



Council for Certification in  
Volunteer Administration

Excellence • Ethics • Education

# **Sticky Situations:** *Applying Ethics to Your Work with Volunteers*

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# What is “Ethics?”

- A set of principles that define behavior as right, good and proper (*Josephson Institute for Ethics*)
- “Ethics” and “Values” are not the same
- NGO’s & businesses have codes of ethics
- Ethics can mean different things to different people
- Ethical dilemmas occur when ethical values clash

# Each of us carries an ethics backpack...



# What's in my ethics backpack?



# Historical Context

- 1970s - First “Statement of Professional Ethics” developed by Association for Volunteer Administration (AVA)
- Late 1990s - Major revision and update based on Josephson Institute of Ethics research
- 2006 - Ethics material transferred to CCVA
- 2016 - Updated by CVA task force to ensure relevance and usefulness to the field.

# Ethical Values for Volunteer Engagement Professionals



# Professional Values and Principles

**CITIZENSHIP:** The Administrator of Volunteers understands that volunteerism is a foundation of civil societies and guides the organization and its stakeholders toward active community participation.

- Philosophy of Volunteerism
- Social Responsibility
- Philanthropy

# Professional Values and Principles

**RESPECT:** The Administrator of Volunteers acknowledges the inherent value, skills and abilities of all individuals and affirms the mutual benefit gained by the volunteer and the organization.

- Dignity
- Inclusivity
- Privacy



# Professional Values and Principles

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** The Administrator of Volunteers demonstrates responsibility to the organization, its stakeholders and the profession of volunteer administration.

- Collaboration
- Continuous Improvement
- Professionalism

# Professional Values and Principles

**FAIRNESS:** The Administrator of Volunteers commits to individual and collective efforts that build and support a fair and just organizational culture.

- Impartiality
- Equity
- Justice

# Professional Values and Principles

**TRUST:** The Administrator of Volunteers maintains loyal and trusting relationships with all stakeholders and is dedicated to providing a safe environment based on established standards of practice.

- Honesty
- Integrity
- Commitment

# Professional Values and Principles

## **CITIZENSHIP**

Philosophy of  
Volunteerism  
Social Responsibility  
Philanthropy

## **RESPECT**

Dignity  
Inclusivity  
Privacy

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Collaboration  
Continuous Improvement  
Professionalism

