

I N D E P E N D E N T
ETHICS
— B  A R D —

**Three-Year Strategic Plan
2021/2022 through 2023/2024**

Updated September 21, 2021

Tallahassee Independent Ethics Board



Our Mission

To promote the actual and perceived integrity of our City government and to prevent unethical conduct before it occurs.

Our Core Values

Integrity – Adhere to strong moral and ethical principles and values.

Honesty – Be transparent and truthful when communicating with others.

Commitment – Be dependable, fair, thorough, and objective.

Excellence – Hold oneself accountable.

Respect – Be courteous to others and treat each person with equal value.

Executive Summary

Through a referendum in 2014, an Ethics Ordinance was established, creating the Tallahassee Independent Ethics Board. In December 2019, the City Commission voted to strengthen the ethics ordinance to give the Board greater authority and to uphold the highest ethical standards. The charter establishes an Independent Ethics Board, a seven-member body appointed by the City Commission, Florida A&M University, Florida State University, State Prosecutor's Office, Public Defender's Office, and two selected at large by the Board members. Staff for the Ethics Office includes an executive director/ethics officer, administrative specialist, and legal counsel. The Board oversees ethics training for City officials, appointees, employees, and advisory board members. The Board has subpoena power and investigates alleged violations of the Ethics Code. The Board relies on citizens, vendors, City employees, and City officials to report violations of the Ethics Code.

The Board reviews its strategic plan at the end of the fiscal year and updates its priorities and strategies to plan for the next three years. Accordingly, the Board has established the following priorities for 2021/2022 through 2023/2024 toward the fulfillment of its mission.

Priorities

1. Investigate alleged violations of the Ethics Code and administer a formal process for resolving complaints.
2. Encourage Tallahassee residents, City officials, City employees, advisory board members, and those conducting business with the City, to maintain the highest ethical standards and report any perceived ethics violations.
3. Ensure every City official, City employee, and advisory board or committee member attends ethics training annually and can apply the Ethics Code.
 - a) Provide ethics training to newly elected and current City officials, their aids, and City appointees.
 - b) Administer a refresher course online for City employees
 - c) Conduct ethics training for new and existing employees.
 - d) Provide Advisory opinions concerning the Ethics Code.
4. Make recommendations to the City Commission that strengthens local ordinances governing the conduct of elected and appointed City officials, City employees, vendors, contractors, and lessees.
5. Create an environment where citizens in the community actively participate in election campaigns, and candidates and City officials give priority to their interests and concerns.

Strategic Priority 1

Key Indicators

- Through the Board's bylaws and administrative procedures, there is a transparent and efficient process for handling complaints.
- Investigations are conducted objectively and on time.

Major Initiatives

Investigate alleged violations of the Ethics Code and administer a formal process for resolving complaints.

- Identify gaps and weaknesses in the Board's bylaws and administrative procedures.
- Conduct thorough and objective investigations.
- Acquire assistance as needed.
- Network with other ethics officers through conferences and personal contact.
- Attend up-to-date training on investigative procedures.
- In 2021/2022, the ethics officer will attend a course that enhances his skills in conducting investigations. He should also receive additional training on topics related to the training requirements for elected officials.
- In 2021/2022 through 2023/2024, continue progress on the major initiatives.

Strategic Priority 2

Key Indicators

- All current and new employees, City officials, and Board members have access to the Tallahassee Ethics Guide.
- Citizens and City employees demonstrate an interest in ethics through social media

Major Initiatives

Encourage Tallahassee residents, City officials, City employees, advisory board members, and those conducting business with the City, to maintain the highest ethical standards and report any perceived ethics violations.

