

Oklahoma Business Ethics Consortium
Program Guidelines
Created August, 2004 – Updated July 2018

I. Purpose of Programs:

Focus on business ethics; attract and hold interest by business leaders in the subject.
To recognize, educate, promote and practice ethical standards.

1. As an effective organizational principle.
2. As a civic value.
3. As a professional skill.
4. As individual character.

II. Program Guidelines:

All invited speakers must be advised to avoid the “5 P’s”, e.g. no profanity, put-downs, self-promotion, proselytizing or politicking!

- A. To maximize attendance, selection of speakers should be made on the basis of whether he/she will be able to “draw” an audience either by subject matter or because of their position/reputation. Program selection is the key element to promoting membership. Topics and speakers should attract an audience on strength of subject matter related to ethics, character or integrity. Other important factors include name recognition, positive reputation or position of the speaker. In selecting a program, **the benefits to the membership in the area of business ethics must always be weighed and held foremost.**
- B. OK Ethics is a forum of information for action on business ethics. To that end, we strive to promote practical ethical methods in the workplace (application v. theory).
- C. As a general rule, we avoid engaging speakers who may be tempted to use OK Ethics as a forum for selling their consulting services. While occasionally, we may highlight an author and provide opportunities for book sales, this must be accomplished with the mindset of how to best inspire and equip our attendees.

We seek and promote business leaders who can share their in-house processes and may serve as role models for other organizations. (Note that a large percentage of our constituency is comprised of consultants. It may create some unnecessary dissatisfaction and dissension if one consultant is chosen to speak over another member in that field.)

- D. Program committees should seek variety in program subject / topic, etc. and format. (speaker, roundtable discussion, debates, etc.) **Information must be transferable and applicable to a broad audience of professionals.** For example, a program on ethical decision-making in the medical field must be

broad enough to be practically applied by someone in the accounting profession. This can be achieved if emphasis is given to the process of decision-making, rather than on medical terms.

- E. **An individual actively running for a political office is precluded from speaking as it may create an impression of partisanship.** (The OK Ethics Board must be consulted before engaging anyone holding an elected office as a speaker. The purpose is to provide feedback and guidance.)
- F. OK Ethics is not a marketing organization, so speaker self-promotion is not permitted. (Again, book sales are permitted – see also item C.)

As a non-sectarian organization, the Consortium is not a platform for religious proselytizing. We respect the diverse beliefs held by our members and, for that reason, request that our speakers recognize that the Consortium is not an appropriate venue for promoting religious issues.

Meeting Places:

Each Chapter is autonomous in determining its place of meetings. It is expected to meet in a place where any members or guests can attend. Preference is for a central location. Prices should not be excessive and must be kept consistent through the chapters because of the inclusion of prepaid meals in dues and for budgeting purposes.

Cancellation:

The chapter board may cancel a regular meeting if it falls on a legal holiday or in the event of bad weather, epidemic or of a disaster affecting the whole community. (Note that insurance cancellation policy does not cover “foreseeable” events, but will cover a speaker’s failure to appear or cancellation due to hazardous road conditions.)

Scheduling:

Regular meetings should be consistent in day and time at each Chapter and start and end on time.

- Oklahoma City – Second Wednesday of the month – 11:30 to 1:00
- Tulsa – Third Thursday of the month – 11:30a.m. to 1:00p.m.

Special meetings, workshops, etc, may be scheduled by the Board.

Changes in dates may be made in order to accommodate speakers' schedules (e.g. such as the situation involving shared presenters). Under no circumstances should a chapter schedule an event on the same day as a different chapter.

Expenses:

If Chapters invite non-member speakers, the individual Chapter is expected to pay their expenses, if any. Expenses beyond those of regular meals, must be approved by the CEO, after review and approval by the Treasurer.. Normally, we avoid paying honorariums or fees to speakers. Rare exceptions include out-of-state professional speakers.

Program Format:

- It is essential that each Chapter provides for a definite order of business at its regular meetings, with provision for a speaker / program as well as networking. **The central focus must be on business ethics and related subject matter.**
- Program committee should select a regular member to do a **brief presentation on one of the Guiding Principles at the beginning of each meeting.** This will help ensure that these Principles are continually emphasized.
- Continuing education credits should be offered as often as practical and must be consistent with authorizing organization's guidelines. For example, CPE's for accountants must satisfy all requirements by the Accountancy Board. To ensure consistency and protect the reputation of OK Ethics, approval of CPE recommendations is held by the CEO. It will be contingent on 1) a committee review of CPE guidelines, 2) timeliness of submission of the program description; and 3) a clear connection to the practical application of ethics.

Guidelines for communicating a recommendation for CPE or other certification programs:

- 1) **General program description** that can be used both for PR purposes as well as for demonstrating proof that the program was related to ethics.¹
- 2) **Target audience** (e.g. HR Accounting? Basic or intermediate level?)

¹ *Special Note: Because of the nature of our organization, OK Ethics rigorously strives to abide by certification rules, whether for CPA's or other professional entities. For example, OK Ethics is responsible for maintaining records of the program content and attendance for a five year period under OAB rules. Certain specifications must be met, such as programs must be 50-minutes and focused on ethics.*

- 3) **Specifically demonstrate how the program benefits the participants in terms of enhancing their knowledge of ethical practices**, character or integrity. What are the take-aways or skills gained?
- 4) **Qualifications of speaker:** Establish his/her expertise in the topic area, as it relates to ethics (e.g. best practices, research, business model).

Program / Speaker Ideas:

Any member may submit recommendations directly to the Program Committee or the Board of ideas for program, format changes, specific speakers or to request topics of interest for future programs.

Speaker's Bureau:

Chapters should make available, to groups in their community, speakers who can effectively talk about ethics. i.e. a program about OK Ethics' mission, resources, etc.