

City of Austin Ethics Bowl FAQ Sheet

What is an Ethics Bowl?

An Ethics Bowl is an exciting, competitive tournament where two teams compete against each other on a particular ethics topic. A panel of judges scores the arguments of each team and their ability to find weaknesses in the opposing team's argument. The team with the highest score at the end of the round wins.

When is the Ethics Bowl?

The Ethics Bowl coincides with the City's Open Government Symposium on April 17th.

How does it work?

A few weeks before the tournament, a set of case studies and detailed procedures for the tournament is released to all the teams. Teams research the policies that pertain to the case studies and formulate answers to the provided discussion questions. On the day of the tournament, teams are randomly paired for competition. The case studies given in advance are the same case studies used on the day of the competition, although the question that is discussed is a new one that was not previously shared. Teams are given an allotted amount of time to formulate their argument for the new question which is then discussed and judged. Each team competes in more than one round. The winning team is determined by a combination of number of rounds won and total score.

Who are the teams?

The teams are made up of City employees. Each department with less than 300 FTEs will be allowed one team; teams with more than 300* FTEs will be allowed two teams to represent their department. Teams consist of no more than four department employees and one executive level coach.

An executive heat will be conducted for teams of executives. Executive teams have no more than four members and can be from a mix of departments. Executive teams must register with the Ethics & Compliance Team by the registration deadline (see *What is the Deadline for Registering Teams?* below).

*Departments with over 300 FTEs: Austin Energy, Austin Resource Recovery, Austin Water Utility, Aviation, Health & Human Services, Parks & Recreation, Planning & Development Review, Police, and Public Works.

What does the executive coach do?

The executive coach is a member of the department's executive team. The role of the coach is to support the team as they prepare for the competition. A coach does this by being available to answer policy questions, review the team's arguments, and give helpful feedback.

How are the teams made?

The following steps outline how an employee signs up and department teams are chosen.

Step 1: Employees interested in participating contact their department ethics SPOC (see attached list).

Step 2: The SPOCs provide the list of interested employees to their department's executive team for consideration.

Step 3: The executives choose the team participants from the list of interested employees. Preference should be given to employees who are in good standing, who have the support of their immediate supervisors, and whose participation won't negatively impact their workgroup or department services.

Step 4: The department director assigns a coach from his/her executive team.

Step 5: The department SPOC registers the team with the Law Department's Ethics & Compliance Team.

What is the deadline for registering teams?

Department SPOCs must register their team with the Ethics & Compliance Team by March 29th.

Do employees need to take vacation time to participate?

No. Preparing for, and participating in, the Ethics Bowl is considered work time. Employees do not take vacation or personal time to prepare or participate.

What are the topics of the case studies?

The case study topics will vary, although all will be connected to City policies, such as conflicts of interest, outside employment, use of City resources, fraud, waste, and abuse.

Is there a prize for the winners?

The winning department gets a huge trophy to display, along with bragging rights, until the next Ethics Bowl the following year. Members of the winning team receive smaller individual trophies.

Does every department have to participate?

No. Directors will not be disciplined or shamed if they don't have a team.

Why should employees participate?

Employees who participate gain exposure both inside, and outside of their department, increase their knowledge of City policies, and get to practice public speaking skills.

What do directors get out of this?

Directors who have participating teams (or who join an executive team to compete) get engaged employees who are learning how to apply City policies to real life situations, an opportunity to boost department pride, and an excuse to unleash some pent-up competitive spirit.

Where do I get more information?

Contact Alicia Olmstead in the Ethics & Compliance Team (974-2201) or your department SPOC.

Department Ethics SPOCs

Department	Contact
Animal Services Office	David Ackerman
Austin Convention Center/Palmer Event Ctr	Monica Hammond
Austin Energy	Sydney Byram
Austin Resource Recovery	Lynn Wolfe
Austin Water Utility	Anna Bryan-Borja
Aviation	Ghizlane Badawi
Building Services	Julie Nicolson
Capital Planning Office	Liane Miller
City Auditor	Nathan Wiebe
City Clerk	Myrna Rios
CMO/ACMO	Rose Marie Martinez
Code Compliance	Elaine Garrett
Communications & Technology Mgmt.	Peggy MacCallum
Communications and Public Information	Dave Matustik
Community Court	Susan Requejo
Contract Management	Melissa Pool
Economic Growth & Redevelopment Svcs.	Olivia Parker
Emergency Medical Services	Paul Hafner
Financial Services (Budget, Controller, Purchasing, Treasurer Offices)	Lauren Brumley
Fire: non-sworn	JoBeth Prentice
Fleet	Deanna Davidson
Governmental Relations	Mary Contreras
Health & Human Services	Francine Gertz
Human Resources	Sarah Chen
Labor Relations Office	Janet Morris-Parker
Law	Alicia Olmstead
Library	Shea Denny
Management Services	Rose Marie Martinez
Municipal Court	Rebecca Stark
Neighborhood Housing & Community Dev.	Rebecca Kennedy
Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Mgmt	Sonia Goodman
Office of Real Estate Services	Andrew Miller
Office of the Police Monitor	Louis Gonzales
Parks and Recreation	Tino Garcia
Planning & Development Review	John Beasley
Police: non-sworn	Lakshmy Haridas
Public Works	Robin Murray
Small and Minority Business Resources	Thomas Owens
Sustainability Office	Lucia Athens
Telecommunications & Regulatory Affairs	Paul Lewis
Transportation	Max Eby
Watershed Protection	Mike Ihnat