- Ensure the Tallahassee Ethics Guide remains relevant to the user.
- Distribute the Ethics Guide to all City officials, employees, vendors, contractors, lessees, City Commission advisory groups, and committees.
- Ensure the Tallahassee Independent Ethics Board web page is up-to-date and relevant.
- Engage the Tallahassee community, City officials, and City employees through social media.
- Conduct monthly meetings in the community.
- In 2021/2022, hire an individual or company to create and maintain a social media presence that highlights essential items from the monthly meetings and provides scenario-based advisories.
- In 2022/2023 through 2023/2024, conduct meetings in the community to inform and engage the public.

Strategic Priority 3

Key Indicators

- Annually ensure every City official and employee receives ethics training that is relevant to our mission.
- By 2023, establish core online training courses accessible to every City official, advisory board member, and employee.

Major Initiatives

Ensure every City official, City employee, and advisory board or committee member attends ethics training annually and can apply the Ethics Code.

- a. Provide ethics training to newly elected and current City officials, their aides, and City appointees.

Year One

- Assess training needs
 - Use guest instructors to deliver training topics in 2021
 - Create a training module about public records by January 2022
 - Create a training module about public meeting laws by January 2022
 - In 2021/2022, deliver scenario-based instruction on state and local ethical standards. Create online training modules on Article II of the Florida Constitution, statutory requirements for voting conflicts, campaign contribution limits, and restrictions on campaigning within government buildings.
 - In 2022/2023, update training modules as needed. In addition, create means of evaluating the effectiveness of the training.
 - In 2023/2024, enhance training programs in response to course evaluations.
- b. Administer an online refresher course for City employees
 - In collaboration with the Human Resource and Workforce Development Department (HRWD), develop a new online refresher course by January 1 of each year.
 - In 2021, we created an online ethics course delivered to over 3,000 employees. We also identified an alternative delivery method and assisted with the delivery as needed. The HRWD administered the online training and ensured that over 98 percent of City employees received the training.

- By March 1, 2022, collaborate with the HRWD to develop an online refresher course that meets the annual ethics training requirement for City employees. Then, repeat this process in 2023 and 2024.
- c. Conduct ethics training for new and existing employees.
- Year One
- Coordinate training In collaboration with the Human Resource and Workforce Development Department
 - Deliver the Ethical Standards of Conduct Course #01 to scheduled classes.
- 2022/2023 through 2023/2024
- Deliver Ethical Standards of Conduct Course #01 as needed.
 - Evaluate the impact of training
 - Update course based on assessment
- In 2021/2022, ensure that the Ethical Standards of Conduct Course #01 remains up-to-date. Deliver the training to new employees as needed. Provide classroom instruction as the circumstance allows it. Establish a formal process for evaluating the training.
- d. Provide advisory opinions.
- Use social media to inform others of the Board's authority to provide advisory opinions on the application of the Ethics Code.
 - Create a section on the Board's website to list advisory opinions.
 - Add a review of applicable advisory opinions to the training curriculum for new employees, advisory boards, and committees.
 - With the assistance of the HRWD, include a reference to the advisory opinions in the annual critical policy review. All City employees are required to complete the annual review.
 - With the assistance of City staff, create an automated notification for employees wishing to receive advisory opinions as they are approved.

Strategic Priority 4

Key Indicators

- The City Commission adopts the Board's recommendations that are in line with our mission.

Major Initiatives

Make recommendations to the City Commission that strengthens local ordinances governing the conduct of elected and appointed City officials, City employees, vendors, contractors, and lessees.

Year One

- Complete a recommendation to address weaknesses in the current lobbying ordinance.
- Recommended changes as needed.

Strategic Priority 5

Key Indicators

- The Campaign Contribution Refund Program performs more of an active role in local campaign financing.
- By 2024, there is a 5% increase in refund distributions through the Campaign Contribution Refund Program.

Major Initiatives

Create an environment where citizens in the community actively participate in election campaigns, and candidates and City officials give priority to their interests and concerns.

2021/2022

- Upon Board recommendations, implement a plan to increase citizen participation in election campaigns. Implement a plan to increase the awareness of local campaign finance laws

2023/2024

- Evaluate the success of the program for continuous improvement.