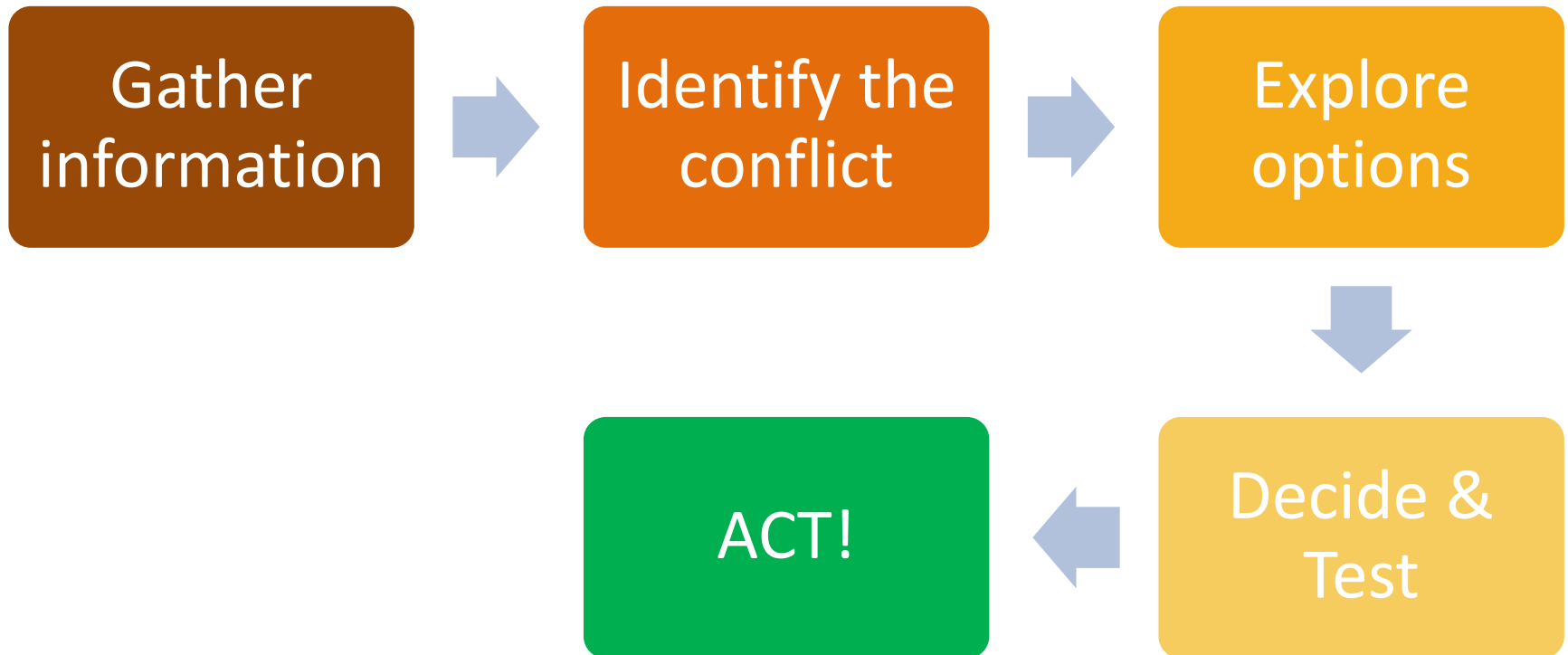
## **FAIRNESS**

Impartiality  
Equity  
Justice

## **TRUST**

Honesty  
Integrity  
Commitment

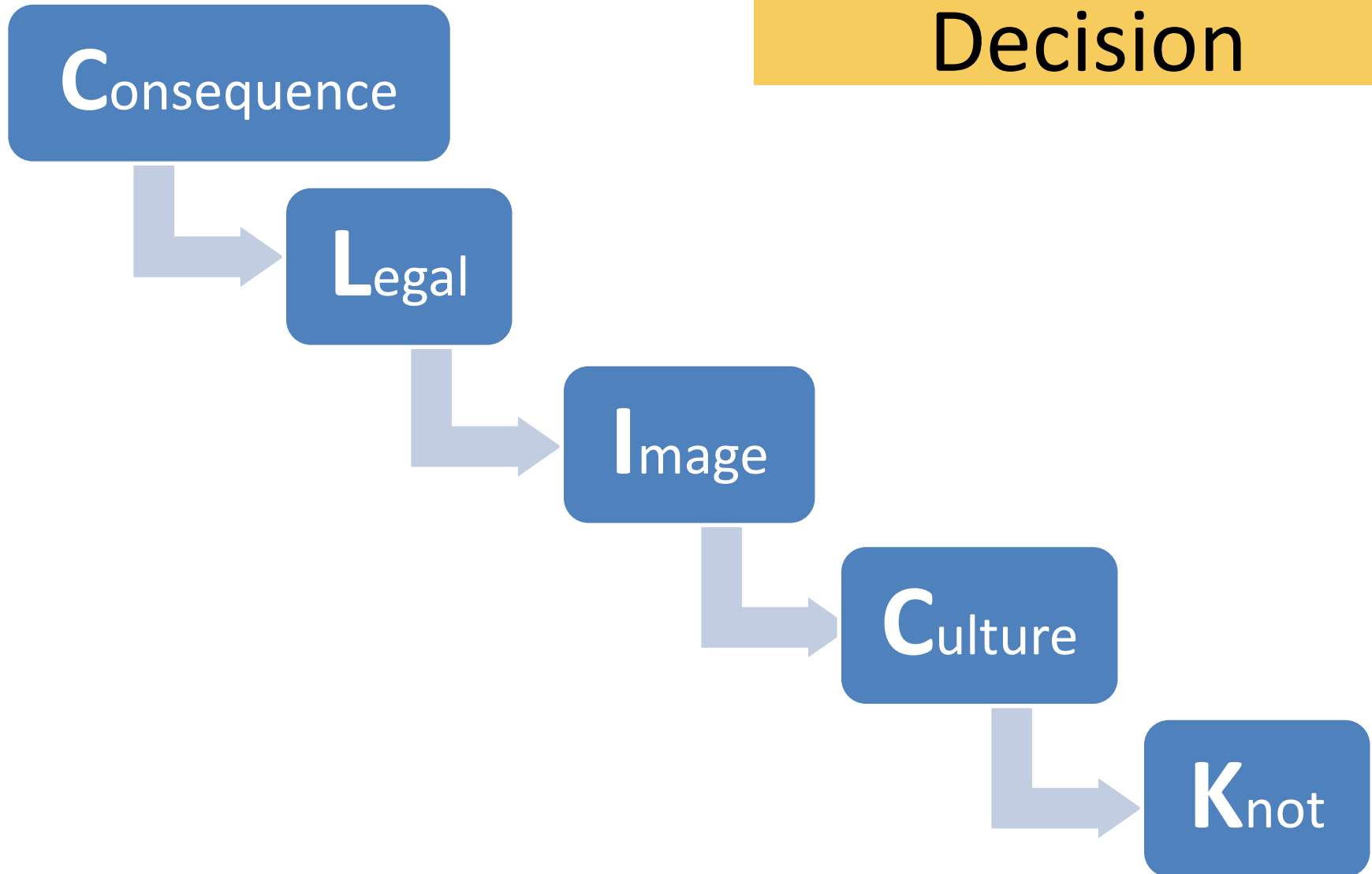
# Ethical Decision Making Process



# Decision Making Steps

- 1. Gather information:** *what led to this situation? who's involved? what else do I need to know?*
- 2. Identify the dilemma:** *which two or more values or principles are at the heart of this dilemma? where is the main tension?*
- 3. Explore various options & consequences:** *what if I did this? what if I didn't do that? who will be affected?*
- 4. Make a decision and test it:** *seek the path of least harm*
- 5. Act** -- *with confidence, courage, professionalism*

# Testing Your Decision



# Decision Making Steps

- 1. Gather information:** *what led to this situation? who's involved? what else do I need to know?*
- 2. Identify the conflict:** *which two or more values or principles are at the heart of this dilemma? where is the main tension?*
- 3. Explore various options & consequences:** *what if I did this? what if I didn't do that? who will be affected?*
- 4. Make a decision and test it:** *seek the path of least harm*
- 5. Act** -- *with confidence, courage, professionalism*



# Breakouts: Real Life Scenarios

- Start to practice the decision-making process
- Grab the hand-out
- Identify a note-taker to report out highlights
