CIPS Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct

1. Forward

This document is designed to help CIPS members understand how the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice ('the Code') describes the way to maintain the highest levels of ethical conduct with respect to our professional activities. It should not be construed to deny the existence of other ethical or legal obligations equally imperative, but not specifically mentioned.

- **The Code of Ethics** is described in the form of the high ideals of CIPS members.
- **The Standards of Conduct** elaborates ethical imperatives using rules to assist in the determination of whether specific activities violate the Code of Ethics.

Information Technology (IT) has an enormous impact on our society. IT professionals must act in a manner which recognizes our responsibilities toward society. The CIPS Code of Ethics helps to protect society from professionals who do not live up to these responsibilities.

By virtue of our knowledge and skills as IT professionals, we are often granted the means and opportunity to impact society in ways others cannot. With such privilege comes the obligation and responsibility to behave in ways that support fundamental ethical principles.

Applying ethical principles to the IT profession requires an understanding of those principles and the profession in ways relevant to the daily work we perform. Situations can arise that involve making judgments based on specific circumstances, often complex, with conflicting ethical principles. There are varying methods to determine which ethical principle prevails.

This Code establishes guidelines and deals with matters subject to judgment, difficult to state absolutely and which must be judged in light of professional standards in effect at a given time. Professionals cannot be expected to make these judgments without guidance. Two individuals may not necessarily come to the same conclusion. There needs to be a process for resolving ethical dilemmas. Setting the standard is a responsibility of the professional organization representing these professionals. In Canada, that organization is CIPS.

2. The CIPS Code of Ethics

Distinguishing marks of a profession are its acceptance by the public, and the profession's acceptance of its responsibility to the public. The following statements are a set of high ideals to which all CIPS members aspire. CIPS members have an obligation to:

Imperative #1: Protect the Public Interest and Privacy of Information

Carry out work or study with primary regard for public interest (including health, security, safety, privacy, protection of the environment and social responsibility) and in accordance with regulatory requirements and legislation.

Imperative #2: Avoid Conflicts of Interest

Act so the welfare of others takes precedence over personal interests and provide full disclosure to impairment of personal judgment.

Imperative #3: Take Professional Responsibility

Serve their employer/clients competently, carry out their work with due diligence, maintain and advance their knowledge and exercise uncompromised professional judgment.

Imperative #4: Contribute to the IT Profession

Respect the rights and professional aspirations of colleagues and uphold the integrity, dignity and image of the profession.

3. Compliance with the Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct

CIPS members are expected to be familiar with and to not act contrary to the Code. CIPS members assume an obligation of integrity above and beyond the requirements of laws. Unless stated, the Code applies equally to both certified and non-certified members.

Lack of awareness does not excuse unethical behaviour; violators may be subject to disciplinary actions including but not limited to suspension or termination of membership and/or professional certification. CIPS members are obligated to report unethical behavior or violation of the Code by other CIPS members.

4. The Standards of Conduct

Standards of Conduct: a set of rules that elaborates on each imperative of the Code of Ethics, helping to determine if specific activities violate the Code. The following statements describe minimum acceptable levels of conduct.

Imperative #1: Protect the Public Interest and Privacy of Information

CIPS members have an obligation to:

Carry out work or study with primary regard for public interest (including health, security, safety, privacy, protection of the environment and social responsibility) and in accordance with regulatory requirements and legislation.

Report to the relevant authority problems that might result in serious damage to persons, organizations, property or the economy.

Work in accordance with legitimate rights of 3rd parties, and conduct all activities with due regard for ownership, property rights and privacy.

Treat all employer/client business information as confidential, respect copyrights, trade secrets, privacy and terms of license agreements.

Give credit where it is due on all reports, papers and ownership of code and designs.

Understand and comply with obligations imposed on them under applicable privacy legislation, including The Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA), and any amendments to or successor legislation.

Not discriminate in any manner based on issues such as race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, national origin, or social class. Behave as directed regarding any other issue protected by legislation. Exemplify the values of equality, tolerance, and respect for others.

Implications of the Ethical Imperative #1

Such a commitment requires leadership, professional competence, making sure information systems are understood for what they are and what they can and cannot do. *It is about:*

* Our privileged access to systems. We have the opportunity to cause harm or injury to society, and a corresponding duty to protect society.
* Ensuring intellectual property revealed during the course of work is kept confidential.

Imperative #2: Avoid Conflicts of Interest

CIPS members have an obligation to:

Maintain objective integrity and independence in professional judgment.

Not place personal interests or those of colleagues above interests of employers/clients, nor place any interests above those of the public. (If this hierarchy causes conflict you have an ethical dilemma).

Make efforts to notify all parties involved and to make full disclosure to the relevant authority if any conflict might be seen to occur by an independent 3rd party.

Not enter into reciprocal relationships with third parties who stand to gain as a result of their work.

