



**Pacific-wide  
Code of Ethics for  
Public Servants**



**Public  
Service  
Fale**

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# Introduction

Codes of Ethics and Conduct can be instrumental in setting clear expectations, and clarifying and promoting ethical behaviour. A Code of Ethics identifies and defines a common set of values and associated expected behaviours, while a Code of Conduct sets out rules, compliance, and actions or applications of a Code of Ethics. This Code of Ethics aims to unite Pacific public services through shared cultural strengths, common values, and collective expectations of public servants.

The Pacific region is home to diverse cultures. Although Pacific countries and territories are unique in their own ways, they share many cultural strengths, including common community values integral to Pacific cultures, the nature and close connections of small island states, and the shared importance of family, respect and service.

These values and expected behaviours are a compass to help guide public servants in their professional roles, support them with decision making, and to set clear expectations for conduct. Public servants, at all levels, are expected to work towards integrating these shared values into their everyday behaviour and conduct, decisions, actions, policies, systems and processes.

By committing to these values and adhering to the expected behaviours, public servants strengthen the ethical culture of public services and enhance public trust and confidence in the integrity of public services. This aligns with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations Convention Against Corruption, the PIFS Biketawa and Boe Declarations and their commitments to good governance.



# Statement of Values & Expected Behaviours

This Code of Ethics sets out and defines five key values and relevant expected behaviours for each. These values are interconnected and cannot be considered in isolation from each other.



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**SERVICE**  
Act with care and stewardship  
Serve the public interest  
Support the Government of the day

**INTEGRITY**  
Be honest and trustworthy  
Maintain professionalism  
Uphold political neutrality

**EQUITY**  
Respect all people  
Treat all people fairly  
Provide equal opportunities

**ACCOUNTABILITY**  
Promote transparency  
Speak up  
Have respect for the rule of law

**COMMUNITY**  
Support the honour of others  
Work collaboratively  
Help people to participate



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# ‘O le ala i le pule o le tautua’ – Samoa

The pathway to leadership is through service.

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Centered around people, the value of service weaves us together as Pacific people and public servants. Service is at the heart of many Pacific cultures, and is pivotal to the shared public service values outlined in this Code of Ethics.

Within our Pacific cultures, we have different hierarchies within our families, social groups and communities, to whom we serve in different situations and settings. As public servants and stewards of the public service, we have a duty to serve our communities, countries and the Government of the day.

## **Act with care and stewardship**

As stewards of the public service, we each play a role in taking care of our public management system and ensuring it is sustainable and future-proof. Stewardship is about looking ahead, taking action and making decisions that will position us in a collectively better off place in the future. As proactive stewards of the public service, we invest in long-term capability, people and institutions, systems and processes, and legislation and policies. In all our decision and policy making processes, we are mindful of future contexts, risks and opportunities, and understand the importance of our ability to provide advice and serve the Government of the day. We recognise our duty to work together to lift performance across the public service and maximise our collective impact, for the benefit of our communities.

## **Serve the public interest**

As public servants, we have a duty to serve the public interest (i.e., the collective interest of the community) above our own personal and private interests when carrying out official duties. We strive to better understand and meet the needs and aspirations of our communities, and support the Government of the day to act as good stewards of the public interest.

## **Support the Government of the day**

Public servants play an important role in supporting the Government of the day with sufficient information and free and frank advice to inform evidence-based decision making for our communities. Proactive free and frank expert advice is a key enabler for Ministers in achieving their objectives. We are also responsible for the delivery and implementation of government policies, and are expected to do so in a diligent way, regardless of our own personal opinions.



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# ‘Dui seva ga na bua ko tea’

– Fiji

You will reap what you sow.

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Public servants should always behave in a way that maintains the integrity of the public service and upholds the shared Pacific values outlined in this Code. Integrity is an all-encompassing value and speaks directly to the way in which public servants should carry and conduct themselves. Members of the public are entitled to expect a public service which acts to the highest standards of integrity at all times and in all circumstances.

## **Be honest and trustworthy**

As public servants, we build trust with others by behaving honestly at all times. The authority to use public money and power must be continually earned through telling the truth, honouring agreements and commitments by doing the things we say we will do, and aiming to not mislead through distortion or omission.

## **Maintain professionalism**

Members of the public are entitled to expect us to be professional, and behave in ways that preserves public trust and confidence in the public service. This includes proper use of authority, government resources, assets and official information; performing official duties to the best of our abilities; creating and utilising opportunities for development where necessary; and ensuring our conduct and behaviour is appropriate and consistent with the expectations of our roles.

## **Uphold political neutrality**

The public service is apolitical and must perform its functions in a neutral and impartial way. Public servants are expected to serve the Government of the day by acting impartially and implementing government policies, regardless of one’s own interests or beliefs. As public servants, acting in politically neutral ways includes how we present ourselves publicly, on social media, and other platforms. We should also be cognisant of the activities we engage in that could be construed as conflicting with our obligation to act impartially. We are expected to manage our personal political rights, beliefs and opinions alongside our obligation, as public servants, to uphold the political neutrality of our public services.



