

# Overview of the Election Center's Ethics in Practice Project and Applications for Other Election Administration Organizations

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# Overview

FOCUS: Areas of administrative discretion where the law is not perfectly prescriptive or silent

- The Election Center (National Association of Election Officials)
- 1990s Developed a Standards of Conduct for Election Officials
- 10-hour Training Course
- Committee on Ethics in Practice
  - Revisited and annotated standards of conduct
    - Toolkit for election officials
  - Decision-making framework for election officials
    - Public facing training
    - Ethics sounding board



# CERA Certification & Ethics

- CERA Certification

- 12 10-hour courses
- Principle: election administration is a function of public administration
- Core public administration KSAs
- Focus on election law and history

- Course 5: Ethics

- Overview of ethical approaches
  - Ancient and modern
- Review of current application for public administration and ethical frameworks
- Application to contemporary election administration concerns



# Committee on Ethics in Practice

Hilary Rudy, State of Colorado, Chair

Natalie Adona, Nevada County CA

Zoe Burch, Charleston County SC

Barb Byrum, Ingham County MI

Mark Coakley, Henrico County VA

Bruce Elfant, Travis County TX

Monica Holman Evans, Washington DC

Ricky Hatch, Weber County UT

Jenny Scutchfield, State of Kentucky

Wesley Wilcox, Marion County FL



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# Standards of Conduct

Affirmative statements on ethical practice in election administration

Updated 2023-2024

Annotations and examples



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## Standards of Conduct 101 ★ ★ ★

What are the Standards of Conduct for Election & Registration Officials?  
How do I talk about them with voters and the press? [Read this quick guide to find out.](#)



### WHAT ARE THE STANDARDS OF CONDUCT?

The Standards are ten longstanding ethical principles for election administration that have guided election officials for decades. In 2023, a cross-partisan committee of election officials from around the country convened to enhance the Standards by supplementing the core principles with clear explanations of what each means in practice. Most election officials adhere to these principles and take these actions every day.



### I DO THESE THINGS EVERY DAY. WHY ARE THE STANDARDS IMPORTANT NOW?

Research shows that a person's local election official is a uniquely trusted voice. However, trust in elections remains low in many areas, partly because voters do not trust what happens in other election jurisdictions. Knowledge of who election officials are and what they do remains low. Feedback from officials has been clear that many want better tools for explaining what we do as a unified profession. Our renewed focus on the Standards of Conduct addresses this need.



### WHY SHOULD I TALK ABOUT THEM PUBLICLY?

Many officials are confident discussing their own work and have trusting relationships with their own communities. The Standards help show that we are a professional community that follows the same values and principles across the country, even as we follow different state and local election laws. If voters trust what you're doing, and you can vouch that election offices around the country follow the same Standards of Conduct you do, you are better able to give voters the same confidence you have that your vote matters in national elections.



### USING THE STANDARDS OF CONDUCT TO HELP VOTERS UNDERSTAND AND TRUST OUR WORK:

- **I am part of this community** and care deeply about our democracy. I do this work because I want our community to be guided by the will of voters.
- **My number one job is to uphold the U.S. Constitution** and all state and federal election laws. Our office conducts elections with honesty and integrity, and we ensure all eligible voters have an equal opportunity to participate.
- **We follow professional standards of conduct** that commit us to being transparent, impartial, and accountable. We invite the public in to see how elections work, watch votes being counted, and even participate in the process by volunteering. Our doors are open; we are here to answer your questions and show you that your vote is counted accurately.
- **Other election officials around the country follow the same standards** of conduct that we do. We may uphold different state and local election laws, but our values, goals, and ethical standards are the same nationwide. I'm confident that elections will reflect the will of voters this year, because I am confident in my fellow election officials.

