



Sarah's community consultation

The story

Sarah is responsible for coordinating a major decision that could result in a considerable change to the way the department operates and impact on a number of stakeholders in the community. Sarah is excited about the proposed changes as her parents stand to benefit both financially and socially, however, she is also aware that a cohort of the community is opposed to the proposal.

The Secretary of the agency asks Sarah to organise a community consultation to feed into the decision-making process. It's something they always have to do for bigger decisions like this. Sarah tells colleagues that, due to the tight timeline, she only has time to contact a small group of community members to be part of the process. Of this group, she ensures that the majority of participants are in favour of the change.

Questions

- ▼ What are the ethical issues in this situation?
- ▼ Do Sarah's actions breach the State Service Code of Conduct?
- ▼ What strategies could be implemented to prevent this in the future?

The information used in this scenario is not factual – we created it for education and discussion. Any likeness to actual persons or events is coincidental.

Questions – Facilitator copy

1. What are the ethical issues in this situation?
 - ▽ Conflict of interest.
 - ▽ Lack of honesty and integrity.
 - ▽ Improper use of power and authority.

2. Do Sarah's actions breach the State Service Code of Conduct?
 - ▽ Yes. She has a conflict of interest which is contrary to the State Service Code of Conduct and undoubtedly the department's conflict of interest policy.
 - ▽ She has also improperly used her position to influence the outcome of a government process which is supposed to be transparent and accountable.
 - ▽ It is unlikely that Sarah would have a defensible position if questioned about her actions.

3. What strategies could be implemented to prevent this in the future?
 - ▽ Introduce a requirement for supervisor approval on community consultation processes.
 - ▽ Introduce procedures for selection of stakeholders that are not single-person dependant within the agency.
 - ▽ Integrate conflict of interest disclosures within consultation processes.
 - ▽ Ensure that the State Service Code of Conduct is well circulated within the agency.
 - ▽ Openly publicise the consultation process and outcomes to the community.



The Commission can help

We are available to provide support and assistance with identifying, reporting, investigating, managing and preventing misconduct: prevention@integrity.tas.gov.au or 1300 720 289.

For more Misconduct Prevention resources go to www.integrity.tas.gov.au/resources