

# What's In a Name?

**Calvin Bellamy**  
Guest Contributor

Do names and symbols matter? Shakespeare tells us about a rose by any other name smells as sweet. Yet, much effort and many advertising dollars are spent promoting a product name or introducing a new logo. So, both—name and symbols—must matter.

It is in this spirit, I thought it might be worth focusing on the name "Shared Ethics Advisory Commission" and its new logo. The Commission is also known as SEAC for convenience because our name is so long. Even so, every word of our name carries meaning.

**Shared:** This first word announces our overall approach. Working together we can achieve greater results. In SEAC's case, twenty-three local towns, cities, and counties have come together for the shared goal of promoting ethics in local government. Each member community has adopted the same Code of Shared Ethics and Values. Our ethics training flows from that document.

**Ethics:** Some say ethics is just a matter of common sense. How I wish that were true. Generally, people want to do the right thing in the right way all the time. This is certainly true of people in public service. The trouble is so much of human activity falls in the gray area between black and white choices. People need a framework to assist them in assessing a particular circumstance they may be facing. People are better able to act ethically if they have been trained on the basics of

ethical decision-making. This is what SEAC does in our various training programs.

**Advisory:** The third word in our name alerts everyone to the fact that SEAC is only a part, albeit an important part, of the effort to achieve an ethical culture. The first step in establishing an ethical workplace or society is to let people know what is expected of them. By use of realistic sample situations, SEAC training can be helpful to public employees of every rank. But training is only the beginning. There also needs to be a mechanism for unethical situations to be reported (anonymously if appropriate), investigated and if improper behavior is found, to apply the appropriate remedy. SEAC depends on each of our member communities to put in place appropriate personnel policies and then communicate those policies to their employees.

**Commission:** This word explains how SEAC functions. Each member community designates a private citizen to serve on the Commission and Commission members may add a limited number of at large Commissioners to assist with SEAC projects. This all-volunteer group, serving without any compensation, develops and oversees SEAC's ongoing ethics training, hosts an annual Ethics Summit and challenges all candidates for local office to commit to providing their employees with ethics training and effective whistleblower protection.

**Logo:** The preceding paragraphs use the words of our name to define what SEAC is.



There is no way a symbol or logo can capture all that material. So, our logo simply shows our geographic area (Northwest Indiana) and uses the image of a flame to symbolize the enlightenment that comes from ethics training. The logo repeats our name and our founding year to remind anyone seeing our logo who we are and that we have been training ethics decision-making for nearly 20 years. Our work will never be done.

Hopefully, the preceding information has given you a better idea of SEAC and what we do. Perhaps you will be encouraged to tell any local official you meet that SEAC's work is important to you personally and to the well-being of your community.

**Special note:** you can join SEAC at its annual Ethics Summit on Thursday, Oct. 24, at Avalon Manor, located at 3555 U.S. 30, Merrillville. Registration is from 8 to 8:30 a.m. The program begins at 8:30 a.m. and ends at 11:30 a.m. This event is free and open to the public. Register online at [sharedethics.com](http://sharedethics.com) by Friday, Oct. 11.

*Calvin Bellamy, a lifelong resident of Northwest Indiana, is a retired banker and attorney and currently is SEAC's President Emeritus.*