



American Culinary Federation Ethics Committee Policies and Procedures Operations Manual Updated October 2025 / BOD Approved January 19, 2026

American Culinary Federation, Inc. • Attention: Administration • 6816 Southpoint Pkwy, Ste 400 • Jacksonville, FL 32216 • (800) 624-9458 • www.acfchefs.org

Purpose

The purpose of the Ethics Committee shall be to investigate allegations of unethical conduct on the part of ACF members, in accordance with the procedures set forth in the Bylaws and Operation Manuals

About the ACF

The American Culinary Federation (ACF) and its subsidiaries ACF Educational Foundation (ACFEF), a 501(C)(3) Foundation, and its subsidiaries. is a nonprofit New York corporation, tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue Code. It is the premier professional chefs' organization in North America, advancing and promoting professionalism, leadership, and collaboration within the culinary industry.

These Procedures are intended to specify the appropriate action to be taken by ACF in response to alleged violations by ACF members of ACF's Code of Professional Ethics, the ACF Bylaws, and to ensure due process under the law as set forth in these Procedures.

Overview

The Ethics Committee is responsible for promoting and upholding the highest standards of ethical conduct within the organization. The Committee provides guidance on ethical matters, reviews potential conflicts of interest, and ensures compliance with established codes of conduct and organizational values. The Ethics Committee will safeguard the integrity and reputation of the organization by ensuring that all activities, decisions, and relationships reflect fairness, honesty, and accountability.

Responsibilities

- Develop, review, and recommend policies related to ethical behavior, conflicts of interest, and professional conduct.
- Review and address reported ethical concerns or violations in a fair and confidential manner.
- Provide advice and recommendations to the ACF Board or leadership on ethical matters as requested.
- Oversee annual disclosures of potential conflicts of interest by board members, staff, and volunteers.
- Promote awareness and understanding of ethical standards through communication and training.

Qualifications for Committee Members

The Ethics Committees shall be comprised of five (5) members as stipulated in the American Culinary Federation Bylaws. They will be subject to the following qualifications:

- They shall be currently paid members in good standing and maintain such status while holding office.
- They shall be a Professional Culinarian or Senior Professional Culinarian member.



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- They shall be a member of a chapter and reside within the region in which they have been elected to serve.
- The Committee members shall not hold any other elected national office or serve on any other committee and/or commission. The elected member will resign their position prior to the commencement of their term.
- Comply with current ACF Travel Policy

Rules

- The Committee shall accept the Policies and Procedures to govern their activities and give input on any future changes to these procedures.
- These Policies and Procedures shall be approved by the ACF Board of Directors prior to their effective date.
- All committees, both appointed and elected shall determine a quorum as defined by the ACF Bylaws, prior to the start of any meeting. If a quorum cannot be established at the time of the meeting, no official business can be voted on. The committee chair may reschedule a meeting for a time when a quorum can be established.

Limitation of Authority:

The committee shall not have authority over:

- The filling of vacancies on the Board of Directors or in any committee.
- The fixing of compensation of the members of the Board of Directors for serving on the Board of Directors or on any committee.
- The amendment or repeal of the Bylaws or the adoption of new bylaws.
- The removal of any officer, director or ACF member.
- The amendment or restatement of the Certificate of Incorporation.
- The adoption of a plan or merger or consolidation with another corporation.

Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality, and Compliance Requirements

All members must have the following on file with ACF:

- Signed NDA.
- Current COI disclosure form.
- Signed acknowledgment of this Operations Manual.

Anti-Harassment

Compliance with the ACF Anti-Harassment policy and completion of required training is mandatory.



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Travel

- The Committee Chair or designated representative shall, and its members may, attend any ACF-hosted meeting, including but limited to the ACF Board of Directors' meeting, ACF Board of Governors' meeting, ACF National Convention, recognized commission or committee meetings as requested by the ACF National President.
- If requested, the Committee Chair or designated representative attending shall provide a report for any of these meetings at the expense of the ACF.
- All members will abide by the ACF Travel Policy when making any travel plans which are approved by the ACF National President.

