Fostering Integrity, Accountability and Public Trust

BC Public Service

Annual Ethics Report

Fiscal Year 2024/25

BRITISH COLUMBIA
BC Public Service

Where ideas work

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Territorial acknowledgment

The BC Public Service acknowledges the territories of First Nations around B.C. and is grateful to carry out our work on these lands. We acknowledge the rights, interests, priorities and concerns of all Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit), respecting and acknowledging their distinct cultures, histories, rights, laws and governments.

Executive message

As the Head of the BC Public Service, I'm pleased to share the 2024/25 Ethics Annual Report. Each day, I am inspired by the unwavering commitment of BC Public Service employees in delivering essential services with integrity. When employees complete their Oath of Employment and Standards of Conduct, they not only commit to upholding integrity, but to placing ethics at the heart of everything they do.

Our collective ethical leadership is central to fostering public trust by ensuring our work reflects fairness, accountability, inclusion and respect. As our organization remains adaptable and flexible to meet the evolving needs of the province and the people we serve, ethics and integrity remain key pillars of our work.

The 2024/25 report highlights key initiatives and achievements that support ethical decision-making, including training, outreach and the work of ministry ethics advisors. I invite you to explore the report and celebrate the dedication and integrity of BC Public Service employees whose everyday actions foster trust in government and strengthen the communities we serve.

Together, let's continue to lead with vision, uphold ethics as a core principle and ensure the BC Public Service remains a beacon of integrity for the province and beyond.

Shannon Salter

Deputy Minister to the Premier,

Cabinet Secretary and Head of the BC Public Service

Ethics in the BC Public Service

Introduction

The BC Public Service is built on a shared commitment to integrity, accountability and service excellence that fosters public trust. As BC Public Service employees, we're committed to acting in the best interests of people in British Columbia and making decisions which reflect high ethical standards. Ethics in the BC Public Service are shaped by our shared approach to upholding an ethical framework as an organization and are enabled by the commitment and daily choices we all make as BC Public Service employees. This report outlines the foundational ethics documents in the BC Public Service, highlights progress made by ethics partners over the past year and describes the supports available to help employees confidently make ethical decisions.

Ethics foundations

Ethics are the principles guiding how we behave and make decisions. Ethics are also the underlying structures that promote respectful, inclusive and psychologically safe workplaces. In the BC Public Service, our approach to ethics is shaped by 3 core documents outlining our commitments as employees:

- The Oath of Employment
- The Standards of Conduct
- BC Public Service Corporate Values

BC Public Service employees start their careers by swearing or affirming the Oath of Employment. This Oath is a commitment to act with integrity, put the public interest ahead of personal interests and avoid any real or percieved conflicts of interest. It also requires employees to protect confidential information, serve the government fairly and impartially and follow the Standards of Conduct.

The Standards of Conduct establish expectations for all employees to support the core policy objective that "employees exhibit the highest standards of conduct." Complying with these standards is a condition of employment.

The BC Public Service corporate values are an additional piece of the foundation to uphold and strengthen ethics in the BC Public Service. In collaboration with BC Public Service employees, the values of teamwork, curiosity, accountability, courage, passion and service, with an overarching value of integrity were identified as the qualities we hold to the highest regard in our organization (figure 1).

Figure 1: BC Public Service Corporate Values

Ethical culture in practice

Ethical culture is shaped by the everyday decisions, behaviours and interactions of BC Public Service employees throughout the province. The BC Public Service Ethics Framework (figure 2) shows our approach to ethics management is integrated and shared across different teams and individual employees. Under the ethics management framework, ministries and central agencies (Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Citizens' Services and the BC Public Service Agency) have been delivering learning and engagement sessions and supporting employees across the BC Public Service to help grow the culture of integrity and respect by demonstrating how to apply our core documents in practice and supporting employees to confidently apply them in their daily work.