- Use discussion questions for assigned scenario
- Discuss through your own organization's lens
- 15 minutes

# Debrief: Real Life Scenarios

- Scenario A: Mandate for diversity
- Scenario B: Application form
- Scenario C: Long-time volunteer
- Scenario D: Self advocacy

*Conversation highlights?*

*Potential learnings?*

*Reflection on the process?*

# Moral Courage

*“Moral courage is the quality of mind and spirit that enables one to face up to ethical dilemmas and moral wrongdoings firmly and confidently, without flinching or retreating.”*

***Rushworth Kidder  
Institute for Global Ethics***

# ***“Exercising” Ethics***



- Post the CCVA Values & Principles near your desk
- Discuss ethics at staff & volunteer orientations
- Devote time at staff or leadership meetings to focus on each ethical principle
- Identify colleagues to serve as your “sounding board”

## ***Resources***



Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration

[www.CVAcert.org](http://www.CVAcert.org)

Independent Sector (*search “Ethics & Accountability” in Resources section*)

[www.independentsector.org](http://www.independentsector.org)

Josephson Institute of Ethics [www.josephsoninstitute.org](http://www.josephsoninstitute.org)

*“Complete Guide to Ethics Management: An Ethics Toolkit for Managers”* by Carter McNamara (free 20 page booklet)

Final  
Questions or  
Thoughts?

