

DEPARTMENTS

Ethics Inquiries

Check Your Ethics Knowledge

Are you looking for a way to plan a professional development program? ICMA offers assessment instruments that you can use to determine your relative management strengths and the areas where you would do well to focus your professional development time.

To give you an idea of the types of questions that you might encounter related to the area of integrity, check your knowledge with the following questions. You'll find the "best choice" answers at the end of this column.

For more information about the assessment instruments that ICMA offers, go to <http://icma.org>. You can do a search for "management practices assessment," or click on "professional development" to read more.

1. You have been the city manager for a suburban community for 15 years and have begun to accumulate some savings that you would like to invest. The metropolitan area is growing rapidly, and there are a number of good opportunities you can consider. What is the best choice for a real estate investment for you as a city manager?

- A. Land adjacent to your community that the neighboring city manager tells you may be rezoned from single-family to a higher-density use when the master plan is revised.
- B. A rental property in another community.
- C. A historic property in your own city that you could renovate for multiple purposes, including your home, a rental unit, and a small commercial use.
- D. A sizable property in a distant county that you could afford to invest in only if your department directors joined you in a real estate partnership.

2. You are a town manager married to another town manager. You work in a nearby community, and you live in the community where your wife serves as manager. Because you have a background in library science, your neighbor asked you if you would consider running for the library board in her community. You do not need to raise any campaign funds to do this, and you know how hard it can be to find qualified candidates for these sorts of positions. What is the best course of action?

- A. Check with your town council to see if there are any concerns. If not, file the paperwork to become a candidate.

- B. Ask your wife to check with her town council. If the council has no objections, file the paperwork to become a candidate.
- C. Check with your town council, and have your wife check with her town council to see if there are any concerns. If not, file the paperwork to become a candidate.
- D. Decline to run for this office, explaining to your wife that even though you don't have to raise money, you cannot be a candidate for any local office.

For answers, see below.

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Answers to "Check Your Ethics Knowledge."

1. The answer is B. Many city managers make it a practice to purchase nothing but their own homes in the communities where they work. The ICMA Code of Ethics stresses that members should avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest. Prudent managers are careful about financial dealings with their employees and would not enter into a real estate partnership with them because of the potential for a conflict of interest.

They also know it is unwise to make an investment on the basis of a tip from a colleague or any other information that might come to their attention because of their position. Acting on confidential information is unethical (and may be illegal).

2. The answer is D. The ICMA Code of Ethics has a guideline that makes it clear that its members should not run for any elected office. This principle is important in helping a professional local government manager maintain a reputation for fairness and impartiality.