Figure 2: BC Public Service Ethics Management Framework

Ethics partner highlight: Ministry of Finance

Ethics partners across the BC Public Service help foster a culture of integrity, transparency and accountability in all aspects of public sector work. This section highlights the work of the Ministry of Finance and the Office of the Comptroller General (OCG) and the significant amount of work they have done to address ethics and integrity over the last year. The OCG plays a key role in promoting ethical financial management across the BC Public Service. In fiscal year 2024/25, the OCG launched a refreshed version of their Fraud Awareness and Prevention compliance course, and implemented additional financial controls to promote ethical financial management, decision-making and responsible stewardship of public resources.

Additionally, in the last year with the release of the BC Internal Controls Framework (ICF), the OCG reinforced the expectation of ministries to uphold ethics and integrity while delivering government programs and services. The ICF provides clear guidance to help ministries safeguard assets, ensure reliable financial reporting and comply with laws and policies. Throughout the year, the OCG conducted training sessions with Chief Financial Officers and ministry finance staff, integrating ICF principles into core policy updates and supporting ministries in developing their own internal controls. These efforts underscore the importance of ethics in financial decision-making.

Annual Review and compliance courses

Every year, BC Public Service employees are expected to complete the Annual Review online learning course, which includes a refresher on the Oath of Employment, Standards of Conduct and Appropriate Use Policy.

This helps ensure all employees are aware of any updates to these policies and understand their responsibilities in fostering a respectful and ethical workplace. Employees can access the Annual Review course any time, and it takes 15 to 30 minutes to complete. The review is designed to be simple and approachable, and it plays a key role in strengthening a shared understanding of ethics across the BC Public Service.

Completion rates can vary from year to year due to factors such as changes in workforce size and timing of reminders. Since May 31, 2022 the rates have fluctuated up and down, but are currently at a 4-year high of 84 percent (figure 3).

Figure 3: Annual Review Completion Rates

In addition to the Annual Review, BC Public Service employees are expected to complete 3 courses further outlining expectations in the workplace:

- Diversity and Inclusion Essentials builds on the expectations set out in the Standards of Conduct and the responsibility employees share in fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace
- Information Management 117 outlines shared accountabilities and conduct when using information and technology at work
- Fraud Awareness and Prevention has been implemented to help employees better understand what fraud is and how to prevent, detect and report it

Work continues to increase awareness of the Annual Review and other compliance courses and improve reporting capabilities for ministries (figure 4).

Figure 4: Completion Rates (as of March 31, 2025)

Note: the Fraud Awareness and Prevention course was refreshed during this fiscal year, and for that reason a compliance date of August 31, 2024 was used to provide comparable results.

Outreach, training and advisory services

An increased focus on outreach and training is continuing to build an ethical culture in the BC Public Service. The goal of outreach and training is to prevent misconduct and wrongdoing from occurring, by helping employees understand the Standards of Conduct and how they apply in their everyday work, and the importance of asking questions and speaking up when they have concerns.

Outreach

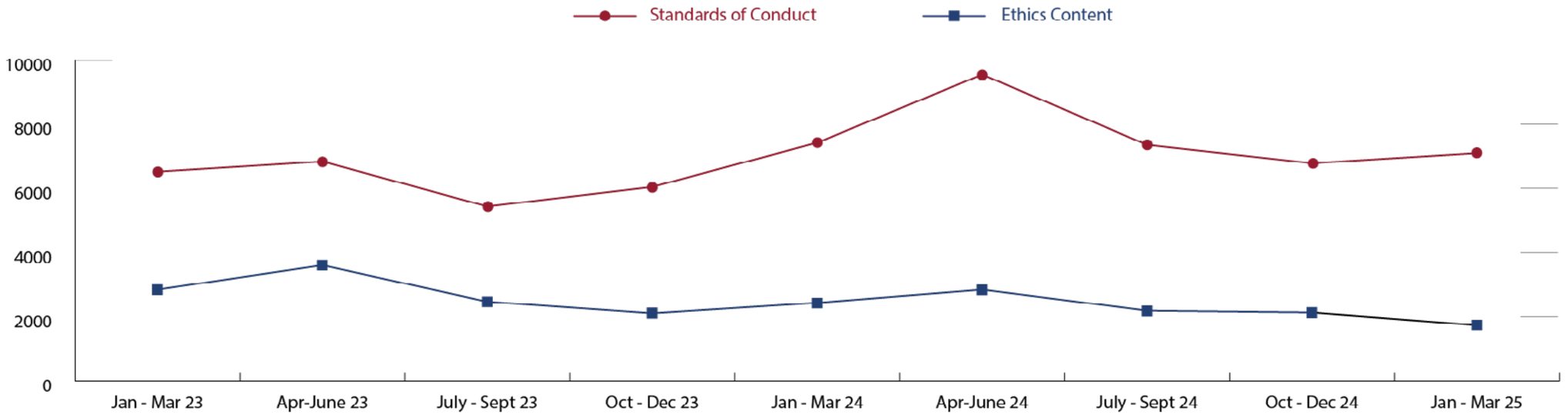
Ministry ethics advisors and the corporate ethics team have been hosting outreach sessions to help BC Public Service employees learn about ethics, ask questions and talk openly about real workplace situations. Outreach happens through many formats, from emails to online video sessions and can cover topics including:

