

CODE OF ETHICS

I. OVERVIEW.

Metro 4 and SESARM exist to serve the local and state air pollution control agencies in the Southeast. As non-profit corporations, Metro 4 and SESARM must not only meet the needs of the collective member agencies but they must do so with a firm and complete commitment to conformance with all applicable federal and state statutes and regulations, grant management conditions, and professional standards of behavior. This Code of Ethics establishes the expectations for Metro 4 and SESARM officers, Boards of Directors members, employees, and other representatives.

Metro 4 and SESARM serve the public interest by supporting their member agencies and must do so consistent with a high standard of ethical principles. This Code of Ethics is both a standard of behavior to which to aspire and a guide for making ethical decisions. It contains specific language that sets the minimum expected levels of behavior and individuals who deviate from these ethical principles may be subject to disciplinary action. However, the Code is not simply a set of rules. It also creates an expectation that Metro 4 and SESARM will do the right thing in any given situation. Ethics ultimately are a matter of personal as well as corporate responsibility. Consistently making ethically correct decisions is not easy. Achieving consistent ethical operations requires commitment, awareness, motivation, and practice. This Code shall be continually used within Metro 4 and SESARM to provide guidance and support in daily operations.

The member agencies expect Metro 4/SESARM services to be supportive, credible, and trustworthy. By accepting the opportunity to serve within Metro 4/SESARM, officers, Boards of Directors members, and administrative staff must accept the personal obligation to be accountable, which includes becoming familiar with and abiding by the requirements Metro 4 and SESARM must meet, making diligent efforts to seek out necessary information to understand and conform to the requirements, accepting personal responsibility for the foreseeable consequences of actions and inaction, and taking into account the long-term interest of the member agencies and the constituencies they serve.

On this basis, Metro 4 and SESARM have developed this Code of Ethics and the objectives, principles, and guidelines that support the Code. Unless a limitation is specifically stated, the guidance in this Code shall apply equally to Metro 4 and SESARM officers, Boards of Directors members, employees, and any other individuals involved in Metro 4/SESARM affairs on behalf of member agencies.

II. THE PUBLIC INTEREST.

Provision of Metro 4 and SESARM services are defined by their adequacy and acceptance in the eyes of the member agencies, local, state, regional, and national colleagues, and the public. Metro 4 and SESARM member agencies indirectly serve the general public including their citizens, taxpayers, permittees, business associations, environmental groups, and other interests. The agencies are stewards of the environment, specifically air quality, and are charged with protecting public health through responsible environmental management. The public relies on the members of Metro 4 and SESARM to exhibit competence, objectivity, and integrity in all that they do. This reliance imposes a public interest burden and Metro 4/SESARM and the member agencies must work towards the collective well-being of the community of people and institutions that they serve.

The standards of Metro 4/SESARM are applicable to the public interest. Decisions made must consider scientific and health data available as well as economic realities. Healthy communities are those that provide a clean environment, fulfilling jobs, and enjoyment of life and property. Since Metro 4/SESARM operations are funded almost exclusively by federal grant funds, financial integrity and efficiency are mandated. Conservative expenditure of funds is required. Periodic, independent audits of organization financial books are necessary. Proper management of financial transactions is critical and must be transparent. Collaboration and leveraging of resources are warranted to ensure that services are provided in the most cost-effective way. Quality is important and maintenance of a sound quality management system is expected. As Metro 4 and SESARM acquire funds and conduct work on behalf of the member agencies, work should be targeted towards the most critical and priority needs of the agencies. Resources should not be wasted. Costs should be carefully controlled to minimize financial impacts on the contributing member agencies.

Metro 4 and SESARM should conduct business in a manner that ensures confidence and trust for member agencies and their constituencies. If done in this manner, the public interest will be properly served, credible environmental work will be conducted by well-trained and knowledgeable member agency employees, the environment will be protected, public health will be enhanced, and all individuals and entities will have a positive feeling and high level of trust in Metro 4/SESARM and its operations, work products, and member agencies.

III. OBJECTIVES.

This Code of Ethics establishes that representatives of Metro 4 and SESARM are to work at the highest possible standards of professionalism and to attain the highest possible levels of performance as it serves the member agencies, and indirectly, the public interest. These goals require that three basic objectives be met:

A. Credibility.

Metro 4/SESARM must demonstrate credibility and competence through its work. This requires development of levels of trustworthiness and expertise that will allow those served to gain and maintain confidence in organization work. Users of data, analyses, and conclusions derived from Metro 4/SESARM work should be confident that work products and the individuals producing them are trustworthy, accurate, and dependable. Observers should be able to recognize easily that Metro 4/SESARM operates within a framework of professional ethics that positively impacts everything the organizations accomplish.