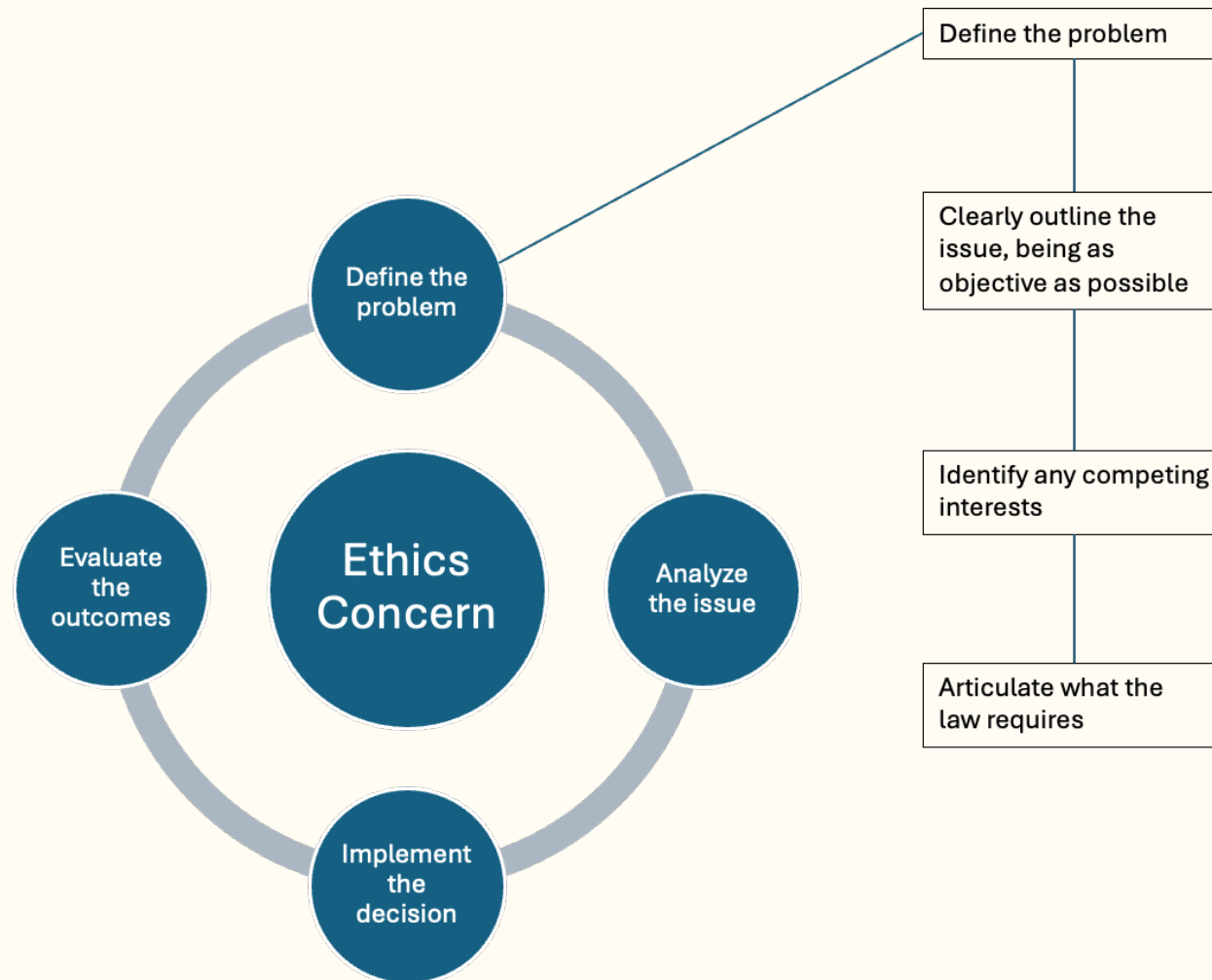
Voters and the media often have questions about the integrity of our elections. You know best how to talk to your community. Leaning in to our Standards of Conduct is a way to speak more broadly about elections nationwide – please use them as you see fit.



