



**SHARED ETHICS ADVISORY COMMISSION**  
SERVING NWI SINCE 2005

## 20 YEARS OF ETHICS TRAINING



**CREATION:** It was the Monday of Thanksgiving week 2005, November 21<sup>st</sup> to be exact. The temperature that evening was in the low 40s and the sky was overcast. But inside Teibel's restaurant, the spirit was lively and upbeat. Local history was being made. That evening, the town councils of Highland and Munster and the city council of Crown Point met together. A meeting of three councils at the same time and place is unusual, but these three communities had a common purpose: adoption of an interlocal agreement creating the Shared Ethics Advisory Commission (SEAC). They also approved the Code of Shared Ethics and Values which serves as the basis for SEAC's ethics training programs.

**FORMATION:** In the years between 2006 and 2010, SEAC began defining itself and its mission. In the earliest years, SEAC hosted general meetings discussing the concept of ethics, but soon realized that an organized training curriculum was needed. With the help of volunteers from Calumet College and Purdue Northwest, the first training curriculum was developed; volunteer trainers recruited from the staff of member communities; and formal ethics training began on an individual community basis. During this time, two additional communities joined SEAC, bringing the number to a total of five



**GROWTH:** SEAC's second five years was a period of rapid growth with a total of 17 additional communities joining between 2011 and 2015. To mark SEAC's fifth anniversary, they hosted the first Ethics Summit open to the general public free of charge. There has been an Ethics Summit every year since then except the COVID year of 2020. During this second period, SEAC began specialized ethics training for department heads and private citizens serving on their community's boards and commissions. During each election cycle, SEAC also initiated the Candidates Ethics Action Pledge asking every local candidate to sign, indicating their support of ethics training and whistleblower protection.

**Bringing Ethics Awareness and Training to NWI for 20 Years**

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**MATURITY:** During the years between 2016 and 2020, SEAC continued to offer and improve all the ethics training developed in the earlier periods. SEAC also welcomed two new member communities. See the full listing of SEAC's 22-member communities the website [sharedethics.com](http://sharedethics.com). Internally, SEAC reorganized its structure. Previously, SEAC acted as a committee of the whole, but with the increasing membership and the variety of ethics training programs, a division of labor was needed. Three committees were formed – Training, Communication, Summit Planning and these are overseen by an executive committee consisting of the Commission president, vice president and committee chairs.



**RENAISSANCE:** Much of SEAC's training came to a halt during the period of COVID lockdown. SEAC took this pause as an opportunity to improve the presentation materials and refresh the SEAC logo and website. An all-new training curriculum was developed combining computer-based and in-person training. And a handy reference booklet was developed in 2021. This Ethics Guide is intended for distribution to every employee of SEAC member communities along with a copy of the Code of Shared Ethics and Values.

**TODAY:** 20 years later, SEAC is still going strong. SEAC is an all-volunteer organization that arranges ethics training for communities that wish to join. This practical ethics training includes programs for front-line employees, department heads and private citizens serving on their community's boards and commissions. SEAC also hosts an annual Ethics Summit open free-of-charge to the general public. Also, during each local election, candidates are asked to commit to providing ethics training and strong whistleblower protection.



**WHAT CAN YOU DO?** Promoting ethics in local government requires the involvement of everyone. Ask your local political leaders if your town, city or county is a member of SEAC. If so, thank them. If not, ask them why not.

**TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

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