124-4729

Internet: <http://www.seattle.gov/ethics/>

J:\TRAINING\Train Brochures\contractor-vendor brochure rev.doc  
5/2007



# An Explanation of the City of Seattle's Ethical Standards

for  
Contractors, Vendors,  
Customers and Clients



*This pamphlet is intended to help you understand the conduct expected of City employees, elected officials, and members of City boards and commissions under the Seattle Ethics Code.*

## SEATTLE ETHICS AND ELECTIONS COMMISSION

*Your advocate for fair, open, and honest government.*

# An Explanation

## of The City of Seattle's Ethical Standards

*Contractors, vendors, customers, and clients:  
We appreciate doing business with  
you and hope that you find this  
information helpful.*



### The Code of Ethics Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) 4.16

The Seattle Ethics Code was created to inspire public trust in City government and ensure that City officers and employees are “independent, impartial, and responsible to the people.” The law is administered by an independent commission of citizen volunteers.

The Code sets ethical standards about work activities, business relationships, and the use of City resources that apply to all City employees, elected officials, and members of most City boards and commissions.

This brochure highlights areas of the Code that pertain to contractors, vendors, and regulated parties, and also to customers and clients. It is one of our efforts to increase awareness of the Code and to help you better understand what employees can and cannot do.

If you would like more information or have questions, please call us at 206-684-8500 or visit our web site:

<http://www.seattle.gov/ethics/>

**This brochure is a general summary of the Seattle Ethics Code. If you have questions or would like advice on a specific issue, please contact Commission staff.  
206-684-8500**

## HIGHLIGHTS

### THANKING CITY EMPLOYEES

The best way to thank a City employee is to write a letter of praise to the employee's supervisor. City employees may not accept gifts, loans or other things of value in appreciation for their work or services.

*Example: Employees responsible for purchasing cannot receive gifts or premiums for the City orders they place.*



Employees may accept promotional items or items such as flowers or candy to share with co-workers or the public, as long as they are valued at \$25 or less. However, the Commission limits the value of such items to \$50 from a single source in a calendar year.

### SOLICITING ITEMS

City employees may not ask people with whom they do City business to donate items, whether for personal, charitable, or other purposes.

*Example: Inspectors may not ask businesses they inspect for donations of meeting spaces or supplies.*

### NO FREE MEALS

Employees may not accept free meals from people with whom they do City business, or from people who wish to do business with the City.



*Example: An employee who is meeting with a vendor or client for lunch cannot have the lunch paid for by the vendor or client.*

### REFRESHMENTS AT MEETINGS

Employees may accept basic refreshments—such as coffee, tea, soft drinks, doughnuts, or cookies—when attending meetings in your office.

### USE OF CITY FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

City employees cannot use City resources for non-City purposes. City property, including City paid time, vehicles, and equipment, may only be used for a City purpose.



### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Employees may not take part in City business where they, or an immediate family member, have a financial or private interest. Employees also may not take part in City business where they would appear to have a conflict of interest.

*Example: City employees must withdraw from a vendor selection process if one of the competitors is the employee's spouse or domestic partner, or if a competitor has been the employee's business partner or client within the last twelve months.*

### ADVERTISING

Employees cannot use their positions for anyone's private gain or use City resources for a non-City purpose. Therefore, they cannot hand out or post advertising materials.

### INVITATIONS TO SEMINARS & CONFERENCES



City employees may attend educational programs paid for by City vendors or potential vendors only under limited conditions. Neither the City nor the employee can accept reimbursement for expenses incurred that are not allowable under the City's Travel Policies and Procedures. In all cases, the event must serve a City purpose

*Example: An employee may not attend a conference at your expense unless you are required by contract to provide training or education to City employees, or the employee is directed by his or her supervisor to attend. Reimbursement for travel or lodging must be made to the City, not to the individual.*

### AFTER LEAVING CITY EMPLOYMENT

Employees must wait one year after leaving the City before they can (i) assist others in proceedings involving their former agency, (ii) assist or represent others on matters in which they were officially involved, or (iii) compete for contracts when they helped determine the scope of work or the process for selecting a contractor.

*Example: For one year, former employees may not assist their new employers in seeking permits from the City department they left.*