- The Standards of Conduct
- Conflicts of interest
- Respectful workplaces
- Social media use
- Speak-up culture
- The Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA)

Hundreds of sessions have been held since 2018 and are available upon request by contacting a ministry ethics advisor or emailing the corporate ethics team at ethics@gov.bc.ca. This past year alone, the corporate ethics team held 26 sessions reaching over 3,000 employees spanning all lines of business and roles in the BC Public Service.

In addition to direct outreach sessions, the ethics pages on Careers & MyHR include the most relevant and timely ethics information pertinent to BC Public Service employees, people leaders and executives. Figure 5 shows the number of site visits for different ethics related pages on Careers & MyHR from 2022 to 2025.

Figure 5: Number of Visits to Ethics and Standards of Conduct on MyHR Website in 2023 to 2025



Training

There are many opportunities for online learning on a range of ethics topics. Some courses, such as Ethics for Everyone and Conflicts of Interest for Employees, are available to all employees through the LearningHUB. Tailored in-person training is also available for co-op employees, BC Public Service leaders in Bands 4 to 6 roles, ministry ethics advisors and executives. These focused courses are offered regularly to support ethical leadership and strengthen the overall culture of integrity across the BC Public Service.

Ethics advisory service

While prevention is key when it comes to ethics, we know real-world situations can be complex and constantly changing. That's why it's important for employees to have a trusted place to go when they have questions or concerns about ethics.

Every ministry has an appointed ethics advisor. Ministry ethics advisors act as points of contact for ethics-related questions, assist with ministry-specific follow-ups for ethics-related matters where necessary and participate in outreach activities in their ministries. In addition, the corporate ethics advisory service is available as an avenue for ethics inquiries and can be reached by emailing ethics@gov.bc.ca.

If employees have a question or concern about ethics and don't feel comfortable speaking with their supervisors, they are encouraged to reach out to their ministry's ethics advisor. Employees don't need permission to contact them, and each advisor has a confidential email address only they can access. Once an employee reaches out, the ministry ethics advisor will follow up with them directly and help connect them to the right resource(s) to work with the employee to resolve their concern. Figures 6 and 7 include the number of inquiries received from employees since 2020 as well as a breakdown of the different types of inquiries brought forward to ministry ethics advisors and the corporate ethics advisory service over the last year.

