
Member Code of Ethics

Purpose

This Code establishes the ethical standards that guide the professional conduct of INCOSE members. It reflects enduring principles of integrity, responsibility, and professional service, applied to the complex, interconnected systems that shape today's world. Because ethical dilemmas often involve competing values, this Code emphasizes principled judgment over rigid rules. When conflicts arise, members are expected to thoughtfully evaluate decisions using sound ethical reasoning, professional standards, and careful consideration of the broader societal impact of their actions.

Introduction

Systems engineering is a profession grounded in expertise and service to society, bridging disciplines, technologies, organizations, and life-cycle phases. INCOSE members:

- Represent diverse stakeholder interests across cultural, national, and regulatory boundaries
- Influence complex socio-technical systems, from infrastructure and defence to healthcare, climate solutions, and AI-enabled technologies, with long-term consequences for society
- Bear responsibility not only to employers and clients, but to the public and to future generations

The trust placed in our members is significant. With that trust comes enduring responsibility.

Core Ethical Principles

INCOSE members uphold and advance the integrity, honor, and dignity of the systems engineering profession through the following principles:

1. Safety, Health, and Welfare of the Public

Hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public in all professional duties. Raise concerns through the appropriate channels when decisions present unacceptable risk to the public or to future generations.

2. Integrity and Honesty

Act truthfully, transparently, and objectively at all times. Avoid deception, misrepresentation, or omission of material facts. Maintain independence of professional judgment, present findings honestly even when unwelcome, and never allow undue pressure to compromise the integrity of professional advice.

3. Competence and Lifelong Learning

Perform services only within areas of demonstrated competence. Recognize the limits of your expertise and seek qualified support when needed. Commit to continuous professional

development (technical, and ethical) and stay current with emerging technologies and the evolving challenges of the profession.

4. Professional Excellence

Strive to elevate the standards, credibility, and impact of the systems engineering profession. Perform work with rigor and care.

5. Accountability

Accept responsibility for your decisions, analyses, and their consequences. Be open to peer scrutiny and corrective action. Promptly identify and address errors, risks, or unintended consequences. Document your reasoning so that others may learn from and scrutinize it.

6. Sustainability and Stewardship

Give due regard to the long-term environmental, social, and economic sustainability of the systems you help design and deploy. Promote resilient and equitable solutions that consider not just immediate outcomes but their consequences for society and the natural world over time.

7. Equity and Inclusion

Uphold the dignity of all persons and actively promote equitable and inclusive participation in the profession. Engage with and represent diverse stakeholder perspectives. Acknowledge and work to mitigate biases, personal, organizational, or systemic, that may affect professional judgment.

8. Privacy and Discretion

Members recognize that personal, proprietary, and confidential information is entrusted to them in good faith. Discretion in managing such information is an expression of integrity, not merely a compliance obligation. This extends to the responsible handling of data in digital systems and AI tools, where the boundary between personal and professional information is increasingly blurred.

Ethical Decision-Making

Systems engineers regularly encounter situations where professional obligations, employer directives, client interests, and public welfare are in tension. When ethical conflicts arise, members should:

- Revisit the principles of this Code as a primary reference
- Consider the long-term systemic and societal impact of available courses of action
- Seek peer or professional guidance when uncertain
- Document their rationale and decision-making process
- Raise concerns through appropriate channels and, where necessary, escalate to relevant authorities

Ethical competence means asking the right questions, seeking appropriate counsel, and acting with integrity even when the path forward is unclear.

Version History

#	Description	Author	Date
1	New Draft	Adrienne Albregts	25 Feb 2026
2	Revised	Stueti Gupta	June 2026
3	Revised as per comments from BOD	Stueti Gupta	July 2026
4	Revised as per comments from BOD	Stueti Gupta	August 2026