NACDEP
Ethics 2012

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What is good and what is right: Ethics in Municipal Government

The City of Bozeman
Ethics Research Story starts here…

2008 City Charter, Bozeman, MT

The city commission shall …establish an **independent board of ethics** …(and) provide **annual training** and education of city officials, city boards, and employees regarding the state and city ethics codes.
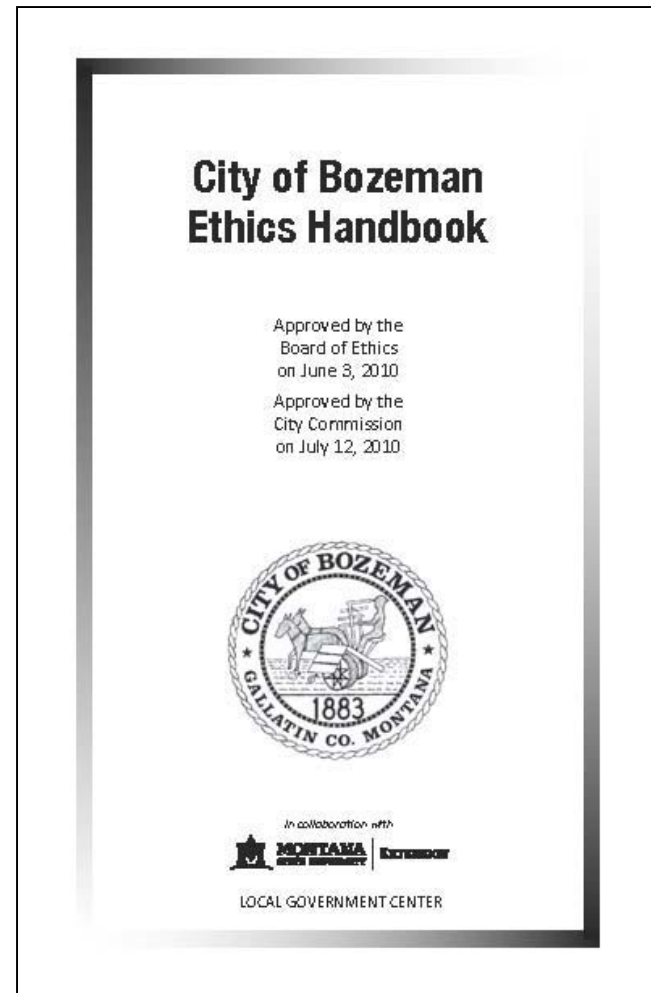
Art. VII Sec. 7.01(a)(b) Jan. 1, 2008

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Independent Board of Ethics established

Ethics Handbook

Distributed to 600+ City employees, elected and appointed officials (City Council and Boards)

City of Bozeman
Ethics Handbook

Approved by the
Board of Ethics
on June 3, 2010

Approved by the
City Commission
on July 12, 2010

In collaboration with

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CENTER

By the close of 2011

Two series of trainings have taken place

- 2009 – "Live" in-person trainings to all employees, elected and appointed officials

- 2010/2011 – "On-line" training related to Bozeman's specific Code of Ethics and the Montana State Code of Ethics

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Did it make any difference?

Bozeman: 37,280 population
- ✓ Annual ethics training for employees, elected, appointed officials
- ✓ Code of Ethics – State and City-specific
- ✓ Ethics Handbook
- ✓ Evaluation of ethical behavior (city core values) as part of performance evaluation
- ✓ Whistle-blower policy defined; mechanism to report ethical violations defined
- ✓ Mechanism to discipline employees and independent Board of Ethics established
- ✓ Ethics resource staff identified for guidance

Kalispell: 19, 927 population
- ✓ Periodic training as needed. Group discussions in work areas as impacted.
- ✓ Code of Ethics – State
- ✓ Ethics covered in personnel handbook
- ✓ As part of performance evaluation if issues are present
- ✓ Mechanism to discipline employees

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Methods

Research Design:

Perceptions of Ethical Climate survey
Pelletier & Bligh, 2006

Two First Class cities in Montana (over 10,000 pop)

- Bozeman – 346 employees

- Kalispell – 181 employees

- Random sample – 132 responded

- The sample size of 132 allows for a 95% confidence level and a +/-7.4% confidence interval.

