

NATIONAL WOMEN'S COUNCIL



CODE OF CONDUCT FOR BOARD MEMBERS

OF THE

NATIONAL WOMEN'S COUNCIL

NOVEMBER 2025

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FOREWORD

All holders of public office are expected to work to the highest personal and professional standards during the mandate assigned to them following their appointment to offices concerned.

Responsibilities, behaviours and actions towards each other, the organisation, the employees of the organisation and the target public during the term of office of the Board Members at the organisation should be based on principles and ethical standards set out in this document.

It is in this very context that this document, ***the Code of Conduct for Board Members of the National Women's Council*** also referred to as "***This Code***", has been developed and adopted by the National Women's Council referred to as the "***organisation***" or the "***Council***".

This Code provides a clear guidance on the standards expected from serving Board Members which is formulated in three parts:

Part 1.0:

Adoption and Application of This Code and the Core Values

Part 2.0:

An insight into the set up of the National Women's Council; mission vision, objects and functions, constitution of the Board and committees, and Regional Committees, as spelt out in the National Women's Council Act 2016; Roles of Board Members and Prerequisites for a Responsible Board Member.

Part 3.0:

The Code of Conduct: General and Specific Principles.

Upon signing ***This Code***, each firm and alternate representatives on the Board of the Council shall be bound by it. Non-compliance or disrespect of ***This Code***, would be considered as a breach of the terms of appointment. ***This Code*** should not be considered as an exhaustive document and should be read together with applicable laws.

This Code is accessible on the website of the National Women's Council (nwc.govmu.org).

1.0 ADOPTION AND APPLICATION OF THIS CODE AND CORE VALUES

The Board of the National Women's Council (NWC) at its 49th Meeting held on 26th November 2025 has approved the **Code of Conduct** (hereafter referred as ***This Code***) for **Board Members** of the NWC which shall take effect as from 27th November 2025 with respect to conduct arising or occurring on or after that date.

This Code is based on the following core values as laid down under the Code of Ethics for Public Officers with necessary modifications

CORE VALUES to be observed by Board members:

(1) Integrity

Avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work.

Refrain from making an abuse of one's official position to seek personal gain or financial or other material benefits for one's family or friends.

(2) Selflessness

Acting solely in terms of the public interest.

(3) Impartiality

Acting and taking decisions impartially, and fairly and without discrimination or bias., irrespective of one's own political affinity or preference or personal affiliations or ties.

(4) Objectivity

Favouring meritocracy and basing one's advice and decisions on rigorous analysis of evidence.

(5) Accountability

Being responsible and accountable for one's decisions and actions.

(6) Openness

Being as open as possible in one's decisions and providing justification for one's actions whenever required.

(7) Honesty

Acting in good faith and being truthful.

(8) Justice

Adhering to the rule of law and the principles of natural justice.

2.0 NATIONAL WOMEN’S COUNCIL

2.1 Set up of the National Women’s Council

The National Women’s Council (NWC), a parastatal body operating under the purview of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, was set up under the National Women’s Council Act No.27 of 1985. The legal framework was subsequently reviewed in 2016 with the aim to provide a modern and appropriate framework to further promote women’s empowerment and gender equality.

The **National Women’s Council Act No.5 of 2016** was passed at the National Assembly on 03 May 2016 and received the assent of the President of the Republic of Mauritius on 06 May 2016. The Act was proclaimed on 07 March 2018 to come into operation as from 08 March 2018.

2.2 Mission Vision of the Council

Our Vision

Our Vision is that of a Republic of Mauritius where all women and men have equal rights and opportunities to shape society and their own lives. We work towards the promotion of women’s empowerment for the attainment of gender equality.

Our Mission

Our Mission, as a governmental corporate body is to work towards the social, economic and political empowerment of women, by adopting a Gender and Development approach. We work in partnership with other stakeholders that share the same objectives for the attainment of gender equality.

2.3 Objects of the Council

The Objects of the Council as spelt out under **Section 4** of the National Women’s Council Act shall be to -

- (a) promote women’s empowerment and gender equality;
- (b) ensure and promote the active participation of women in the social, economic and political fields in order to further their overall empowerment; and
- (c) provide a platform for women to voice out their needs, concerns and aspirations.

2.4 Functions of the Council

Section 5 of the National Women's Council Act states that the Council shall have such functions as may be necessary to attain its objects most effectively and shall, in particular –

- (i) implement Government policies relating to women's empowerment and gender equality;
- (ii) advise the Minister on ways of addressing factors responsible for impeding women's empowerment and gender equality;
- (iii) provide a network at national, regional and international levels with organisations which promote women's empowerment and gender equality;
- (iv) collaborate closely with such body having objects similar to those of the Council as may be set up by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly;
- (v) identify and recommend to the Board projects which will promote the participation of women in all sectors of the economy; and
- (vi) promote the recognition of women's rights as human rights; and
- (vii) determine a yearly financial and implementation programme.