Attendance Policy

- All Committee members are expected to attend all meetings, which are convened on an as needed basis.
- Absences: Missing two (2) consecutive meetings triggers a follow-up from the Committee Chair. Three (3) consecutive absences result in ACF Board review and possible dismissal.
- Continuing education hours will be awarded at the end of each term. Committee members who are dismissed from the committee will not be awarded CEHs.

Onboarding

New members must complete:

- Orientation with the Chair and Staff Liaison on the mission, structure, and objectives.
- Review and acknowledgment of this Operations Manual.
- Training in governance responsibilities and reporting expectations.

Duties

Complaints

For actual timelines, please refer to the ACF Ethics Resource Flowchart for Complainant/Respondent (attached)

- The following shall constitute cause for consideration of complaints before the American Culinary Federation Ethics Committee:
 - Violation of the Bylaws, Code, or policies or procedures of ACF.
 - Conviction of a felony or other crime of moral turpitude under federal or state law in a matter related to the practice of, or qualifications for, professional activity.
 - Gross negligence or willful misconduct in the performance of professional services or unethical or unprofessional conduct based on demonstrable and serious violations of the Code of Professional Conduct.
 - Fraud or misrepresentation in the application or maintenance of ACF membership, professional recognition or credential.



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- Any other conduct or action which in the opinion of the ACF is improper or prejudicial to the ACF or is detrimental to the interest and responsibilities of the culinary professions.
- A complaint made against an ACF member shall be made in writing via certified mail, return receipt requested and submitted to the Chair of the Ethics Committee (“Ethics Chair”) and signed by the individual submitting the complaint (“Complainant”), who may or may not be a member of ACF.
- The complaint shall contain details of the alleged activities; the basis for the Complainant’s knowledge of these activities; names and contact information of all persons involved or who may have knowledge of the activities and whether the complaint has been submitted to a court of law, an administrative body or law enforcement authorities.
- The complaint must also cite the section(s) of the ACF Bylaws and/or ACF Policies and Procedures allegedly violated.
- Anonymous complaints will not be accepted.
- After review, if the complaint is found to be valid, the complaint will be presented to legal counsel for review.

Preliminary Review of Complaint

The Ethics Chair, who may act in consultation with the Regional Ethics Chair (“Regional Chair”), the Executive Director and legal counsel, may in the exercise of sound discretion conclude that the complaint contains unreliable or insufficient information or is without merit. In such cases the Ethics Chair may:

- Request additional information or clarification from the Complainant.
- Determine that the complaint is in essence a commercial dispute or not potentially actionable to the degree that would justify bringing it before the Ethics Committee.
 - In that case, the complaint is dismissed with a written notice from the Ethics Chair to the Complainant.
 - If a complaint is received that is similar to a complaint already under consideration regarding the same individual by an administrative body, law enforcement authorities or a court of law, the Ethics Committee will generally not process the complaint until a final determination has been issued.

Valid Complaint

- If a submission is deemed by the Ethics Chair to be valid and actionable complaint, the Ethics Chair shall ensure that written notice is provided to the accused ACF member (“Respondent”).
- The notice shall include a copy (or description) of the complaint, any supporting documentation and a copy of the ACD Bylaws, the Code and these Procedures.
- The notice should also state that the Respondent has thirty (30) days from receipt to respond to the complaint in writing and to submit copies of all relevant materials.



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- The response must be signed by the Respondent.
- If the Ethics Chair does not receive a response, he/she will attempt to contact the Respondent by telephone.
- If contact with the Respondent is still not made, a second written notice will be sent.
- Failure to reach the Respondent will not prevent the Ethics Committee from proceeding with the investigation or reaching a decision.