Implications of the Ethical Imperative #2

A hierarchy of interests– including self-interest, need to be balanced. *It is about:*
- Serving the greater good, "intelligent disobedience" or at least transparency when asked to take on a task in conflict with other responsibilities
- Taking appropriate action on reasonably certain knowledge of unethical conduct on the part of a colleague
- Not accepting work that would be unethical or would use resources that belong to others
- Declining employment if it causes conflict

Imperative #3: Take Professional Responsibility

CIPS members have an obligation to: Take responsibility for results.

Achieve and maintain professional competency in their area(s) of practice, as described in the CIPS Common Body of Knowledge.

Demonstrate knowledge required to undertake work, be compliant with relevant legislation and accepted standards of practice.

Tell the truth and avoid misrepresentation. Be honest and candid. Have integrity.

Be fair to competing vendors.

Balance quality and cost in a very transparent way. Quality includes meeting the requirements of the client AND meeting their need for timeliness.

Follow policies and procedures of client including procurement. Follow client's code of business conduct, and any contract requirements.

Implications of the Ethical Imperative #3

There is a need to demonstrate respect, integrity, accountability, and reliability; furthering the credibility of the IT profession. Support the position that CIPS is the representative of Canada's IT professionals by being a good example. *It is about:*

- Participate in lifelong learning regarding the practice of the profession
- Identifying qualifications for tasks accepted
- Not misrepresenting qualifications, expertise or experience
- Not representing oneself as an authority on topics in which one lacks competence
- Defining alternative strategies to reach goals and the implications of each strategy.
- Ensureing that products and related modifications meet the highest professional standards possible
- Expanding one's capabilities and increasing one's competency
- Treating contractors fairly
- Being accountable for results and contractual obligations

Imperative #4: Contribute to the IT Profession

CIPS members have an obligation to:

Act in a manner that upholds the reputation of CIPS and the IT profession in general, in relationships with anyone with whom they work.

Support professional development for current and new CIPS members, for potential members, colleagues and subordinates.

Work to enhance the public's understanding of information systems and their current capabilities and limitations.

Make all reasonable efforts to counter misinformation that could bring the IT profession or CIPS into disrepute.

Be collegial. Maintain respectful workplace relationships.

Make reasonable efforts to voluntarily participate in activities such as development of standards of practice and advancements in bodies of knowledge.

Implications of the Ethical Imperative #4

Professionalism, competency, leadership: attributes we want in our members. *It is about:*
- Promoting the IT profession and attracting new CIPS members.
- Supporting professional bodies of knowledge through active participation.

5. The Process of Ethical Decision-Making

In the process of ethical decision making, when in doubt, CIPS members should seek clarification and guidance on how to interpret the Code of Ethics.

Members should take the following steps when making ethical decisions and resolving ethical dilemmas:
- Identify the key ethical issues in the situation
- Identify what ethical imperatives are relevant to the situation
- Determine what standards of conduct are of major importance to the situation and begin to implement some possible actions by:
  - generating alternatives and examining the risks and benefits of each
  - securing additional information
  - consulting with colleagues, the CIPS Registrar, or with other appropriate sources
  - examining the probable outcomes of various courses of action
- Take a moment to reflect. (Include in the decision making process the feelings and intuitions evoked by the ethical challenges. You might decide that you would feel uncomfortable with certain alternatives even if the action can be justified)
- Determine action plan
- Take action (follow a concrete action plan, evaluate the plan, and be prepared to correct any negative consequences that might occur from the action taken).

In addition, any CIPS member may request interpretation, clarification or amplification of any part of the Code of Ethics.

  - Such requests may be general in nature or may refer to a particular hypothetical or real situation.
  - Such requests shall be submitted (in confidence) in writing to the Registrar's Office of CIPS.

6. Definitions

- **Conduct**: The way a person behaves toward people or organizations.
- **IT**: Acronym for Information Technology.
- **Public**: Of or having to do with the people as a whole.
- **Public interest**: What is considered beneficial to the public.
- **Client**: Some person or organization paying for goods or services. Including employees.
- **Integrity**: Quality or state of being of sound moral principle; uprightness, honesty, sincerity.
- **Relevant authority**: A person or group with jurisdiction over directly related areas of concern.
- **Competent**: Properly or sufficiently qualified or capable.
- **Body of Knowledge**: The prescribed aggregation of knowledge in a particular area an individual is expected to have mastered to be considered or certified as a practitioner.
- **Legitimate rights**: Entitlements assured in accordance with recognized or accepted standards or principles.
- **Trustworthy**: A characteristic of the professional whose intentions and competence can be trusted by colleagues, clients, employers, and the public.
- **Third party**: A general term that includes anyone not a party to a contract, agreement, instrument, etc.
- **Due Diligence**: the care that a reasonable person exercises to avoid harm to other persons or their property