

503. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

SCOPE: This policy applies to all eligible employees of the City of Vancouver, unless otherwise addressed by a current collective bargaining agreement or public safety policy.

POLICY: Employees are expected to represent the City in a positive and ethical manner. Employees have an obligation to avoid conflicts of interest or any activity which would give the appearance of a conflict of interest.

GUIDELINES:

1. What is a “conflict of interest”?

It is impossible to describe all of the situations that may cause or give the appearance of a conflict of interest. The following list is not intended to be exhaustive, but includes some of the clearer examples:

- Employees may not accept any employment relationship which competes with or creates a conflict of interest with a duty to the City.
- Accepting gifts, gratuities, loans, entertainment or other items of value from anyone with whom an employee regularly transacts City business, who has or seeks a contract with the City, or who desires other official action from the City.
- Giving, offering or promising anything of value to a customer, a potential customer, or a financial institution in connection with any transaction or business that the City may have with that customer, potential customer, or financial institution.
- Misusing confidential City information or disclosing such information to any individual who does not have a need to know the information.
- Using the City's name, account or credit to purchase merchandise for personal use.
- Using City assets or labor for personal use.

2. What should an employee do if he/she learns of a situation that is a conflict of interest or may appear to be a conflict of interest?

Any conflict or potential conflict of interest must be disclosed to an employee's immediate supervisor, the Department Director or Human Resources as soon as possible.

3. What if an employee is offered or receives a gift?

Any and all gifts received by a City employee at any time during the year should be given to the employee's immediate supervisor or the Department Director with an explanation of the circumstances surrounding receipt of the gift. If possible, the supervisor or Department Director will return the gift to the sender with a written expression of thanks and an explanation of the City policy concerning gifts. A copy of the letter will be sent to the City Manager.

If returning or refusing a gift would be impractical (such as food, flowers or plants), the supervisor will take the item to a recognized relief/assistance organization or make the item available for the enjoyment of all employees or members of the public in the employee's work area. The supervisor will also send a thank you card to the person or company that provided the gift explaining what was done with the gift.

4. Are there any situations when an employee may accept a gift?

Yes, under limited circumstances. Items of nominal value provided for advertising purposes such as pens, calendars, or items received at a conference, are acceptable. Employees should make every effort to use such items in the workplace instead of taking them home. In addition, meals may be purchased or provided for City employees at business meetings as long as there is a justifiable work-related purpose for the meeting.