1. Introduction

This PMI Ethical Decision-Making Framework (EDMF) document describes steps that can be used to guide an individual in the project management profession through a process to make a decision when confronted with an ethical dilemma.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to supplement the PMI Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct with an aid project management professionals who are confronted with an ethical dilemma can use.

Comments or questions about this PMI EDMF document can be provided via email to the PMI Ethics Member Advisory Group (Ethics MAG): ethics.mag@pmi.org.

3. Background and Context

PMI has recently succeeded in raising the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (Code) awareness level within the organization. Efforts by the Ethics MAG (formerly the Code Implementation Advisory Committee) and the ethics Community of Practice (COP) are continuing to increase awareness. A decision was made for the Ethics MAG to build on the ethics awareness levels by focusing on members' ethical decision-making capability and accountability. Toward that end a PMI EDMF has been developed that members can use, as a companion to the Code, to guide their ethical behavior.

Team: This PMI EDMF document has been developed over a one-year period by an international team of PMI volunteers with the assistance of a recognized ethics expert.

- ■ **Team Leader:** Michael O'Brochta
- ■ **Members:** Giusi Meloni, Shobhna Raghupathy, Peter Pfeiffer
- ■ **Ethics Consultant:** Marty Taylor

Process: The PMI EDMF Team efforts included conducting a worldwide ethical decision-making benchmarking of dozens of organizations. Feedback to draft versions of the PMI EDMF, which has been consistently positive, has been incorporated from PMI component leaders at the 2011 North American Leadership Institute Meetings, from PMI members at the 2011 North American Global Congress, from members of the PMI Ethics Community of Practice (COP), from the PMI Ethics Review Committee (ERC), from 731 responses to a March 2012 survey of PMI members, and from the PMI Board of Directors (BOD).
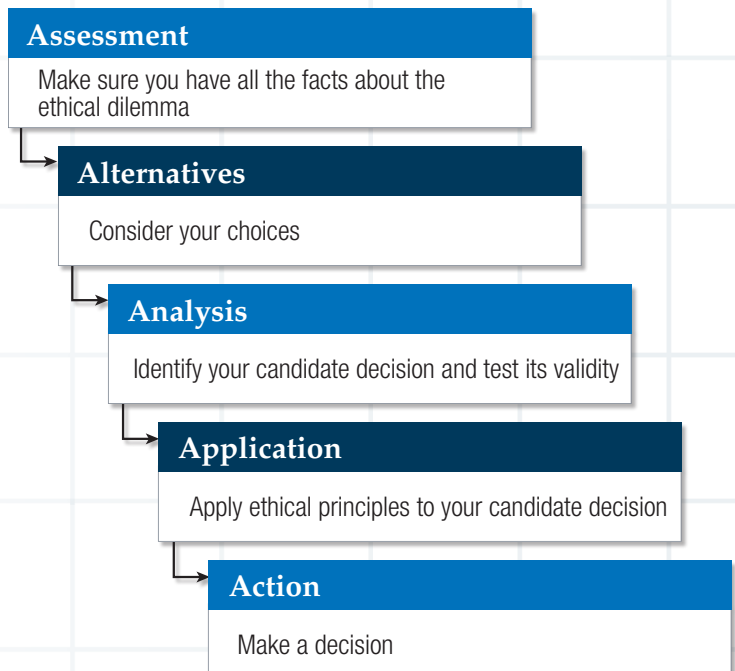
4. How To Use The PMI EDMF

The PMI EDMF has been developed for use by individual members of PMI and for use by PMI credential holders; it is aspirational and not mandatory. Since the PMI EDMF is intended to be used as a guide for critical thinking throughout the ethical decision-making process, it is represented as a sequence of questions and sub-questions to stimulate the user beginning with the recognition and assessment of the issue, and ending with a decision and action. Critical to the successful use of the PMI EDMF is the recognition that the answers to the questions raised by the PMI EDMF are the responsibility of the user. The PMI EDMF can also be effectively used at the end of a decision-making process, when a decision is about to be made, to reflectively look back to see if the important steps have been taken and if the important considerations have been made.

Although the PMI EDMF is presented as a logical linear sequence of steps, it is understood that PMI EDMF users will likely find it useful to loop back-and-forth between steps. Since the PMI EDMF is not entirely prescriptive and does not include every possible step or question useful for making an ethical decision, users are encouraged to be stimulated by the PMI EDMF to challenge themselves with additional steps and questions.

5. PMI Ethical Decision-Making Framework

The following lists PMI EDMF steps.

Assessment
Make sure you have all the facts about the ethical dilemma

Alternatives
Consider your choices

Analysis
Identify your candidate decision and test its validity

Application
Apply ethical principles to your candidate decision

Action
Make a decision

PMI Ethical Decision-Making Framework

1. **Assessment: Make sure you have all the facts about the ethical dilemma and ask these questions:**

   - Does it abide by the law?
   - Does it align with the PMI Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct?
   - Does it agree with your employer's and client's code of ethics and conduct?
   - Does it align with your ethical values and those of the surrounding culture?

   If it does not abide by the law, seek legal council. If the answers to the above questions provide substantial facts to make a case, go to the next step. If you are not sure, you may need to gather more facts or ask a trusted person for advice.

2. **Alternatives: Consider your choices by asking the following questions:**

   - Have you listed possible alternative choices?
   - Have you considered pros and cons for each possible choice?

   If the answers to the above questions result in a viable solution, go to the next step to analyze your candidate decision. If not, you may need to gather more facts and complete your research.

3. **Analysis: Identify your candidate decision and test its validity with these questions:**

   - Will your candidate decision have a positive impact or prevent harm to project managers, PMI staff or volunteers, clients, your employer's organization, other stakeholders, the environment, or future generations?
   - Does your candidate decision take cultural differences into account?
   - Looking back, will this decision seem like a good idea a year from now?
   - Are you free from external influence to make this decision?
   - Are you in a calm and unstressed state of mind?

   If the possible impacts are acceptable, proceed to check your decision against ethical principles in the next step. If not, consider taking time to test another candidate decision, review your options and/or your case.

4. **Application: Apply ethical principles to your candidate decision by asking these questions:**

   - Would your choice result in the greatest good?
   - Would your choice treat others as you would like to be treated?
   - Would your choice be fair and beneficial to all concerned?

   If these or other traditional philosophical questions evoke doubts or seem to create a new dilemma, you might need to reconsider your decision, review the facts, the options and the implications.

   If the answer is "Yes" and your candidate decision seems consistent with other ethical principles, move to the next step to decide and take action.

5. **Action: Make a decision after considering these questions:**

   - Are you willing to accept responsibility for your decision?
   - Could you make your decision public and feel good about it?
   - Are you ready to act?

   If you are comfortable with your decision, take action. If not, retrace these steps to discover a better solution.

PMI®
Project Management Institute