B. Professionalism.

Every officer, Board member, employee, and representative of Metro 4/SESARM must demonstrate a high level of professionalism, conform to high ethical standards, and demonstrate a strong commitment to the work of the organizations.

C. Quality of Services.

Work conducted by Metro 4/SESARM and its agents must be reliable and of high quality. High standards of performance should be established and met.

IV. PRINCIPLES.

In order to achieve the goals and objectives of Metro 4/SESARM and its member agencies, the following fundamental principles shall govern organization operations:

A. Integrity.

Honesty must be prevalent in all operations and work products.

B. Objectivity.

Fairness must predominate and can be achieved by not allowing prejudice, bias, conflict of interest, or influence of others to override objectivity.

C. Competency.

Services must be provided with due care, competence, and diligence. The continuing Metro 4/SESARM staff duty is to maintain professional knowledge and skills at levels required to ensure that member agencies receive competent services.

D. Confidentiality.

Confidentiality must be maintained for all proprietary and personal information acquired during the course of performing tasks and delivering services and for which disclosure and distribution restrictions exist through local, state, and/or federal ordinances, regulations, and/or statutes. Information required to have limited or no distribution will not be disclosed and will be used solely for the purpose(s) resulting in the information being acquired.

E. Professional Behavior.

Metro 4/SESARM staff behavior must be in a manner consistent with accepted standards for corporation staff and environmental professionals. Staff must refrain from any conduct that might bring discredit to the organizations and/or their member agencies.

F. Technical Expertise.

All work conducted by Metro 4/SESARM staff must be in accordance with relevant technical and professional standards. Likewise, contractors and other agents of Metro 4/SESARM shall be subject to the same expectations. The duty of staff, contractors, and other agents is to carry out their responsibilities with care and skill and in accordance with these principles. All technical work shall be conducted in a manner that delivers required information in a reliable form.

V. EXPECTATIONS.

A. Metro 4 and SESARM expect and actively promote the highest attainable levels of ethics within their individual and collective operations. Officers, Boards of Directors members, employees, and other representatives of Metro 4/SESARM shall function personally and professionally in a manner that maintains a high level of integrity, credibility, and public trust for the corporations, their staff, and their work products by performing as follows:

1. Adhere to this Code of Ethics, organization policies and procedures, and other standards which apply and which ensure the reputation of the staff, member agencies, and work of Metro 4/SESARM;
2. Be aware of, and strive to apply and conform to, work-related requirements and standards prescribed in grant awards and associated federal, state, and local statutes, regulations, ordinances, policies, and other guidance;
3. Consider the needs of member agencies and service to the public interest to be paramount in carrying out duties;

4. Perform duties and supervise the work of subordinates with the highest degree of professional care;
 5. Conduct work at all times with diligence, honesty, integrity, dignity, and respect for others;
 6. Render opinions, observations, and conclusions only after appropriate consideration of the pertinent facts, utilizing appropriate available resources and expertise;
 7. Conform with the Metro 4/SESARM Conflict of Interest Policies and Procedures and avoid using information gathered in the course of Metro 4/SESARM business for personal gain or other advantage or to the disadvantage of others, avoid dispensing special favors or privileges to anyone, whether or not for remuneration, and never accept, for oneself or a family member, favors or benefits under circumstances which might be construed by reasonable persons as influencing the performance of duties and constituting an actual conflict of interest, or an appearance thereof;
 8. Continually seek to increase personal professional knowledge and skills and those of co-workers to improve services to the member agencies and the public;
 9. Treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness, and good faith, advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees, avoid discrimination of any type, distinguish between personal convictions and professional duties, and do not allow personal beliefs to interfere with organization operations, employee performance, or production of work products;
 10. Avoid transmitting or using confidential information obtained in the course of performing professional work except for intended purposes and in compliance with all applicable statutes, regulations, ordinances, and guidance; and
 11. Disclose improprieties when they become apparent consistent with the Metro 4/SESARM Whistleblower Policies and Procedures.
- B. Employees of Metro 4/SESARM further shall:
1. Work a number of hours per day consistent with each individual personnel plan;
 2. Perform duties with earnest effort and best thought;
 3. Seek to find and use the most practical, efficient, and economical ways of getting tasks accomplished;
 4. Be innovative in thought and action, not willing to allow unnecessary and irrelevant practices of the past to define the future; and

5. In all actions, be cognizant of the fact that the reputations of member agencies are critical to their effectiveness and that no individual action should be undertaken that would undermine the goals of the member agencies to be credible and effective in their management of air quality.