2.5 Board and Committees

2.5.1 The Board

In accordance with **Section 8** of the National Women's Council Act, the Board comprises of:

- (a) a Chairperson appointed by the Minister;
- (b) the Supervising Officer or a representative of the parent Ministry;
- (c) a representative of the Ministry responsible for the subject of finance;
- (d) a representative of each of the 3 Regional Committees selected in accordance with section 8(6);
- (e) a representative of such body having objects similar to those of the Council as may be set up by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly;
- (f) 4 other persons, with experience relating to social, economic and political empowerment of women, to be appointed by the Minister after consultation with such person as the Minister may determine.

2.5.2 Committees

Section 10 of the National Women's Council Act provides for the setting up of Committees as the Board may determine. In this respect, the Board has set up the three (3) Committees, namely HR Committee, Finance & Procurement Committee and Project Committee for the smooth execution of the day-to-day operations of the Council.

Each Committee is composed of a Chairperson and three (3) members delegated by the Board from among the members of the Board with experience and expertise in the relevant field of activities. The Manager of the Council and any other officers, as appropriate, are in attendance in these Committees.

2.6 Regional Committees

Section 20 of the National Women's Council Act refers to provision made with respect to the setting up, management and functioning of the Regional Committees.

Each district is referred to as a region and therefore provision is made for the set up of nine (9) Regional Committees in the island of Mauritius.

Rodrigues is considered as a separate region.

2.7 Roles of Board Members

In order to fulfil the objectives of the Council relating to women's empowerment and gender equality and to exercise the functions of the Board as set out in the Act, Board members have different backgrounds.

2.7.1 Prerequisites for a responsible Board Member

The prerequisites for a responsible Board Member include the following aspects:

- Ownership and Belongingness;
- Accountability;
- Confidentiality;
- Shared Responsibility;
- Commitment;
- Innovation (ideas, projects, programmes);
- Good understanding of gender issues, and
- Willingness/Preparedness to acquire such knowledge.

2.7.2 Roles of Board Members

The Roles of Board Members are two-pronged:-

- To act collectively on matters pertaining to the smooth running of the Council; and
- To contribute effectively as per his/her representativeness.

2.7.3 Board members can be grouped in three categories, namely:

- (I) Government and governmental institutions;
- (II) Regional Committees; and
- (III) Independent Members.

(I) REPRESENTATIVES OF GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

Rationale:

The rationale of appointing representatives of Government Institutions on the Board is to ensure that the needs and aspirations of women are taken into consideration whenever policies are formulated.

Roles:

- They should collaborate with the Council in order to facilitate the implementation of policies and programmes falling under the purview of the institution he/she represents.
- Subject to the approval of their Supervising Officer, they should provide feedback on policies/programmes/services/facilities provided by the institution he/she represents that could be of interest and benefit to women.

(II) REPRESENTATIVES OF REGIONAL COMMITTEES

Rationale:

The rationale of appointing representatives of Regional Committees on the Board of the Council is to **primarily** provide a platform to the representatives of such committees to voice out their concerns/aspirations/needs, etc.

Roles:

They should be able to:

- Establish a mechanism (working arrangement) that facilitates **regular dialogues** with their members related to the economic/social and political empowerment of women.
- Identify needs/concerns/aspirations of their members, and recommend to the Board actions that will address them.
- Trickle down information on issues that will further the interests of women, and encourage members to maximize on services/facilities available for women's welfare.
- Act as pressure groups and advocate on gender inequality issues.
- Network and share best practices.
- Implement policies and programmes related to women's empowerment.
- Delegate another member to replace them whenever they cannot attend a meeting/participate in an activity.

(III) INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

Rationale:

Unlike the other two categories, the Act provides the appointment of four Members by the Minister, who are commonly referred to as Independent Members. It is understood that these members have demonstrated their interest/experience/knowledge on women's issues and have the capacity to contribute positively to the overall objectives of the Council.

Roles:

It is expected that as an Independent Member he/she should be able to:

- Inform the Board on women's issues raised by individuals or groups of women whose interests are not represented on the Board or who have no means through which they can voice out their concerns.
- Contribute to the objectives of the Council in regard to their specific field of expertise/knowledge.
- Establish linkages with Regional Committees and encourage them to bring women's concerns to the Council, and assisting them in the organization of activities
- Encourage women to join women associations.
- Advocate on women's empowerment issues at various instances.

3.0 PRINCIPLES AND OBLIGATIONS OF THIS CODE

3.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND OBLIGATIONS

3.1.1 Purpose of *This Code*

The purpose of the ***This Code*** is primarily to provide **guidance** to Board Members (Firm and Alternate) and help them recognise and deal with ethical issues; and further help in fostering a culture of honesty and accountability thereby enforcing the mechanisms to report unethical conduct. It also defines clearly the standards expected from those serving on the Board of the Council and that harassing, bullying or other discriminatory behaviour is not what is expected of a Board Member and will not be tolerated. ***This Code*** should not be considered as an exhaustive document and should be complemented by applicable laws.

3.1.2 Principles and Ethical Standards

This Code sets out the principles and ethical standards that apply to all Board Members of the Council including the Chairperson.