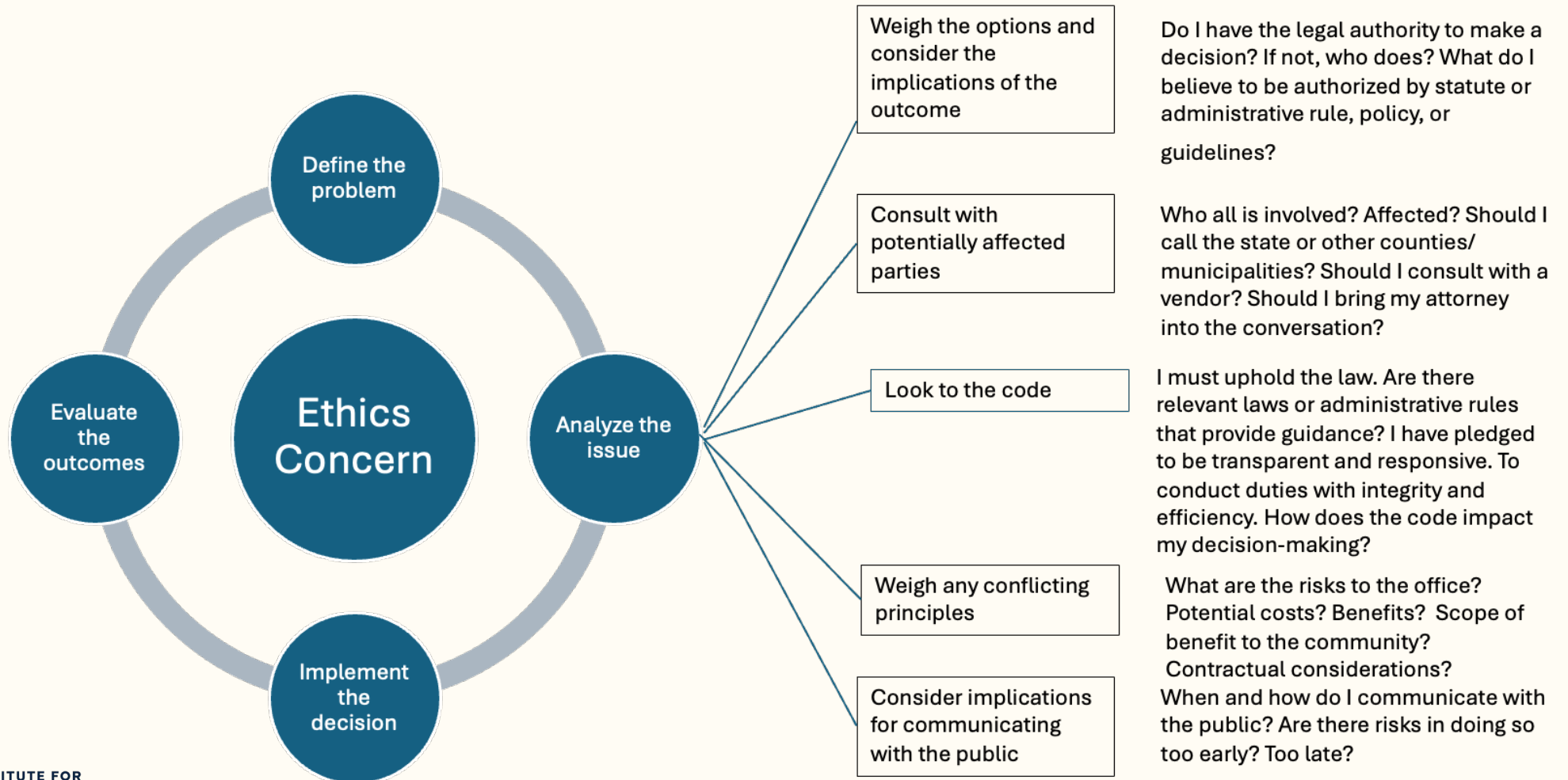
# Decision-making Framework



# Decision-making Framework: Step 1

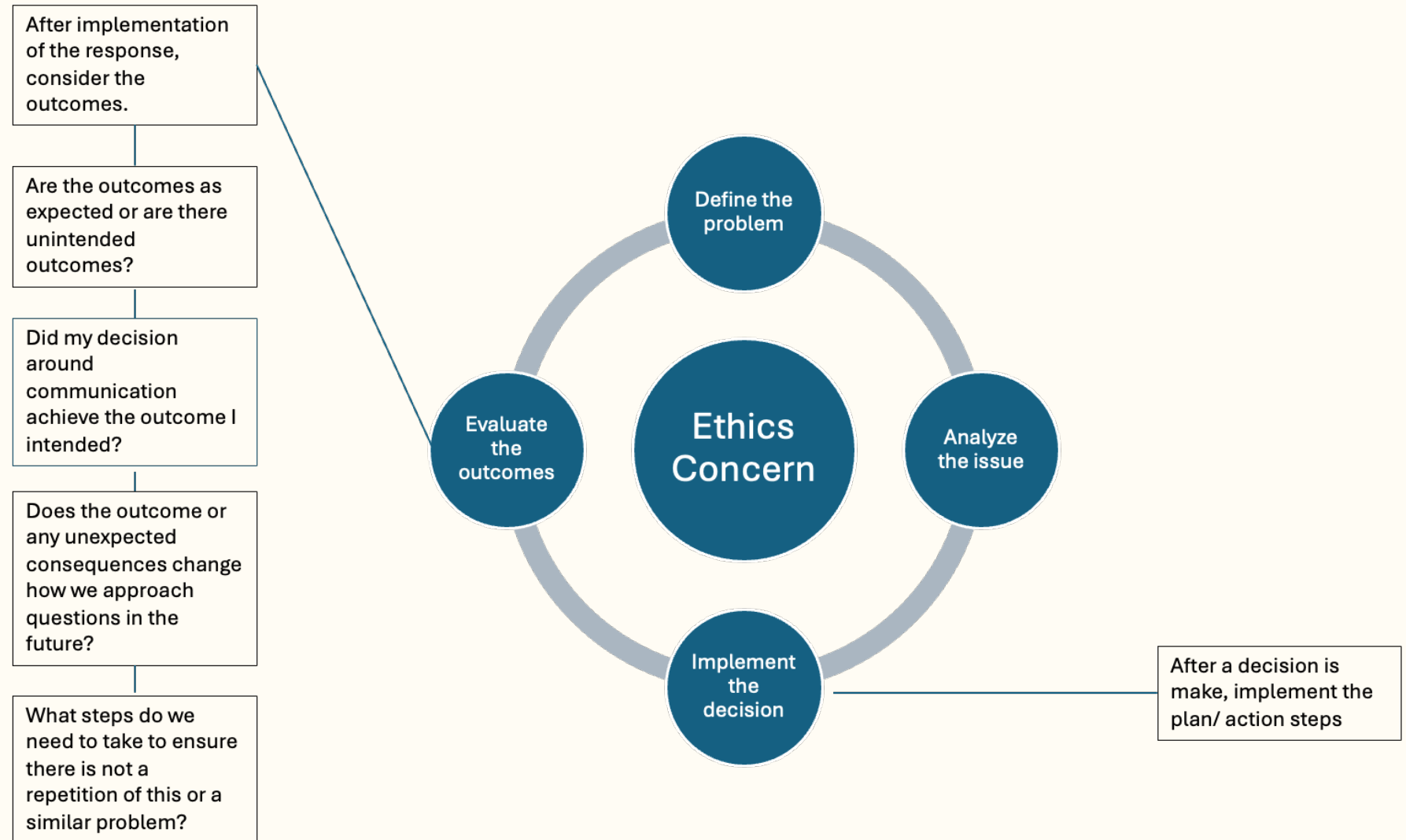


# Decision-making Framework: Step 2





# Decision-making Framework: Steps 3 & 4



# Standards of Conduct Toolkit

- Standards of Conduct with practical application
- Media recommendations
- Messaging and talking points
- Sample media posts
- Templates for communicating in your community

FIND IT HERE! [https://electioncenter.org/national-association-of-election-officials/professional-education-program/Standards of Conduct Toolkit.pdf](https://electioncenter.org/national-association-of-election-officials/professional-education-program/Standards_of_Conduct_Toolkit.pdf)



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# Forthcoming Products

## Public Facing Training

- Brief, asynchronous training on the Election Center website
  - Brief video
  - Application exercise
- Available late spring 2025

## Ethics Sounding Board

- Portal on Election Center website for members to submit questions to sounding board
  - Committee fact gathering and consideration
  - Discussion and feedback
- Pilot Fall 2025



# Application for State Associations

- Adopt OR post Standards of Conduct OR modify for your own needs
- Adopt OR modify and apply our decision-making framework
- Use our public facing training
- Join the Election Center and take the longer training and utilize the ethics sounding board
- Use for job ads and/or connected to performance plan/reviews
- Create your own training
  - Should go beyond typical state ethics trainings
  - Based in real examples + potential problems
  - Develop a sense of community support and sharing



# Questions and Feedback



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