Survey

Factors	Survey Questions	Research Questions
Observations of Misconduct	1	1
Reporting Misconduct	2	2
Perceptions of ethics program effectiveness	35, 36, 37, 38	3
Ethics code awareness	4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9	4
Perceptions of ethical decision-making processes	10, 11	4
Perceptions of ethical resources scale		
Information	12, 13, 14	4
Time	15, 16, 17	4
Financial Resources	18, 19	4
Perceptions of informal ethical norms	20, 21, 22, 23, 24	4
Perceptions of ethical leadership	25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34	4

Instruments/data analysis

- **Instrument** – electronic survey monkey or paper version
  - 38 items
  - yes/no response (3 items)
  - Likert scale response (35 items)

- **Data Analysis**

  Independent-samples *t* test was used to determine if City of Bozeman employees differed significantly from City of Kalispell employees on the survey items

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Results

- **Reliability** for the survey was calculated Cronbach's alpha was .939

- **Significant findings**:
  - Perceptions of Ethics Program Effectiveness
    $t(69) = 4.357$, p< .05, $d = .87$
  - Perceptions of Ethics Code Awareness
    $t(123) = 3.194$, p < .05, $d = .57$
  - Perceptions of Ethics Resources Scale – Information
    $t(115) = 2.739$, p < .05, $d = .50$

Ethics Cohort	City	N	Mean	SD	t	df	sig	d
Ethics Code Awareness	Bozeman	74	5.7590	.89185				
	Kalispell	47	4.7518	1.41672	4.357	69	.000	.87
Perceptions of ethical resources scale – information	Bozeman	74	5.2027	1.35689				
	Kalispell	51	4.3464	1.62749	3.194	123	.002	.57
Ethics program effectiveness	Bozeman	74	4.1453	1.24898				
	Kalispell	46	3.6033	.91223	2.739	115	.007	.50

After 2+ years...

