



## Management Support Unit (MSU)



### Information Sheet 4:

## A code of conduct for Executive Officers of voluntary organisations

*“The board and its chief executive constitute a leadership team...The chief executive must be able to rely on the board to confront and resolve issues of governance while respectfully staying out of management. The board must be able to rely on the chief executive to confront and resolve issues of management while respectfully staying out of governance. Each can reasonably expect the other to exhibit leadership”<sup>1</sup>*

It has often been said that the most important decision a Board of Management can make, is the selection of its Executive Officer. A good executive officer is expected to show professionalism, competence, effectiveness, excellent planning skills, and to be able to connect with people at all levels. As well, he/she is expected to manage often limited resources and compete in a competitive environment. Of primary importance for an executive officer is their respect for and adherence to an agreed code of practice.

### In adhering to a code of practice the executive officer should:

1. Provide leadership to the organisation while still recognising the contribution of others
2. Along with the Board, formulate and communicate the vision, values and long term plans of the organisations
3. Act within the powers delegated to him/her by the Board
4. Respect the Board's sphere of responsibility and must assist the Board in their decision making by providing the best possible advice, information and honest assessment
5. Work within the policy framework laid down by the Board
6. Be accountable to the Board for his/her decisions and performance, that of the staff and of the volunteers
7. Conduct themselves in a manner that will not damage or weaken the reputation of the organisation, its staff or Board and must not participate in an activity which is in conflict with the objects or may damage the reputation of the organisation
8. Uphold the highest standards with regard to confidentiality of information or material relating to aspects of the organisation. However, if the integrity of the organisation is threatened a chief executive has a duty to seek independent, confidential advice from a professional association or advisor and if necessary contact the police or regulatory body

<sup>1</sup> John Carver (1990) *Boards That Make a Difference*, Jassey Bass, pp. 128

9. Not gain from any decision or any contractual or other relationship with the organisation. This also applies to his/her family and friends. If such a situation arises, the chief executive must declare this to the Board.
10. Not place him/herself under any obligation, financial or otherwise, to outside individuals or organisations that might influence him/her in the performance of their duties
11. Not benefit from any personal financial or material gain other than that contractually agreed with the Board
12. Not seek gifts in connection with their work and if they are offered, they become the property of the organisation and used for the benefit of the organisation. Exceptions only apply when written into an agreed policy
13. Only use corporate credit cards and claim expenses when it is in line with organisational policy and all expenses must be accurate and accountable
14. Submit to the organisation any fees he/she has earned in the performance of their duties, unless agreed in writing by the Board
15. Not, if they are a full-time chief executive, carry out any other occupation without the knowledge and consent of the Board
16. Clarify, understand, recognise and respect the difference in roles between the Board, the honorary officers and the staff and that they work together for the benefit of the organisation, developing a supportive and loyal relationship
17. Not undermine the authority of the Board in the eyes of the staff or other stakeholders
18. Pursue professional development for him/herself and that of their staff for the benefit of themselves and the organisation
19. Seek to balance, represent and when necessary, arbitrate between the various interests of the organisation's stakeholders
20. Ensure that all stakeholders have an opportunity through appropriate means, to express their views and opinions about policies and direction of the organisation
21. Ensure stakeholders are treated with courtesy and respect. In particular, the chief executive must act fairly in making decisions affecting employment opportunities, conditions and advancement in accordance with good employment and equal opportunities principles. This includes implementing an equal opportunities policy.
22. Ensure that proper, true and relevant reporting is provided to their members, funding organisations, users and other stakeholders.
23. If necessary, put the organisation's objects and needs before the needs of any one group of stakeholders.

(Source: Association Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations)

### Relevant Resources available from the Management Support Unit (MSU)

- **MSU Information Sheet 1** Simple measures to assist non-government organisations in maintaining Good Governance (Free)
- **MSU Information Sheet 2** A Code of Conduct for Boards of Management of Incorporated Non-Government Organisations (Free)
- **MSU Information Sheet 6** Ensuring a productive relationship between Board Members and the Executive Officer (Free)
- **MSU Information Sheet 7** Qualities for Good Leadership (Free)
- **MSU Information Sheet 10** Professional Supervision (Free)
- *Better Meeting* Community Child Care Co-operative (Loan)
- *Effective Meetings* Community Child Care Co-operative (Loan)
- *Legalities: Guidelines for running a community organisation* G. Wheeler, NCOSS (Purchase)
- *Appraising the Chief Executive: an essential guide to performance review* ACEVO London 2002 (Loan)
- *Codes of Conduct and Service Agreements for CEOs* ACEVO London (Loan)
- *Supervision in the Helping Professions – a practical approach* Mary McMahon & Wendy Patton 2002 (Loan)
- *Managing the Managers – developing constructive relationships and roles between paid and honorary managers in non-government community services* NCOSS 1992 (Loan)
- *Leading the Organisation – the relationship between chair and chief executive* ACEVO London 2002 (Loan)
- *Managing Community Organisations* Ettinger House (Series of 5 booklets) (Loan)

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