VI. ENFORCEMENT.

Officers, Board members, employees, and other representatives of Metro 4/SESARM have an affirmative duty to be familiar with this Code of Ethics and to identify and resolve ethical issues before acting. Receipt and initial review of inquiries shall be the responsibility of the Metro 4/SESARM Executive Director unless the inquiry involves the performance of the Executive Director. In the latter case, inquiries shall be referred to the President of Metro 4 and the Chair of SESARM for review and evaluation.

SESARM will strive to maintain confidentiality in all inquiries and investigations. It is acknowledged that, as a necessary part of replying to an inquiry or conducting an investigation, others may become aware of confidential information. Further, circumstances may require reporting of allegations to appropriate authorities.

Inquiries and allegations must be submitted in writing by regular mail or e-mail to the appropriate Metro 4/SESARM individual(s). Inquiries of a sensitive nature should be clearly marked "Ethics Confidential." All inquiries will be acknowledged.

The following guidelines shall apply to ethics investigations:

- A. Investigations of violations of this Code of Ethics can result from inquiries or complaints from organization staff, member agencies, or from any other source.
- B. Metro 4/SESARM will not accept the resignation of an officer, Board member, or employee while the individual is under investigation for violations of this Code of Ethics. Metro 4 and SESARM reserve the right to pursue and disclose the result of an investigation regardless of the person's intent to resign affiliation with either or both organizations.
- C. Before official disciplinary action is taken, any representative of Metro 4/SESARM subject to an ethical finding shall be provided an opportunity, upon request, to respond to allegations, provide relevant information, and have an appropriate hearing, before the Metro 4/SESARM Executive Director and/or the Board(s) of Directors.
- D. Disciplinary action may include, as applicable to the nature of the issue and the status of the Metro 4/SESARM representative:
 1. Remedial action such as additional education or training, which may be incorporated in other actions in this section;

2. Verbal warning;
 3. Written reprimand;
 4. Unpaid suspension for a specified time; and/or
 5. Termination of employment and/or affiliation with Metro 4/SESARM.
- E. The Executive Director and Boards of Directors are authorized to investigate allegations or inquiries, determine the validity of the allegations, and take appropriate disciplinary actions.
- F. No employee, contractor, or other agent of Metro 4/SESARM shall interfere in any ethics investigation or proceeding
- G. Any representative of Metro 4/SESARM for which disciplinary action has been taken shall have a right to written notice of the disciplinary action and the right to appeal the decision and/or the disciplinary action. Said appeal shall be made to the Executive Director if the action was initiated at that level or to the Board or Boards, as applicable. Said appeal shall be made to the President of Metro 4 and/or the Chair of SESARM, if the disciplinary action was initiated at the Executive Director level but not resolved to the satisfaction of the accused individual, or if the action was initiated at the Board of Directors level.
- H. Copies of all relevant documentation associated with a complaint or inquiry, investigation, report of findings, and/or disciplinary action shall be placed in the files of Metro 4/SESARM and shall be maintained in accordance with the Metro 4/SESARM Records Retention Policies and Procedures.
- I. The organization(s) may publicize any disciplinary action taken if it is in the public interest and in the best interest of the credibility and reputation of the organization(s) and or the member agencies.

VII. SUMMARY.

This Code of Ethics reflects general ethics concepts and the general intentions of the member agencies of Metro 4 and SESARM but is not an exhaustive, complete list. Various situations and scenarios may arise that were not contemplated during development of this Code of Ethics. In all cases, whether described herein or not, the behavior and actions of representatives of Metro 4/SESARM staff, contractors, and other agents shall be consistent with the needs and expectations of the member agencies and the public interest. Nothing in this Code of Ethics shall be interpreted to limit required legal investigations and proceedings as prescribed by applicable statutes, regulations, and/or ordinances.

Other expectations of Metro 4/SESARM representatives are further established and described in other policies and procedures of the organizations, some of which are referenced herein.

VIII. CERTIFICATION AND SIGNATURE.

This certifies that this Code of Ethics has been prepared for the exclusive use of Metro 4 and SESARM, that it will be made available to all Metro 4/SESARM staff and the Metro 4 and SESARM Boards of Directors, and that the requirements herein will be explained in adequate detail to ensure that all Metro 4/SESARM staff and representatives are aware of, comply with, and fully implement the Code.

Greg DeAngelo, Executive Director
Metro 4/SESARM