As state employees, we must always maintain a neutral view when considering the actions, behaviors or claims of those with whom we do business.

Maintaining a neutral view does not involve determining whether those we deal with are honest or dishonest, but rather keeping an open and questioning mind. A questioning mind requires a thorough examination of all the facts, withholding judgment pending a methodical and full evaluation, and requiring sufficient documentation to support conclusions. Some refer to this as the “trust but verify” approach.

As we build work relationships with people inside and outside our agencies, it may be increasingly difficult to not let non-neutral views affect our work. Confidence in those we deal with naturally develops. This confidence sometimes prompts us to blindly trust the statements and assertions of others. However, in our role as custodians of state resources, we need to resist that temptation, regardless of the history we may have with certain people. We cannot automatically assume everyone is honest and is always giving us complete and accurate information.

When interacting with outside parties, such as vendors, contractors, or grantees, make sure to receive and review all required paperwork before processing any transactions. If needed, perform periodic reconciliations, investigate identified differences, and resolve them. Ethical external parties should not become defensive or uncooperative when asked for additional explanations or documentation and would understand the need to validate information.

Even when dealing with coworkers, “think twice” - perform due diligence on the information received before acting on it. You may find it difficult to be professionally skeptical of a colleague who may be a friend or who is generally perceived as capable and competent. However, you have a responsibility to question any unclear or unusual items and receive reasonable explanations. Get acquainted with your agency’s appropriate authorities. Feel comfortable talking to them if a coworker is unable or unwilling to provide you with necessary information or documentation to support decisions under your responsibility.

In maintaining a neutral view, consider the following:

- do not ignore your intuition regarding the actions, behaviors or claims of other people
- follow your instincts if something appears incorrect or improper
- obtain additional evidence needed to ensure the information or transaction is accurate and appropriate
- do not be intimidated to ask the questions necessary to make an informed decision.

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Questions?

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