

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

**Three-Year Strategic Plan
2021 - 2023**

Adopted December 17, 2020

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 Ethics Office that is led by the Independent Ethics Board, a seven-member body. Staff for the Ethics Office includes an executive director, administrative specialist, and legal counsel. Through the Ethics Office, the Board oversees ethics training for every City official, appointee, employee, and advisory board member on an annual basis. The Board has subpoena power and investigates alleged violations of the Ethics Code. The Board relies on citizens, City employees, and City officials to report violations of the Ethics Code.

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.

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.

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 aids, and City appointees.

Year One

- Assess training needs
- Use guest instructors to deliver training topics in 2021
- Create a training module about the Ethics Code by January 2022
- Create a training module about public records by January 2022
- Create a training module about public meeting laws by January 2022

Year Two and Three

- Provide access to online training giving an overview of the Ethics Code, public records, and public meeting laws
- Use guest instructors to conduct training on Article II of the Florida Constitution, and statutory requirements for voting conflicts, gift bans, campaign contribution limits, and restrictions on campaigning within government buildings

- b. Administer an online refresher course for City employees

- In collaboration with the Human Resource and Workforce Development Department, develop a new online refresher course by January 1 of each year.
- Collaborate with the Human Resource and Workforce Development Department to administer the online refresher training.

- 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.

Year Two

- Create an asynchronous course for online training to supplement classroom instruction.

Year Three

- Deliver Ethical Standards of Conduct Course #01 as needed.
- Evaluate the impact of training
- Update course based on assessment

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.

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.

Year Two

- Assess the weaknesses and strengths within the Ethics Code to determine if there is any need for changes.

Year Three

- If applicable, complete a recommendation to the City Commission strengthening the Ethics Code.

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.

Year one

- Hire a graduate or postgraduate student intern to research best practices.
- Collaborate with a student intern to develop a plan for engaging the community in the Campaign Contribution Refund Program and increasing the awareness of campaign finance laws.

Year Two

- Implement a plan to increase citizen participation in election campaigns.
- Implement a plan to increase the awareness of local campaign finance laws

Year Three

- Evaluate the success of the program for continuous improvement