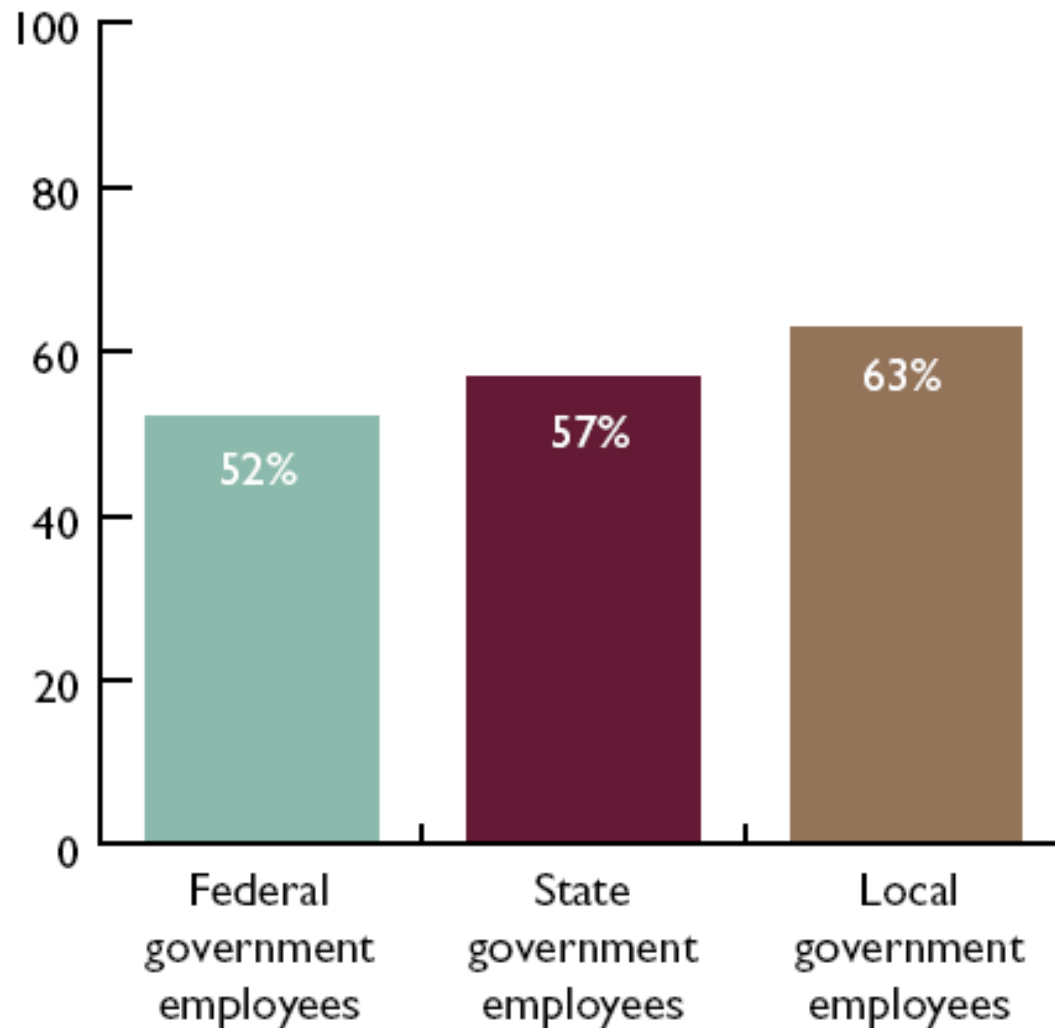**Significant differences between Bozeman and Kalispell in:**

- **Ethics Code Awareness** (policy guides employees in decision-making; have read the code; understand the code; know the city's ethical expectations; know that policies exist)

- **Ethics Resources** (resources are available; easy to get help; staff are available)

- **Ethics Program Effectiveness** (program is effective; confidential manner; increased trust in city; city concerned about ethical standards)

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After 2+ years…

No significant difference between Bozeman and Kalispell in:

- Observations of misconduct

- Reporting of misconduct

- Other measures of perceptions of ethical culture (ethical decision-making process, informal ethical norms, ethical leadership)

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More State and Local Government Employees Observe Misconduct

© 2008 Ethics Resource Center

52%	57%	63%
Federal government employees	State government employees	Local government employees

Bozeman 36%
Kalispell   31%

Planning for 2012

2009:

Live trainings on City Specific Code and State Code of Ethics

2010/2011:

On line training specific to the Code of Ethics (City and State)

2011 Quantitative Research showed good awareness of Code of Ethics

2012:

Move away from the Code alone (defines what you cannot do) towards decision-making and City culture

How do I make the right decision in this case?

Who should I involve?

How do we strengthen ethics within the City of Bozeman?

What do we want from our Ethics Program?

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Qualitative Research 2012

- Clicker results will be saved (anonymous)
- Flip Chart pages collected
- Quotes from small group discussion report out

No identifying information will be logged – age, gender, race, department, years with the City, **nor** date of the specific training for use with quotes

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Which of these statements best reflect how you feel about being part of this Ethics Training today?

1. I'm happy to be here; I like attending the ethics trainings

2. I'm here because I have to come, but I usually learn something and it's not so bad

3. I'm here because I have to come and I'm not looking forward to it

0%   0%   0%

1   2   3

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Results to previous question re: Mandatory Training

Employees:	Supervisors:
• 7% happy to attend	• 4% happy to attend
• 69% have to attend, but OK	• 80% have to attend, but OK
• 24% have to attend, and not happy about it	• 16% have to attend, and not happy about it

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Ethics Scenario Warm-ups
Green Light/Red Light

For the following slides:

    1 = Green

    2 = Red

- Green means "go," it's OK, this is not an ethical issue.

