

TITLE: Gratuity (Gift) Policy

Definitions

A "gift" is any item, product, service, favor, gratuity or other benefit that is offered to a Ford County employee or to a member of the employee's family by any person seeking a decision by, or relationship with the County. Examples of gifts include, but are not limited to, products, goods and services, food, beverage, travel, lodging, admission to entertainment venues and events, discounts, cash or the equivalents of cash such as gift cards, vouchers or credits. "Family" means a spouse, parent, sibling, child, or any other relative, if the latter resides in the same household as the County employee.

Prohibition of Gifts

Ford County employees may not solicit gifts, and no employee may accept a gift unless it is specifically authorized by this policy, and then only specifically if the gift is not intended to obligate or influence an employee in any manner concerning the County or County operations and functions. Employees should immediately, politely yet firmly, refuse to accept any gifts or gratuities of other than the nominal value which might obligate or be intended to influence the employee in any manner. However, gifts from relatives or friends, when it is obvious to a reasonable person the gift is not being given because of the individual's employment at Ford County, are not subject to this policy.

Promotional Items, Rewards & Media/Sample Items

Employees are permitted to accept promotional items of nominal values such as coffee mugs, pens, coasters and similar items that vendors distribute to customers. However, gifts or items received from vendors as a "reward or incentive" as the result of a Ford County purchase shall be delivered to the Ford County Clerk and shall accrue to the benefit of the County. Employees are permitted to accept printed materials, media materials such as flash drives, DVD's, videotapes or software, or samples for purpose of evaluation/review so long as the total does not exceed \$25.

Perishable Gifts, Meals, Beverage and Entertainment

Employees are expected to use restraint and good judgment, but are permitted to accept perishable gifts such as holiday food items or flowers with a value of less than \$100. In the course of conducting County business, employees may accept food and beverages offered as a gesture of common courtesy at meals or receptions, and also entertainment when it would be impolite, impractical or uncivil to decline. However, the County expects employees to exercise restraint and good judgment under this exception and to decline to accept or to reimburse for frequent or extravagant food, beverage or entertainment. Employees are expected to obtain the written approval from the County Administrator, preferably in advance, when the value of the food, beverage or entertainment is estimated to be \$100 or more. Under these circumstances the County Administrator must get the written approval of the Chair of the Board of County Commissioners.

Conferences & Speaking Engagements, Travel/Lodging

Under circumstances when a County employee is attending a conference or giving a presentation or speech as a representative of the County, acceptance of recognition in the form of a ceremonial plaque, gift basket or other ceremonial gift is acceptable when a reasonable person would determine it would be unprofessional, impractical or uncivil to decline. In circumstances where the value of the gift is \$100 or more the employee shall either 1) decline the gift or 2) accept the gift on behalf of the County and deliver the gift to the Ford County Clerk so it can be properly accepted and acknowledged as a gift in kind to the County.

County employees should not solicit or accept any gift involving the payment of lodging or travel expenses from any source that is not a state or federal government entity, agency or taxing unit with the exception of 1) when it is obvious to the person accepting such a gift that the gift is not being provided because of the person's employment with Ford County, or 2) when the person's presence at a meeting, conference, seminar, training or event serves a legitimate County purpose or interest and has been prior approved or authorized by the employee's supervisor.

Gifts from Community Constituents

On the occasion that gifts are received by employees in connection with their County duties and responsibilities in appreciation of a particular courtesy or service, such as gifts from or on the behalf of a constituent, or for gifts of a value of less than \$100 it is permissible to accept such gifts. However, for those gifts exceeding \$100 which could not be refused without discourtesy, employees shall either 1) decline or return the gift, or 2) accept on behalf of the County and deliver to the Ford County Clerk for proper acceptance and acknowledgment as a gift in kind to the County.

Other exceptions include such examples related to social or ceremonial gifts that may be presented to County employees in connection with County duties in situations whereby it is awkward, impolite and unacceptable to decline. Examples would include gifts from visiting foreign representatives with a recognized culture of gift giving or gifts in connection with a significant event such as the birth of a child, etc. County employees may accept such social and ceremonial gifts as long as the value of the gift (or all gifts from the same source in any 12 month period) is less than \$100. Such ceremonial and social gifts of \$100 or greater shall be accepted on behalf of the County and delivered to the Ford County Clerk for proper acceptance and acknowledgment as a gift in kind to the County.

Also, as a part of this policy the Financial Conflict of Interest (FCOI) policy is noted and in the unusual circumstance in which both policies are applicable yet in conflict, the FCOI policy shall prevail.

Date of Adoption: October 2, 2017

Review Date(s): _____