Figure 6: Ethics Inquiries FY2020/21 to FY2024/25

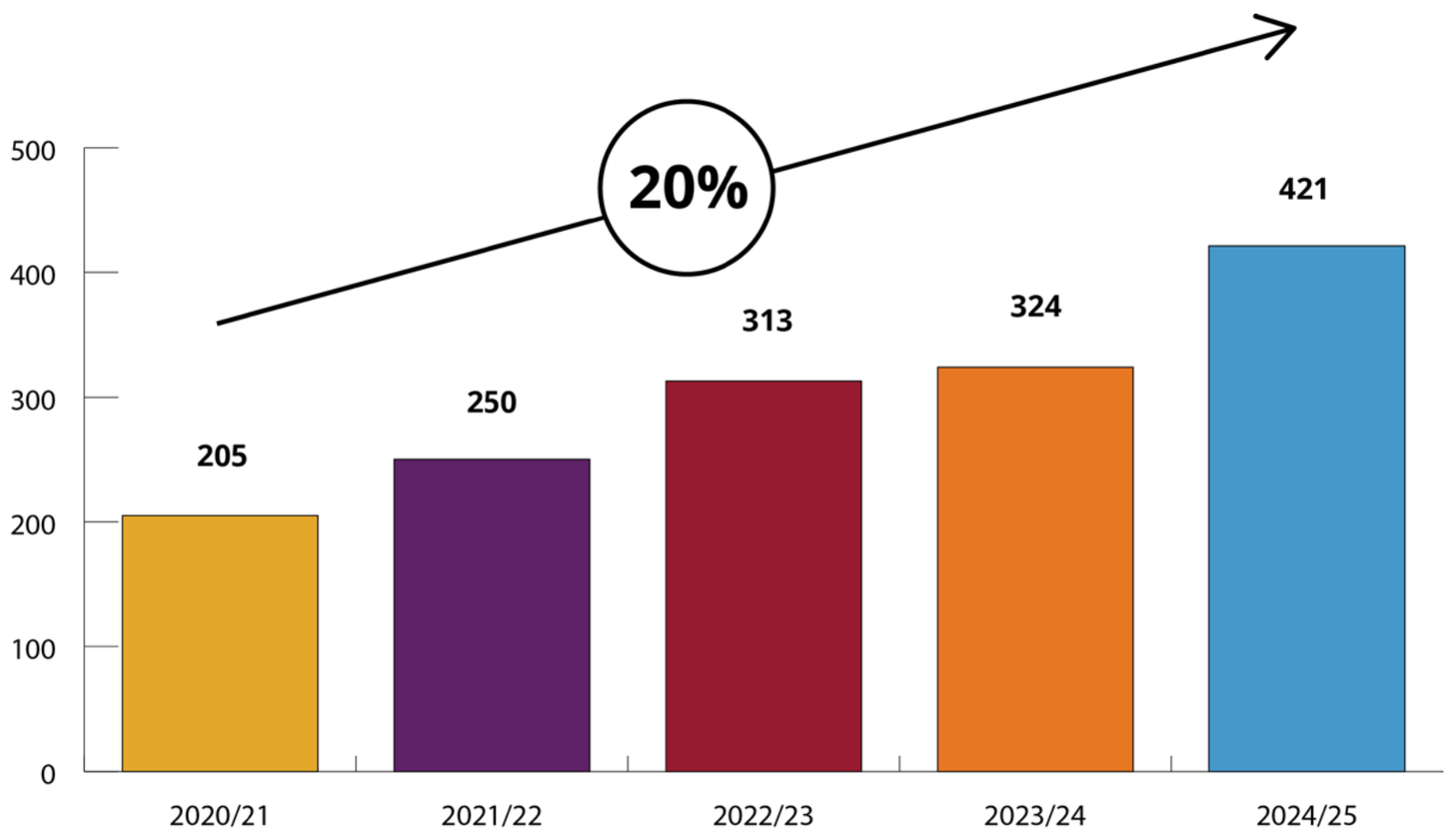
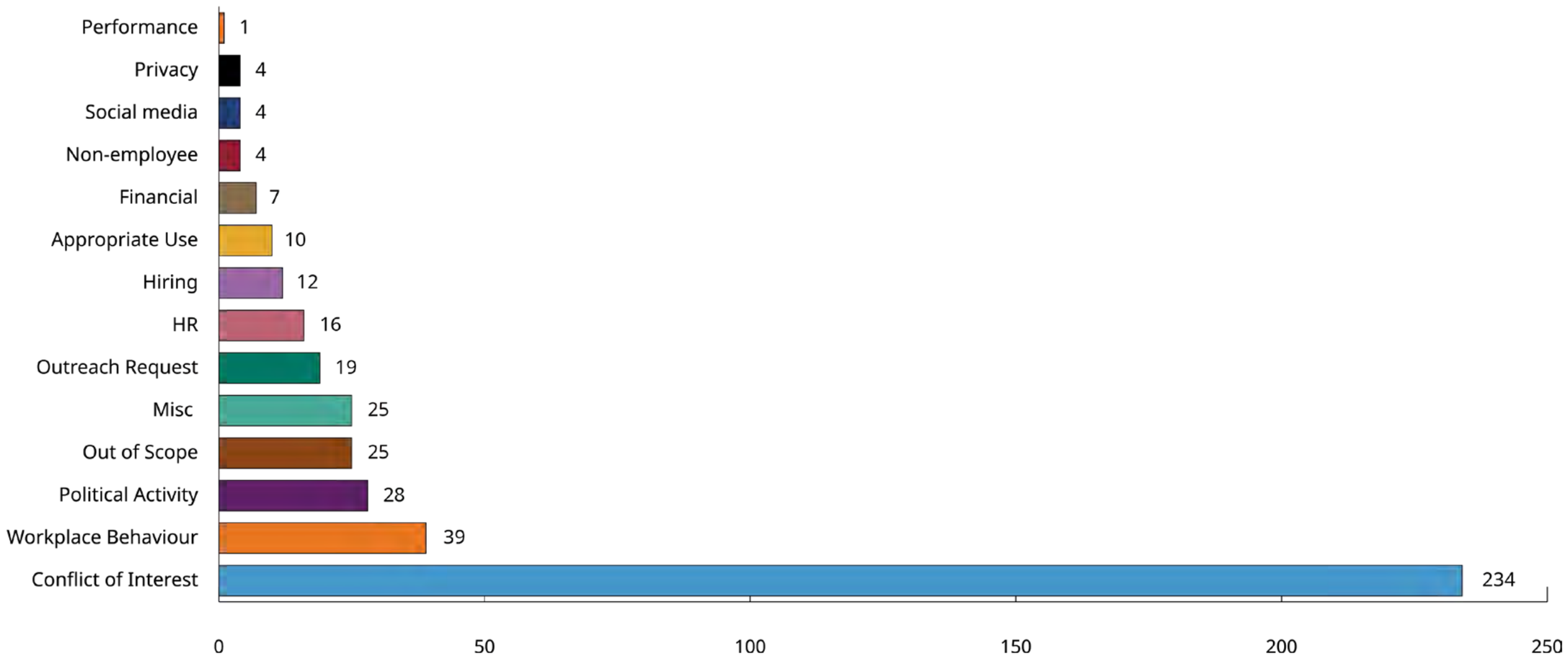