- Red means "stop," this is not ethical behavior!

You are an employee in the Public Works Department. Your neighbor is upset that a branch from your tree at home is dangling into their yard and rubbing on their fence. You don't own a chain saw, but know that trimming this limb will only take minutes and your neighbor will stop complaining about it to the City. You decide to take one of the City's chain saws home overnight to take care of the problem. It's good for the saw to be used occasionally anyway.

1. Green Light

2. Red Light

0%   0%

1   2

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Small Group Scenarios

A Police Lieutenant is also the owner of a small local business. The Lieutenant spends time every shift managing the business and spending hours on the cell phone. The Lieutenant also uses the cell phone to make business calls while responding to emergencies and while on emergency scenes.

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As the Lieutenant, if you have not missed any deadlines or faltered operationally, are you obligated to change your behavior?

1. YES

2. NO

0%

0%

1

2

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As a fellow officer, what would you do?

1. Report the issue to the Lieutenant's Supervisor.

2. Talk to the Lieutenant about the situation.

3. Do nothing, things are working out fine.

4. Do something else not listed here

0%   0%   0%   0%

1   2   3   4

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Small Group Discussion

Talk about this scenario in a group of 4-5 people. Feel free to refer to the Ethics Handbook for guidance.
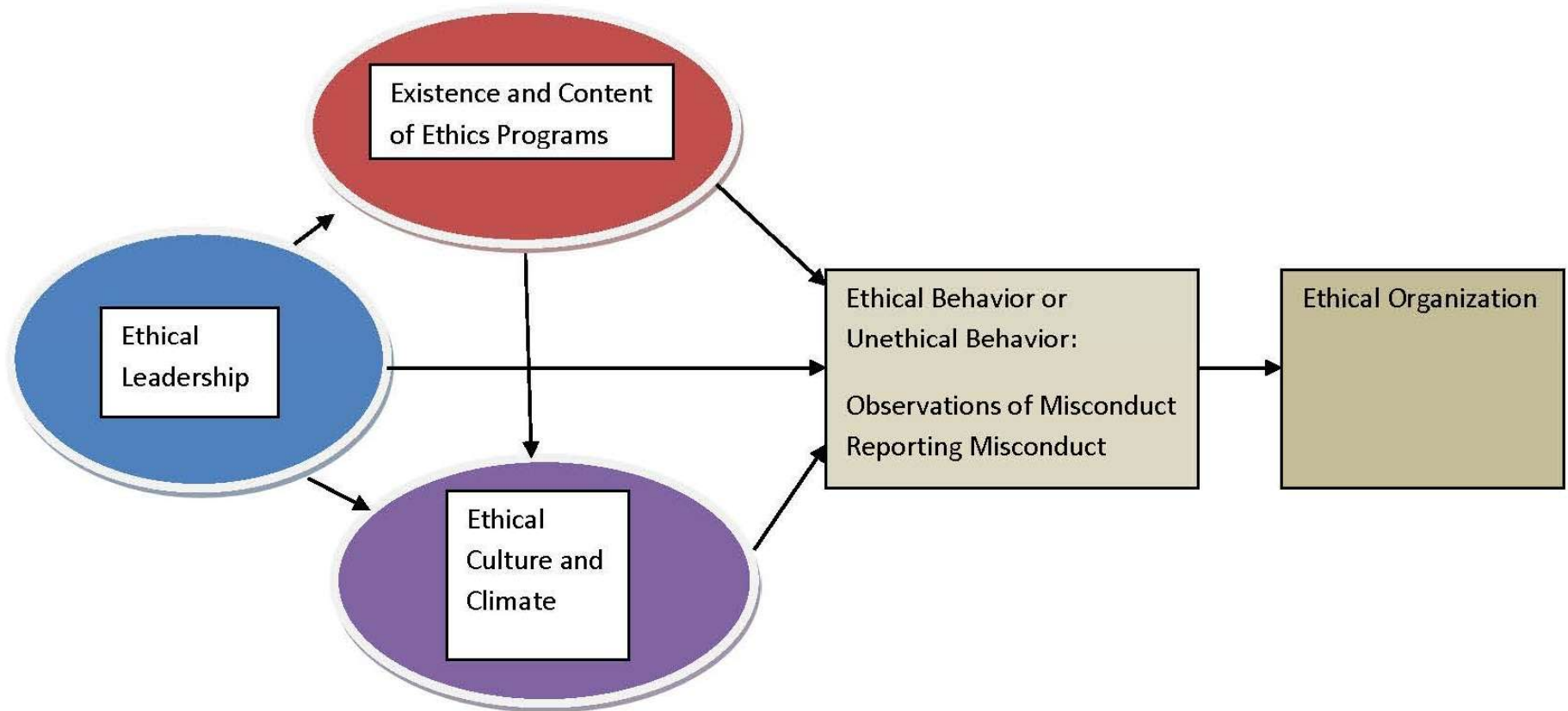
- What should the Lieutenant do?
- What should a fellow officer do?
- How would you handle this situation?
- Is this an ethical issue?

