**Analysis of the ICMA and IACP Codes of Ethics**

**by**

**James Greenwood**

**PSPA 600-Module 2**

Ethics statements of organizations are created to provide members with guidelines and

a framework of principles for the professional to reference when making decisions,

implementing policy and acting. The International City Management Association (ICMA)

adopted its code of ethics in 1924. The ICMA mission is to “create excellence in local

governance by developing and fostering professional local government management worldwide.”(International City Management Association, 2023).

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) adopted the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics in 1957. The IACP states that, “The Code of Ethics stands as a preface to the mission and commitment law enforcement agencies make to the public they serve” (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2023) There are shared principles espoused by both organizations in their codes and there are also substantive differences. The ICMA and IACP members are government employees and many people in government are motivated by a commitment to public service (Lecture-Module2, 2023). The disparities between the two codes include more specific, updated and inclusive language of the ICMA Code compared to the IACP Code. As social equity becomes reflected across professional organizations’ codes, it is incumbent on public administration to articulate what social equity means in theory and practice, particularly to ensure that even the pursuit of fairness is not dominated by elites and has widespread input, especially from historically marginalized populations (McCandless and Ronquillo, 2019).

The ICMA Code lists principles that include professional management delivered through

democratic local government in an effective, efficient, and equitable manner. The public

servants should provide services in a socially responsible way to earn the trust of all the

members of their communities. Members should merit the respect of the public by

demonstrating honor and integrity at the highest level. Members are to support elected

officials by providing them with facts, technical advice on policy choices, work with officials in

goal setting, and to implement the decisions made by their local government. Members should

stay clear of political activities and not participate in the elections of the politicians that they

work for. Members should improve upon their professional skills and assist their cohorts with

development of their skills. The last principle described in the Code is that “Public Office is

public trust” (International City Management Association, 2023).

The IACP Law Enforcement Code of Ethics begins with the basic principles of the role of

peace officers, to protect and serve. The member will “respect the constitutional rights of all to

liberty, equality, and justice”. The principle of maintaining a higher standard in private and public life is also included. The importance of honesty and confidentiality are stressed. Members are not to allow their personal beliefs, biases, or personal associations affect their decisions. The members will act courteously and never use unnecessary force and not accept gratuities or bribes. Members recognize “the badge of my office as a symbol of public faith” and “accept it as a public trust to be held so long as I am true to the ethics of police service”.

Members are to hold themselves accountable and to constantly strive to improve their

knowledge and skills (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2023).

Similarities between the ICMA and IACP Codes include the principles of courtesy, justice,

avoidance of discrimination and equality. The principles of fairness, friendliness, impartiality,

quality, and integrity are explicitly mentioned in the ICMA Code. Differences between the Codes are also present. The IACP Code explicitly mentions the respect of civil, constitutional, and human rights, the eschewing of intimidation and bias, liberty, and public service (McCandless and Ronquillo, 2019).

After careful analysis of both the ICMA and IACP Codes, I ascribe to the ICMA’s Code.

The ICMA Code is more comprehensive and applicable to my current role as Deputy Chief of

Police. I still maintain the beliefs and principles put forth in the IACP Code but see the

importance of tenets in the ICMA Code that are not covered in the IACP. The IACP Code is very

general and applies to all law enforcement officers. As the organization is comprised of Chiefs

and executive level peace officers, the Code should reflect the importance of quality,

effectiveness, and efficiency of services. The IACP Code does not directly reflect on social

responsibility as the ICMA Code does. The ICMA Code puts forth that members are responsible to provide information and advice to the elected officials, which is also a role of the Chief and law enforcement executives. However, the IACP Code makes no mention of the important

relationship that a Chief and police leaders have with the elected officials.

The IACP Code needs a thorough review and update. The lack of any reference to social

justice, inclusivity, and diversity is remarkable. Over the centuries, there have been abuses of

power by those that are sworn to protect and serve the public. The more egregious violations

of public trust have been against people that were viewed as “less than” (Ronquillo n.d.).

Recently, there are profound examples of mistreatment, notably the death of George Floyd in

Minneapolis. Floyd’s death sent shockwaves nationally and across the world. The International

Chiefs still maintain a Code of Ethics that fails to address social injustices and inclusion of

disenfranchised people. The failure to recognize the need for an update is astonishing and

possibly a display of ignorance or arrogance (Svara, 2014).

The ICMA Code was updated in April 2023. The Code has some issues that could be

further enhanced. One such issue is the tenet, “Serve the best interests of all community

members” (International City Management Association, 2023). Although this says “all”, I think it

would be very simple and proper to expand on this to recognize the history of people that have

marginalized and to welcome them in the spirit of inclusivity.

Both the ICMA and IACP Codes of Ethics are good frameworks for public servants. The

ICMA Code is current and more robust in comparison to the IACP Code. As I strive to achieve

higher roles in my Department and ultimately in Village Management, I see the importance of

adopting the ICMA Code of Ethics for my reflection and development.

**Bibliography**

International Association of Chiefs of Police. n.d. Law Enforcement Code of Ethics. Accessed 09 01, 2023. https://www.theiacp.org/resources/law-enforcement-code-of-ethics.

International City Management Association. n.d. "ICMA Code of Ethics." ICMA. Accessed 09 01, 2023. https://icma.org/page/icma-code-ethics.

Lecture-Module2, NIU PSPA 600. n.d. Accessed 08 30, 2023.

Sean McCandless & John C. Ronquillo (2020). Social Equity in Professional Codes of Ethics, Public Integrity, 22:5, 470-484, DOI: 10.1080/10999922.2019.1619442

Svara, John H. (2014). "Who Are the Keepers of the Code? Articulating and Upholding Ethical Standards in the Field of Public Administration." Public Administration Review 561-569.