Equity

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## **‘Taeka n rabakau: Teimatoan te maiu raoi mani babaaire aika a nikoraoi’ – Kiribati**

The maintenance of wellbeing comes from just and fair decision-making.

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It is important that our public services promote equal employment opportunities, and provide all people with a fair and safe place to work. Public servants are expected to be respectful of all people, treat others fairly, and contribute to a diverse, inclusive, and representative public service. Public servants have a key role in enhancing the responsiveness of our public services to the needs and aspirations of the communities we serve, and to the Government of the day. Embedding a meaningful commitment to equity in our workforces, systems and processes means we are better able to understand and respond to the needs of our communities, and make positive impacts for all citizens.

### **Respect all people**

Respect is integral to Pacific cultures, and is expected of public servants in how they conduct themselves and treat other people. As public servants, we respect all people, their cultures, languages, customs and practices, and honour the Pacific ways of working and doing things. We seek to understand others, treat one another with courtesy, and are considerate and respectful of their rights.

### **Treat all people fairly**

As public servants, we are also expected to treat all people fairly and without bias or giving personal favours and benefits. This means that they will be treated the same regardless of their age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, wealth, status, island, village, or family.

### **Provide equal opportunities**

As public servants, we take proactive steps to ensure our public services provide equal opportunities in recruitment, appointment, and advancement processes. All appointments and advancements within our public services are based on merit, and these decisions are made fairly and without bias. Diversity and inclusion are also actively considered to help build and maintain highly capable and effective workforces that reflect the diversity of our communities.



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# ‘Fakataufata e mafiti he gutu mo e gahua he tau lima’ – Niue

When you speak with authority, make sure you follow through with actions.

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Accountability is key in building and maintaining a public service that takes responsibility and ownership of its decisions and actions, fostering a culture of open government. Public servants must comply with all relevant acts, regulations, and lawful directions that relate to the performance of official duties. Public servants are also accountable to the wider community, and have a responsibility to support and maintain an open and transparent public service, which contributes to public trust and confidence.

## **Promote transparency**

As public servants, we work together and for our communities in a spirit of openness and transparency. Members of the public expect a public service which takes action and makes decisions in an open way, demonstrates and ensures transparency in the performance of their functions, and maintains timely and accurate disclosure of information to the public. Public servants promote transparency by demonstrating clear processes around decision making, emphasising its importance in communications, and committing to open practices around reporting and publishing information.

## **Speak up**

Building and maintaining a culture that promotes speaking up about wrongdoing is vital to maintaining the integrity of our public services. We have an obligation to speak up when we see unethical behaviour, hold one another to account, and to speak truth to power when authoritative figures behave in ways or make decisions which conflict with these shared values.

As collective stewards of the public service, we also have a responsibility to maintain the safe and open culture of sharing ideas and proactively offering suggestions to others on how we could improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our public services.

## **Have respect for the rule of law**

Public servants are fully accountable to the law, and have an obligation to observe appropriate acts, regulations, and lawful directions that relate to the performance of official duties. Members of the public expect a lawful and faithful public service, where all employees are familiar with their country’s relevant legislation and are held accountable for their actions and decisions.



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# ‘Angang chok aramas, Aramas chok angang’

– Federated States of Micronesia  
(Chuuk State)

It is with people that the task is done.  
It is with people that there is life.  
Without people, there is no life.

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Connections to other people, families, social groups, and communities are at the core of many Pacific cultures and identities. These relationships often serve as a foundation and main source of strength for many Pacific people. Pacific people do not see themselves as independent units but as a collective; often holding broader interpretations of family and community. Families and communities generally consist of immediate and extended family, churches, friends and their families, wider communities, and Pacific peoples spanning geographic borders and oceans.

## **Support the honour of others**

As public servants, we share a mission to make a difference and improve the wellbeing of our citizens. United by this shared vision, we also have a responsibility to support one another, uplift each other’s honour, and help others to behave ethically and in line with these shared values. We do this by listening, understanding, practising forgiveness, and helping others to learn and grow from experiences.

## **Work collaboratively**

Complex problems often require collective action, beyond single-department solutions. A connected and collaborative public service can enable solutions that work for the communities we serve. As a collective, we recognise the importance of working together, and prioritise working efficiently and effectively to achieve the best outcomes for our communities.

## **Help people to participate**

Working collectively is critical to operating effectively and includes working with non-government organisations, stakeholders, and our communities. Public servants have a responsibility to help people to understand government and how it works through:

- engaging with communities and organisations so they can contribute and participate in decision making processes,
- supporting a public service which is accessible for all, and one which fosters a culture of open government,
- setting clear and fair expectations of the public service, how it works, and the scope and extent of our role as public servants.



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