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Final Small Group Discussion

Choose someone from your group as a spokesperson to report back to the larger group. Use the flip chart paper to log your group responses.
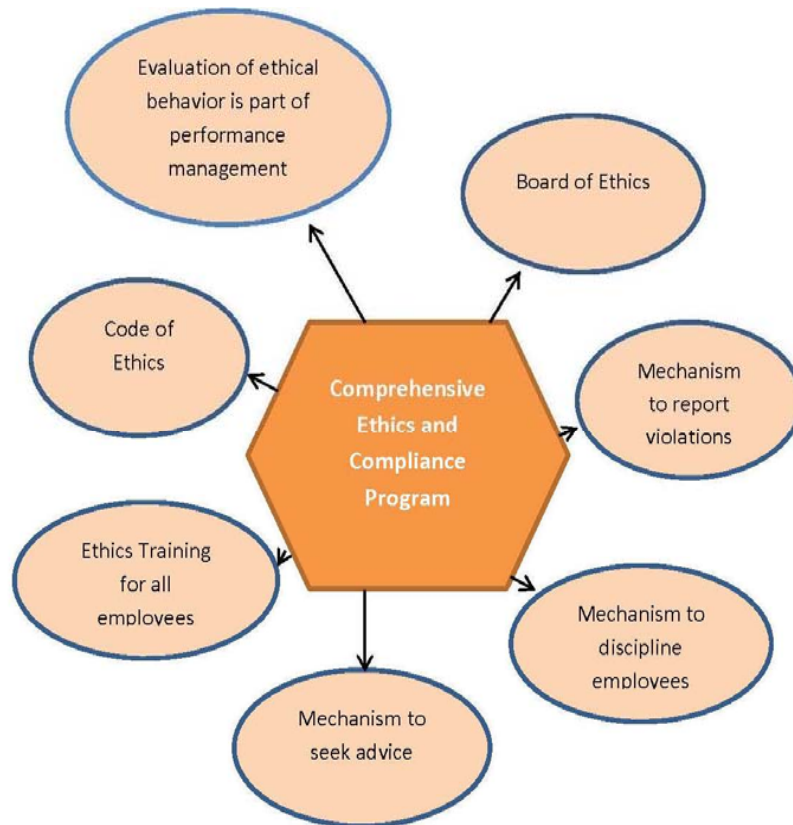
1. Talk about how your group perceives the ethics "culture" within the City of Bozeman. Is it weak, strong, or somewhere in between. Why?
2. What steps would you take to strengthen ethical behavior within the City of Bozeman?
3. What do you think the role of City Leadership should be in strengthening the ethical culture?
4. As a City employee, what do you want out of the Ethics Policy, Board of Ethics and the Ethics Trainings?

