**Member Involvement in Fundraising**

Advice from the ICMA Committee on Professional Conduct

Members are often asked to raise funds for professional association conferences, statewide ballot initiatives, community projects, and other interests. Recognizing that raising funds can create ethical dilemmas for local government managers, the ICMA Committee on Professional Conduct had several discussions of the issues and sought feedback from the membership through *Management InSite* and at regional meetings at the San Antonio Conference.

**Guidance for any fundraising activity**

These principles apply to all fundraising activities:

**Seek no favor.** Tenet 12 of the ICMA Code of Ethics and its guideline on gifts remind members to avoid soliciting money if the individual or the individual’s organization might view the contribution as a “favor” and expect special treatment from the member in the future. Members should exercise good judgment and refrain from soliciting funds from a business if the business has a specific issue that may be coming before the local government in the near future for action or a decision.

**Refrain from asking employees to donate.** It is appropriate for members to provide employees with information about the cause and to give them an opportunity to donate if they so choose. However, directly asking a subordinate to donate may create a situation where employees feel uncomfortable or even coerced into making a donation.

**Exercise discretion.** Members should feel free to decline to participate in fund-raising activities for any cause if they feel it is inappropriate. Some members offer strategic advice on raising funds for certain causes, rather than making direct solicitations.

**Local Government Projects**

Promote transparency in the process by taking these steps:

* Obtain governing body approval for the fundraising effort
* Provide clear guidance and direction to staff who may be engaged in fund raising.
* Publicly announce that a fundraising campaign is under way and outline the parameters of the campaign in writing.
* Regularly report on the sources and amounts of donated funds and services.

**Ballot Measures**

Tenet 7 of the ICMA Code of Ethics has a guideline on “presentation of issues” that provides the basis for member advocacy on ballot measures. Members may make financial contributions to a Political Action Committee organized to promote an issue; engage in raising funds for the issue; and/or provide information.

When advocating for an issue members are advised to:

* Comply with all legal requirements that may apply.
* Consider the governing body’s position on the issue. If the governing body has taken an official stance, members may be obliged to represent the official position of the governing body. If the governing body has not taken an official position or is split on the issue, the members should carefully consider how engaging in fundraising for the measure will reflect on their official responsibilities.

**Professional Association Conferences and Personal Causes**

The general ethical principles apply.