Figure 7: Ethics Inquiries by Category FY2024/25



Our next steps

This report provides all BC Public Service employees with a snapshot of ethics in the workplace. The work is ongoing and continuously adapting to meet changing circumstances. Here are some of the key projects the corporate ethics team is working on over the next year:

- Delivering outreach sessions with increased emphasis on practical examples of dealing with real life ethics issues such as conflicts of interest, speak up culture and social media usage
- Updating ethics-related learning opportunities, including a new course on the Public Interest Disclosure Act and a refreshed version of the Annual Review (Oath of Employment, Standards of Conduct and Appropriate Use Policy) course
- Reviewing and updating conflict of interest guidelines and resources

Appendix A: Ethics resources

Key references and resources related to ethics in the BC Public Service

Legislation

Anti-racism Data Act

Public Interest Disclosure Act

Ethics information and advisory services

Oath of Employment Regulation

Ethics and Standards of Conduct

Talking to Your Employees About Ethics and the Standards of Conduct

Who to Talk to About BC Public Service Employee Ethics

Ethics and Standards of Conduct for Political Staff

Standards of Conduct for BC Public Service Employees

BC Public Service Corporate Values

Conflicts of Interest in the BC Public Service

Social Media Guidelines

Addressing a Respectful Workplace Issue

Policies, Procedures and Guidelines