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Ethical Organization Concept Map

Existence and Content of Ethics Programs

Ethical Leadership

Ethical Culture and Climate

Ethical Behavior or Unethical Behavior:

Observations of Misconduct
Reporting Misconduct

Ethical Organization

Concepts Defined

Ethics Program

- Evaluation of ethical behavior is part of performance management
- Board of Ethics
- Code of Ethics
- Comprehensive Ethics and Compliance Program
- Mechanism to report violations
- Ethics Training for all employees
- Mechanism to discipline employees
- Mechanism to seek advice

Ethics Culture/Climate

- Report misconduct
- Seek guidance
- Discipline employees
- Created mechanisms are used
- Support versus fear of retaliation
- Ethical Behavior is rewarded
- Ethical Culture
- Ethical values are modeled by leadership
- Employee perception of ethical culture strength
- Employees engage in ethical discussions
- In performance appraisals
- In every day work settings

2012 Qualitative Results – BZ Ethical Culture/Climate

EMPLOYEES
- ❑ Employees rated the whole continuum, from weak to strong
- ❑ Not just one culture – subcultures within the organization
- ❑ Hold people accountable at all levels, tie ethics to evaluation
- ❑ Improve communications and transparency
- ❑ Continue with training, education and discussion
- ❑ Hire and promote ethical people
- ❑ Anonymous avenues to report ethical violations
- ❑ Increase pay

SUPERVISORS
- ❑ Supervisors rate ethical culture stronger than non-supervisory employees; no "weak" responses
- ❑ Continue with training, education and discussion
- ❑ Realistic policies, more guidance and clarity in gray areas
- ❑ Hold employees more accountable
- ❑ Be pro-active and not reactive to ethics issues

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2012 Qualitative Results – BZ Ethical Leadership

EMPLOYEES

- ❑ Lead by example, be a good role model for staff

- ❑ City employees want a safe environment for questions and access without fear of retaliation

- ❑ Bridge the gap between management and employees; perception of distance and need for improved communications

- ❑ City leaders are ethics experts – will know what to do and will take action

SUPERVISORS

- ❑ Lead by example, be a good role model for staff

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2012 Qualitative Results – BZ Ethics Program

EMPLOYEES
- ❑ Clear guidelines
- ❑ Training design - variety of delivery methods, scenarios, discussions, mixing staff
- ❑ Employees want continued education and training, like interactive discussions and scenarios
- ❑ Board of Ethics – employees want access, visibility, communications
- ❑ Available, visible, clear legal guidance

SUPERVISORS
- ❑ Training design – specific scenarios within departments, discussion
- ❑ Clear guidelines

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Sampling of Quotes
Ethical Culture – Safe Environment

EMPLOYEES:

"We need to create and reward a culture where questions are invited and asked freely – make it safe."

"There is a reluctance now to bring things forward or to talk freely. Make it safe to go to leadership."

"We would like a retaliation-free environment; if you confront your supervisor or manager, there won't be repercussions."

SUPERVISORS:

"The fear of retaliation affects us too. When there is a reluctance to come to management to share concerns, ask questions, or report an unsafe behavior, supervisors can't act on information they don't have. A safe, open environment is needed for all of us – the fear doesn't serve any of us."

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Why does it matter?