Review of Complaint

- For each complaint that the Ethics Chair concludes is valid and actionable, the Ethics Chair shall authorize an investigation into its specific facts and circumstances.
- The Ethics Chair shall appoint the member of the Ethics Committee within the region in which the Respondent is an ACF member, as well as one or more additional members of the Ethics Committee (the "Investigatory Subcommittee") to conduct the initial investigation.
- The Ethics Chair shall also appoint an Investigatory Subcommittee Chair. The Ethics Chair exercises general supervision over all investigations.
- Both the Complainant and the Respondent may be contacted for additional information with respect to the complaint.
 - The time for providing such additional information shall be established by the Investigatory Subcommittee.
 - The Investigatory Subcommittee may at its discretion contact other individuals who may have knowledge of the facts and circumstances surrounding the complaint and conduct other research and investigation as appropriate.
 - ACF staff and legal counsel may participate in the investigation as determined by the Ethics Chair.
- All investigations and deliberations under these Procedures are conducted in confidence, with all communication marked "Confidential," and they are conducted objectively, without any indication of prejudice.
- An investigation may be directed toward any aspect of a complaint that is relevant or potentially relevant.
- If any person responsible for, or asked to investigate or adjudicate, an ethics complaint has a conflict of interest, s/he should disclose the fact to the Ethics Chair and recuse him/herself from any participation in the investigation and adjudication of the complaint.

Determination of Violation:

- Upon completion of an investigation the Investigatory Subcommittee recommends whether the Ethics Committee should make a determination that there has been a violation.
 - If the Investigatory Subcommittee recommends against a determination that a violation has occurred, the complaint is dismissed with written notice to the Respondent and the



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Complainant.

- When the Investigatory Subcommittee recommends that the Ethics Committee find a violation, the Investigatory Subcommittee also recommends imposition of an appropriate sanction.
 - If the Investigatory Subcommittee so recommends, a proposed determination with a proposed sanction is prepared under the supervision of the Ethics Chair and is presented by a representative of the Investigatory Subcommittee to the Ethics Committee along with the record of the Investigatory Subcommittee's investigation, including the findings of the Investigatory Subcommittee and the specific provisions of the Code, the ACF Bylaws, and/or the ACF policies and procedures violated.
- A copy of the recommendations of the Investigatory Subcommittee, including its findings and the alleged violation, is also sent to the Respondent, who may provide a written response to the Ethics Chair within thirty days of receipt.
- The Respondent is advised of the date that the Ethics Committee will consider the recommendation and, at the discretion of the Ethics Chair, may have the opportunity to address the Ethics Committee as provided in these Procedures.
- The Ethics Committee reviews the recommendation of the Investigatory Subcommittee regarding any violation and sanction, and may accept, reject, or modify the Investigatory Subcommittee's recommendation, either with respect to the determination of a violation or the recommended sanction to be imposed.
- Formal hearings are not held, and the parties are not formally represented by counsel, although the Ethics Committee may consult ACF's counsel.
 - There is no requirement for an in person hearing or meeting, although the Ethics Committee may meet by conference call and, at the discretion of the Ethics Chair, the Respondent may be permitted to address the Ethics Committee during such a conference call, and the Respondent's legal counsel may be permitted to participate to assist the Respondent in accordance with procedures determined by the Ethics Chair.
 - The deliberations of the Ethics Committee shall be confidential, with ACF staff and legal counsel permitted to participate as determined by the Ethics Chair.
- If the Ethics Committee makes a determination that a violation has occurred, this determination and the imposition of a sanction are promulgated by written notice to the Respondent, including the findings of the Ethics Committee and the specific provisions of the Code, Bylaws, and/or policies and procedures violated.
 - This determination shall be final unless appealed and notice of the determination and sanction is provided to the Respondent, with notice of the opportunity to appeal as provided by these Procedures. All determinations that violations have occurred shall be reported to the ACF Board of Directors by the Ethics Chair.



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Sanctions

Any of the following sanctions may be imposed upon a member determined to have committed a violation, although the sanction applied must reasonably relate to the nature and severity of the violation, focusing on reformation of the conduct of the member and deterrence of similar conduct by others:

- **Censure:** A written reprimand expressing disapproval of conduct. It carries no loss of membership and may be public or private.
- **Counseling/Probation:** A directive to allow for correction of behavior specified in complaint. It may include mandatory participation in remedial programs. Failure to successfully complete these programs may result in other disciplinary actions being taken. It carries no loss of membership. Counseling/probation may be public or private.
- **Suspension:** Temporary loss of membership and all benefits and privileges for a specified time. At the end of the specified suspension period, membership is automatically restored. Suspension is a public action.
- **Termination of Membership:** Loss of membership, and loss of all benefits and privileges. Members who have had their membership revoked may not be considered for ACF membership in the future.

