

# PMI Ethical Decision-Making Framework (EDMF)

## 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. An ethical dilemma is a situation which has two or more conflicting values, none of which overrides the other. As such, these situations are beyond what is defined by law. In the case of an ethical dilemma, the individual is faced with a choice and needs to make a decision.

## Purpose

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

Comments or questions about this PMI EDMF document can be provided via email to the PMI Ethics Insight Team (EIT): [EthicsInsight@pmi.org](mailto:EthicsInsight@pmi.org).

## Background and Context

Efforts by PMI global ethics teams continue to increase awareness of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (Code). This framework builds on ethics awareness levels by focusing on members' ethical decision-making capability and accountability. The PMI EDMF was developed as a companion to the Code, to guide ethical behavior.

The PMI EDMF team conducted a worldwide ethical decision-making benchmarking of dozens of organizations. Feedback to draft versions of the PMI EDMF was incorporated from PMI leaders at the 2011 North American Leadership Institute Meetings, from PMI members at the 2011 North American Global Congress, from members of various global PMI Ethics committees, from responses to PMI member surveys, and from the PMI Board of Directors (BoD). (PMI volunteer team: Michael O'Brochta,

Giusi Meloni, Shobhna Raghupathy, Peter Pfeiffer, Ethics consultant, Marty Taylor, 2011). The document was updated based on recent research to improve the effectiveness of the EDMF\*.

## 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 PMI EDMF to challenge themselves with additional steps and questions.

\* Denney, V. P. & Merritt, D. M. (2020, September/December). Improving ethical decision making: Through the lens of graduate project management students. *Journal of Modern Project Management* 8 (24), 138-141. <https://doi.org/10.19255/JMPM02411>

The following describes the PMI EDMF steps.

