

GP - 7: Conflict of Interest

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1. Fairfield County is dedicated to its role of serving its citizens and has an obligation to ensure that there exists public confidence in the integrity of County employees. Therefore, it is essential that the County establish appropriate ethical standards to guide its personnel in the performance of their duties, so that there shall not exist, nor appear to exist, a conflict between private interest and public responsibilities. The County shall determine in its sole discretion if this policy is violated.
2. The following rules shall guide County employees in the discharge of their responsibilities:
 - a. **Gifts, Gratuities and Favors:**

The acceptance of any gift, gratuity, or favor by a county official or employee is strictly forbidden. This does not prohibit the acceptance of items of nominal value generally distributed to all employees. No employee shall request or receive a gift, gratuity, favor, or loan of anything of value for himself or another person if it tends or appears to influence his/her opinion or judgments in the performance of his/her official duties. County employees shall be fair and impartial in their dealings with any person, firm, or corporation which may be interested directly or indirectly in business dealings with the county.
 - b. **Confidential Information:**

No employee shall make use of or reveal confidential information acquired through his/her position with the County for his/her own private gain or for the private gain of any other persons or groups.
 - c. **Acquiring an Interest:**

No employee shall acquire an interest in any contract at a time when he/she has reason to believe that his/her interest will be affected either by his/her own official actions or by the official actions of the County.
 - d. **Statement of Economic Interests:**

The South Carolina Ethics Act requires a Statement of Economic Interest to be filed by all elected officials, County Administrator, Chief Finance Officer and Chief Purchasing Officer. The Statement must be filed with the State Ethics Commission prior to April 15 of each year.
 - e. **Conflict of Interest:**

The South Carolina Ethics Act requires a public official or employee to himself or herself from possible conflict of interest actions or decisions. Business dealings with a governmental agency can take place only after (1) public disclosure of the possible conflict of interest, (2) public notice and

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competitive bidding when that is the normal contract award process, and
(3) complete removal of the interested official or employee from the agency's decision making process.

f. **Disclosure and Disqualification:**

An employee who has a financial interest in a business or activity that he/she has reason to believe may be affected by his/her official actions of the County shall make disclosure of the exact nature and value of his/her interest in writing to the County Administrator and ask their opinion regarding the priority of this interest. Any employee who has such interest shall disqualify himself/herself from participating in any official action directly affecting this interest and follow the appropriate course of action outlined above in item (e).

g. **Contracts with Employees:**

The County shall not enter into any contract for services or property with an employee. The County also shall not enter into any contract with a business in which an employee has interest if that interest might be, or might appear to be, affected by the contract. This section is not applicable under circumstances which constitute an emergency situation, so long as a report detailing the circumstances is later prepared by the County Administrator and submitted to the Council Members.

h. **Outside Employment:**

No employee shall have employment with or render services for any private business or concern if such employment interferes with, or is adverse to, the proper performance of his/her official duties. Nor shall any employee have employment with business or concern when the employee's influence within the County or knowledge of the County's activities could possibly place the business or concern in a more favorable position than its competitors to do business with the County.

All outside employment must be approved in advance by the County Administrator or designee.

The employee will first make the request in writing to his department head. The department head will then forward the request to the County Administrator along with a recommendation for approval or denial after taking into consideration whether he/she feels that such employment would be in conflict with or detrimental to the employee's work for Fairfield County. A written approval or denial will be given to the employee and a copy will be placed in the employee's personnel file.

Approved requests may be reviewed at any time at the discretion of the department head or the County Administrator. Approval may be withdrawn at anytime deemed necessary by the county. Matters not discussed above will be handled by the county in its sole discretion.

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