Appeal

- Within thirty (30) days from receipt of notice of a determination by the Ethics Committee, the Respondent may submit to the Chairperson of the ACF Board of Directors in writing a request for an appeal.
- Upon receipt of a request for appeal, the Board Chairperson, or other officer where the Chairperson has any personal involvement or conflict of interest, appoints an Appeal Board and a Chair consisting of three members of the ACF Board of Directors, none of whom were members of the Investigatory Subcommittee or the Ethics Committee for the same matter. No one with any personal involvement or conflict of interest may serve on the Appeal Board.
- The Appeal Board may only review whether the determination by the Ethics Committee of a violation was inappropriate because of:
 - Material errors of fact
 - Failure of the Investigatory Subcommittee or the Ethics Committee to conform to published criteria, policies, or these Procedures.
- Only facts and conditions up to and including the time of the Ethics Committee's determination are considered during an appeal.
- Written submissions and any reply to submissions may be made by authorized representatives of the Respondent and of the Ethics Committee.
- Submissions are made according to the schedule established by the Appeal Board Chair. Legal counsel is not expected to participate in the appeal process, unless requested by the Respondent



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and approved by the Appeal Board Chair. AC

- ACF and the Appeal Board may consult ACF legal counsel.
- The appeal shall not include a hearing or any similar trial-type proceeding, but the Appeal Board may at its discretion permit an informal oral statement to be made by the Respondent by conference call.
- The Appeal Board conducts and completes the appeal within ninety (90) days after receipt of the request for an appeal.
- Written submissions may be made by the member according to whatever schedule is reasonably established by the Appeal Board.
 - The decision of the Appeal Board, based upon and in compliance with the American Culinary Federation Ethics Committee Policies and Procedures, either affirms, modifies, or overrules the determination of the Ethics related to the practice of or qualifications for professional activity.
 - Gross negligence or willful misconduct in the performance of professional services, or other unethical or unprofessional conduct based on demonstrable and serious violations of the Code of Professional Conduct.
 - Fraud or misrepresentation in the application or maintenance of ACF membership, professional recognition, or credential.
 - Any other conduct or action which in the opinion of the American Culinary Federation is improper or prejudicial to the American Culinary Federation or is detrimental to the interest and responsibilities of the culinary professions.

Quarterly Board Updates

- The Committee Board Member shall provide a formal update at each quarterly (1/4) ACF Board of Directors meeting.

Annual Committee Self-Assessment

- Each year, the CORE Committee conducts a self-assessment of its performance, structure, and effectiveness.
- Results are shared with the Board of Directors, along with recommendations for improvement.

Committee Evaluation by the Board

- The Board of Directors may conduct an external evaluation of the CORE Committee every three years to ensure accountability and alignment.

Election Schedule

- The Ethics Committee, like all standing ACF Board Committees, is elected on a timeline that alternates with the Executive Board.



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- Board Committees (including Finance and Internal Audit) are elected in one cycle. Two (2) years later, the Executive Board is elected.
- This staggered system ensures continuity of governance while maintaining four-year terms for all elected leadership positions.
- A Committee Election page will be placed on ACFCHEFS.org once all candidates have been vetted, that will contain each vetted candidate's name, photo and biography. This information will be accessible to members.

Structure

- The committee comprises five (5) members, one (1) from each region, plus a Chair.
- The Committee Chair will be elected by the majority vote of the ACF membership.
- The Committee Chair is also a member of the ACF Board of Directors with full rights and responsibilities.

Results Notification

Winners are notified by the ACF National Secretary upon verification of results.

Timeline for Committee Chair Elections

Elections are conducted as outlined by the ACF Nominations and Elections Committee.

Regional Committee Members

- Committee members shall be appointed and approved by the ACF Executive Board and Committee Chair in accordance with applicable eligibility, diversity, and service requirements.

Term of Office

- Committee Members and Chair serve one (1) four (4) year term, renewable for a maximum cumulative service of twelve (12) years across any and all board-level roles, this does not preclude service as an appointed committee member.
- The term begins the first Monday following the ACF National Convention.



