



# CODE OF ETHICS AND CONDUCT

## I. INTRODUCTION

As a matter of fundamental principle, Voices of Omaha (VOO) shall adhere to the highest ethical standards because it is the right thing to do. As a matter of pragmatic self-interest, VOO shall do so because public trust in our performance is the bedrock of our legitimacy. Donors and volunteers support this charitable organization because they trust us to carry out our mission, to be good stewards of their resources, and to uphold rigorous standards of conduct.

Voices of Omaha must earn this trust every day and in every possible way. But organizations are, at base, people, and it is up to the people of Voices of Omaha—board members, executive leaders, staff and volunteer chorus members—to demonstrate their ongoing commitment to the core values of integrity, honesty, fairness, openness, respect, and responsibility. This Code of Ethics is a document with which all of VOO’s directors, staff and volunteers are familiar and to which they adhere.

Adherence to the law is the minimum standard of expected behavior. Nonprofit organizations must do more, however, than simply obey the law. We must embrace the highest standards of integrity. Transparency, openness and responsiveness to public concerns are integral to our behavior.

## II. STATEMENT OF VALUES

Any code of ethics is built on a foundation of shared values. VOO values:

- The role of VOO in the community (including relevance and outcomes)
- Innovation and artistic excellence (including partnerships, collaboration, and commitment)
- Diversity and inclusiveness
- Accountability and transparency (including openness, honesty, trust and integrity)
- Development of audience and chorus with an emphasis on education and age-diversity

These values lead directly to the Code of Ethics that follows. These values inform and guide the actions that VOO takes in developing our policies and informing our practices.

### **III . THE CODE OF ETHICS**

#### **A. Personal and Professional Integrity**

VOO staff, board members and chorus members shall act with honesty, integrity and openness in all their dealings as representatives of the organization. VOO promotes a working environment that values respect, fairness and integrity.

#### **B. Mission**

The mission of Voices of Omaha is to present an annual performance of Handel's *Messiah* without admission charge as a gift to the community.

Voices of Omaha is committed to development of a diverse audience and chorus membership by maintaining relevance in the present, and nurturing musicians of all ages to assure an audience and chorus for the future.

All of VOO's programs support that mission and all who work for or on behalf of the organization understand and are loyal to that mission and purpose. The mission is responsive to the constituencies and communities served by VOO and of value to the society at large.

#### **C. Governance**

VOO has an active Board of Directors, which is responsible for setting the mission and strategic direction of the organization and oversight of the finances, operations, and policies of the organization. The Board of Directors:

- Ensures that its board members have the requisite skills and experience to carry out their duties and that all members understand and fulfill their governance duties acting for the benefit of VOO and its public purpose;
- Has a conflict of interest policy that ensures that any conflicts of interest or the appearance thereof are avoided or appropriately managed through disclosure, recusal or other means; and
- Is responsible for the hiring, firing, and regular review of the performance of the Artistic Director, and ensures that the compensation of the artistic director is reasonable and appropriate;
- Ensures that the President and appropriate officers and staff provide the governing body with timely and comprehensive information so that the governing body can effectively carry out its duties;
- Ensures that the organization conducts all transactions and dealings with integrity and honesty;
- Ensures that the organization promotes working relationships with board members, staff, volunteers, and program beneficiaries that are based on mutual respect, fairness and openness;
- Ensures that the organization is fair and inclusive in its hiring and promotion policies and practices for all board, staff and volunteer positions;
- Ensures that policies of the organization are in writing, clearly articulated and officially adopted;
- Ensures that the resources of the organization are responsibly and prudently managed; and,
- Ensures that the organization has the capacity to carry out its programs effectively.

#### **D. Legal Compliance**

VOO is vigilant in maintaining compliance with laws, regulations and applicable conventions that govern and regulate our organization.

#### **E. Responsible Stewardship**

VOO manages its funds responsibly and prudently. This includes the following considerations:

- It spends a reasonable percentage of its annual budget on programs in pursuance of its mission;
- It spends an adequate amount on administrative expenses to ensure effective accounting systems, internal controls, competent staff, and other expenditures critical to professional management;
- VOO compensates staff, and any others who may receive compensation, reasonably and appropriately;
- VOO has reasonable fundraising costs, recognizing the variety of factors that affect fundraising costs;
- VOO maintains an appropriate level of funds to fulfill our mission and purpose and not accumulate excessive reserve funds;
- VOO ensures that all spending practices and policies are fair, reasonable and appropriate to fulfill the mission of the organization; and,
- All financial reports are factually accurate and complete in all material respects.

#### **F. Openness and Disclosure**

VOO provides comprehensive and timely information to the public, the media, and all stakeholders and is responsive in a timely manner to reasonable requests for information. All information about VOO fully and honestly reflects the policies and practices of the organization. Basic informational data about the organization, such as the Form 990, reviews and compilations, and audited financial statements are posted on the VOO website or otherwise available to the public. All solicitation materials accurately represent the organization's policies and practices and reflect the dignity of program beneficiaries. All financial, organizational, and program reports are complete and accurate in all material respects.

#### **G. Program Evaluation**

VOO regularly reviews program effectiveness and has mechanisms to incorporate lessons learned into future programs. VOO is committed to improving program and organizational effectiveness and develops mechanisms to promote learning from its activities and the field. VOO is responsive to changes in its field of activity and the needs of its constituencies.

#### **H. Inclusiveness and Diversity**

VOO has a policy of promoting inclusiveness and its staff, board and volunteers reflect diversity in order to enrich its programmatic effectiveness. VOO takes meaningful steps to promote inclusiveness in its hiring, retention, promotion, board recruitment and constituencies served. VOO does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations. These activities include, but are not limited to, hiring and firing of staff, selection of volunteers and

vendors, and provision of services. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our staff, volunteers, subcontractors, vendors, and clients.

## **I. Fundraising**

VOO raises funds from the public and from donor institutions and is truthful in solicitation materials. VOO respects the privacy concerns of individual donors and expends funds consistent with donor intent. VOO discloses important and relevant information to potential donors.

In raising funds, VOO respects the rights of donors, as follows:

- To be informed of the VOO mission, the way the resources will be used and their capacity to use donations effectively for their intended purposes;
- To be informed of the identity of those serving on the VOO governing board and to expect the board to exercise prudent judgment in its stewardship responsibilities;
- To have access to the most recent VOO financial reports;
- To be assured their gifts will be used for the purposes for which they were given;
- To receive appropriate acknowledgement and recognition;
- To be assured that information about their donations is handled with respect and with confidentiality to the extent provided by the law;
- To expect that all relationships with individuals representing organizations of interest to the donor will be professional in nature;
- To be informed whether those seeking donations are volunteers, VOO employees or hired solicitors;
- To have the opportunity for their names to be deleted from mailing lists that VOO may intend to share; and,
- To feel free to ask questions when making a donation and to receive prompt, truthful and forthright answers.

## **IV. AFTERWORD**

While the VOO Board of Directors has given its approval to this document, it will continue to be reviewed and revised as necessary. A code of ethics is, by necessity, general in outlining broad ethical principles.

Adopted by Voices of Omaha Board of Directors: March 8, 2014