- Trust in Government – steady decline since the 1960's

- Credibility

- Competence

- Expensive law suits

- Confidence in employees doing the right thing

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Public Trust in Government: 1958-2010

Trust government just about always or most of the time
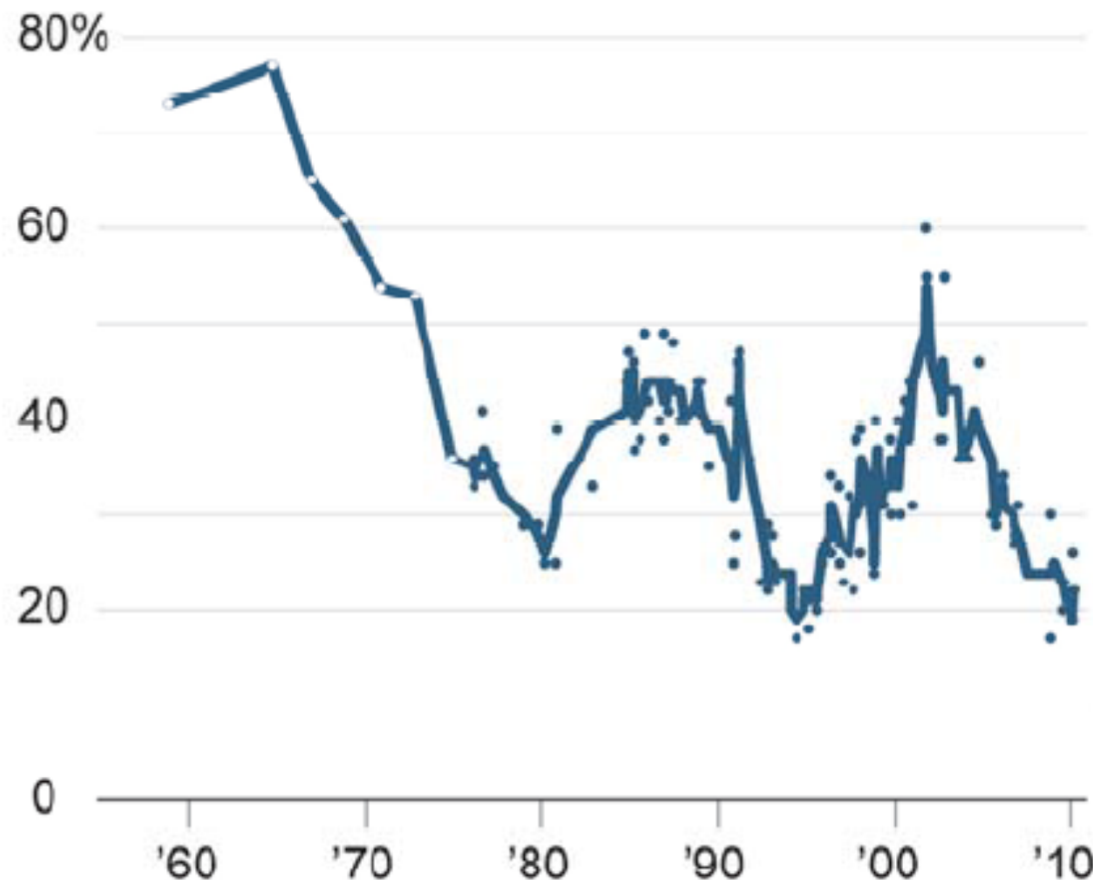
Pew Research Center March 11-21 Q21.
Trend sources: Pew Research Center, National Election Studies, Gallup, ABC/Washington Post, CBS/New York Times, and CNN Polls. From 1976-2010 the trend line represents a three-survey moving average with individual data points shown.

Source: Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, *The People and Their Government: Distrust, Discontent, Anger, and Partisan Rancor.* April, 2010, http://people-press.org/report/606/trust-in-government

State of Montana
May 2011 Municipal Clerks Institute (roughly 80 clerks)

- Do you provide employees with a copy of the State Code of Ethics upon hire?

- **70% do NOT**
- **18% don't know**
- **12% DO**

- Do you provide ethics trainings to your municipal employees?

- **88% do NOT**
- **6% don't know**
- **6% DO**

Next study

Fall 2013

Dissertation

Case Study – City of Bozeman Ethics Program

Compare pilot study data (Fall 2011) to present

Questions?
Thank you!

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