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Acknowledgment of Receipt

I hereby acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Ethics Committee Operations Manual for the American Culinary Federation (ACF) and the ACF Education Foundation (ACFEF). I understand that it is my responsibility to read and comply with the policies and procedures outlined in this manual.

By signing below, I agree to adhere to the guidelines set forth in this manual during my four (4) year term of service with the Ethics Committee. I also acknowledge my responsibility to maintain confidentiality, avoid conflicts of interest, and uphold the highest standards of professional conduct.

Should I have any questions regarding the content or interpretation of the manual, I will seek clarification from the Committee Chair or designated ACF representative.

Committee Member Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____



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ACF Ethics - Resource Flowchart for Complainant/Respondent

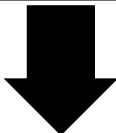
Submit Complaint – Initial Timelines

Submit official notarized letter of complaint to the ACF Ethics Committee Chair. All letters of complaint must be sent by USPS Certified Mail, requiring signature confirmation and proof of delivery. There will be no exceptions to this guideline. Please include the following information: Name(s), addresses, telephone and email address for the complainant and the respondent so correct notifications can be made.

Response to Complainant: Should the written complaint, fully comply with written ACF Ethics guidelines and standards, a written communication shall be generated by the Committee Chair, to the complainant, confirming receipt and identifying next steps of action, within **14 calendar days** of receiving the complaint.

Note: Should the complaint not fully comply with ACF Ethics guidelines and standards, a written communication shall be generated by the Committee Chair, to the complainant, within **7 calendar days** of receipt of the initial complaint. A letter of response, will be sent by USPS Certified Mail, requiring signature confirmation and proof of delivery.

Response to Respondent: Once an official response of receipt, is mailed to the complainant, an official written communication, will be mailed to the respondent, confirming an official complaint against them, within the same **14 calendar days**.

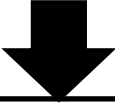


Internal Investigation (60 calendar days)

An internal investigation will begin, for **60 calendar days**, with monthly written communications at the end of each month, updating both the respondent and complainant. All extensions beyond the **60 calendar days**, deadline, and must also be communicated to both parties in writing, with continued updates in writing to both parties, every **30 calendar days**, until the investigation is complete

Communications

Complainant and Respondent are **not** permitted to have any contact and/or communications with each other and/or others, and/or social media, regarding the complaint. All communications will only be directed to the Chair of the Ethics Committee. There will be no direct contact with Ethics Committee members. **Note:** The only exceptions would be with direct Communications to the Chair of the Ethics Committee and/or your respective official advisor/resource person.



Appeal (30 days)

All extensions beyond the **30 calendar days** deadline, must also be communicated to both parties in writing, with ongoing updates, every **30 calendar days**, until the investigation is complete. Appeals will not exceed **90 calendar days**.



Conclusion: Investigation Complete



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Ethics Committee Annual Self-Evaluation Form

Year: _____

Completed By (Committee Member): _____

Date: _____

Please rate the following on a scale of 1–5 (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

Governance & Alignment

1. The Ethics Committee’s objectives were clearly aligned with the ACF Strategic Vision and Goals. 1
2 3 4 5
2. The Chair provided effective leadership and governance oversight. 1 2 3 4 5
3. The committee operated in accordance with its Operations Manual. 1 2 3 4 5
4. Committee decisions were made transparently and in the best interest of ACF membership. 1 2
3 4 5

Member Participation & Accountability

1. Committee members attended and actively participated in required meetings. 1 2 3 4 5
2. Members fulfilled compliance obligations (NDA, COI, acknowledgment, training). 1 2 3 4
5
3. Members contributed equitably to discussions, projects, and initiatives. 1 2 3 4 5

Outcomes & Impact

1. The committee successfully met its annual goals and objectives. 1 2 3 4 5
2. The committee’s work had a positive impact on ACF’s inclusivity and member engagement. 1 2
3 4 5
3. The committee effectively communicated outcomes and recommendations to the ACF Board. 1
2 3 4 5

Improvement & Future Planning

1. What areas of committee performance need improvement?



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2. What additional resources, training, or support would strengthen committee effectiveness?

3. What new initiatives should CORE prioritize next year?

Section 6: Overall Assessment

How would you rate the overall effectiveness of the CORE Committee this year?

Excellent Good Fair Needs Improvement

Signature: _____

Date: _____



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JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title: Ethics Committee Chairperson – Board of Directors

Reports to: ACF Board of Directors, in collaboration with the Executive Director

Position Overview:

The Ethics Chair is an elected leadership role within the ACF Board of Directors, responsible for overseeing the ethical standards and practices that govern the organization. This position is responsible for ensuring that ethical issues are addressed in accordance with ACF's mission, values, and policies. The Ethics Chair will collaborate with the ACF Ethics Committee to guide and resolve ethical concerns, conflicts of interest, and maintain ethical practices within the organization, while ensuring alignment with the ACF Bylaws.

Key Responsibilities:

- **Leadership & Strategy:** Lead the ACF Ethics Committee in developing, reviewing, and implementing ethical guidelines, policies, and procedures that align with ACF's mission, values, and bylaws.
- **Ethical Oversight:** Provide guidance on ethical issues, ensuring ACF's actions, policies, and decisions meet the highest standards of integrity and compliance with organizational values and bylaws.
- **Collaboration with Governance:** Work closely with the Governance Committee to ensure that ethical considerations are integrated into ACF's governance framework, addressing ethical concerns effectively within the organization.
- **Ethics Review & Resolution:** Lead the review and resolution of ethical complaints and conflicts of interest, working with the Ethics Committee to make recommendations on necessary actions, ensuring alignment with ACF's bylaws and policies.
- **Education & Training:** Develop and implement programs to educate ACF staff, board members, and volunteers about the ethical standards and practices expected of them, ensuring these are aligned with the bylaws.
- **Monitoring & Reporting:** Regularly assess the effectiveness of ACF's ethical policies and practices, preparing reports for the Board of Directors on the state of ethics within the organization and ensuring compliance with bylaws.
- **Advocacy:** Serve as a liaison between the ACF and the broader culinary community to promote ethical standards and practices, ensuring that all actions are consistent with the ACF bylaws.
- **Guidance on Ethics Complaints:** Provide guidance to board members, staff, and volunteers when ethical issues or complaints arise, ensuring transparency, fairness, and adherence to bylaws in the resolution process.
- **Confidentiality:** Maintain confidentiality in all ethics-related matters, ensuring that sensitive issues are handled with care, professionalism, and in alignment with the ACF bylaws.



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Qualifications and Skills:

- Experience in Ethics: Proven experience in handling ethical issues and conflicts of interest, ideally within a non-profit, association, or industry-focused organization.
- Leadership: Strong leadership skills with a history of managing committees or teams, particularly in addressing sensitive or complex ethical matters.
- Knowledge of Ethical Standards: In-depth understanding of ethical principles, policies, and best practices as they relate to non-profit organizations, professional associations, and in alignment with ACF's bylaws.
- Communication: Excellent written and verbal communication skills, with the ability to clearly articulate ethical guidelines and issues to diverse stakeholders.
- Problem-Solving: Strong critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, with the capacity to address and resolve complex ethical dilemmas effectively.
- Confidentiality & Integrity: High ethical standards and a commitment to maintaining confidentiality and integrity in all aspects of the role.
- Organizational Skills: Ability to manage multiple initiatives and work collaboratively with committees, board members, and staff.

Additional Requirements:

- Must be a current member of the American Culinary Federation.
- Willingness to travel to board meetings and ethics-related events as required.
- Knowledge of ACF's bylaws, policies, and procedures.
- Knowledge of D&O (Directors and Officers) insurance and liability coverage relevant to Board responsibilities.

Appointment Process:

- This position is an elected position by the ACF membership, in accordance with ACF's bylaws.

Term Length:

- All committee members shall be appointed or elected to four (4) year terms, with terms aligned to ACF's governance cycle in accordance with ACF Bylaws.
- Members may be reappointed or reelected for one (1) additional four (4) year term, for a maximum of eight (8) year's total service on a single committee.

Time Commitment:

- Approximately eight to ten (8-10) hours per month for committee work, board meetings, and ethics-related activities, with increased hours as necessary when reviewing ethical complaints or concerns.