3.1.3 Duties of Board Members

Board Members bear responsibilities in line with the objects and functions of the Council as prescribed under the National Women's Council Act, the Code of Corporate Governance for Mauritius, Guidance Notes for State-Owned Enterprises, the key values and principles set out under the Code of Ethics for Public Officers as provided by the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms and any other documents (such as but not limited to: legislations, framework agreements, circulars, memorandum of understanding) complementing a public body's governing documents. The provisions made under ***This Code*** must be observed alongside the provisions spelt out in these documents. Any breach of this Code will be investigated and appropriate action taken, including termination of appointment.

Board Members have the responsibility to:

- (i) Carry out their duties diligently, honestly, with reasonable competence and act within the scope of their organisation;
- (ii) Consistently attend meetings of the Board and Committees and devote sufficient time to ensure their familiarity and full engagement with the organisation's business and environment; and
- (iii) Ensure that the organisation conducts its business honestly and ethically and constantly improve its services and operation, and maintain a reputation for honesty, fairness, respect, responsibility, integrity and trust.
- (iv) Act in a manner which enhances and maintains the reputation of the Council at all times.

3.1.4 Amendments to This Code

3.1.4.1 Partial Invalidity

If one or more provisions of ***This Code*** are (or become) invalid, this shall not affect the validity of the remaining provisions. The Board may replace the invalid provisions by provisions which are valid and effect of which, given the contents and purpose of ***This Code*** is, to the greatest extent possible, similar to that of the invalid provisions.

3.1.4.2 Waiver

Any waiver of this Code may be made only by the Board of the National Women's Council.

3.1.4.3 Review

The Board will review ***This Code*** as and when required to ensure that it remains consistent with the Board's objectives and responsibilities thereby maintaining continued highest ethical standards.

3.1.5 Acceptance

Any representative who is appointed as a Board Member will be provided with a copy of **This Code** and he must sign a declaration as set out in the Annex to **This Code** to be deposited to the Manager of the Council as an affirmation that the latter agrees to comply with the provisions of **This Code** to become a compliant member of the Board of the Council upon assumption of office. **This Code** incorporates all the contents displayed applicable for all intents and purposes for which it is made.

3.1.6 Access

This Code can be found online at the Council's Website: [https:// www.nwc.govmu.org](https://www.nwc.govmu.org).

3.2 SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES AND OBLIGATIONS OF THIS CODE

3.2.1 Confidential Information

Confidential Information includes all information that are not meant for the public that may be beneficial to an unauthorised party or harmful to the Council, if disclosed. Such information must be treated with sensitivity and discretion and should be used strictly to the extent the Board Member is required to perform his/her duties. All Board Members, during their mandate on the Board or afterwards, should at all times ensure that applicable policies and directives regarding disclosure of information are observed, and shall not:

- (i) Disclose any information of a confidential nature emanating from meetings of the Board or any Committee held or through other means on the affairs of the Council, unless required to do so by law or as authorised by the Board;
- (ii) Use such confidential information for his or her personal gain; and
- (iii) Speak on behalf of the Council unless authorised to do so by the Council, and in addition, making it clear in what capacity they are speaking when issuing public statements pertaining to the Council.

In addition to the above obligations Board Members shall abide by the Data Protection Act.

3.2.2 Conflict of Interest

A Board Member shall ensure that no conflict of interest actual or potential, arises from his personal interest or relation. Where such a conflict arises it should be disclosed in accordance with Section 11 of the Act which states:-

11. Disclosure of Interest

(1) Where any member, or any person related to the member by blood or marriage, has a pecuniary or other material interest in relation to any matter before the Council or a committee, that member:

- (a) shall disclose the nature of the interest before or at the meeting convened to discuss that matter; and
- (b) shall not take part in any deliberation relating to that matter.

(2) A disclosure of interest made under subsection (1) shall be recorded in the minutes of proceedings of the meeting or committee convened to discuss that matter

Board members shall generally comply with the above provision made in the Act of the Council and in accordance with approved corporate governance document (s) adopted by the Council.

3.2.3 Conduct with the Council

Board Members:

- (i) Shall not interfere or exert undue influence on the day-to-day administration of the Council;
- (ii) May take appropriate actions on certain specific administrative issues at the Council with the approval of the Council provided that these actions are not inconsistent with the rules, policies and procedures of the Council;
- (iii) Shall refrain from giving directives to the staff including the Manager; and
- (iv) Ensure that public funds are used economically, efficiently and effectively.

Board Members shall hold the interests of the Council above personal interests and shall avoid conduct that could bring the organisation into disrepute or create the appearance of impropriety.

3.2.4 Responsibilities Towards Employees of the Council

Board Members should:

- (i) Be committed to providing equal opportunity in all aspects to employment and shall not conduct any illegal discrimination or harassment of any kind;
- (ii) Treat any staff employed by the Council with courtesy and respect. It is expected that all employees will show the same consideration in return to the Board Members;
- (iii) Not ask or encourage employees to act in any way which would conflict with their own Code of Conduct; and
- (iv) Ensure that the Council has an open, transparent and safe working environment where employees feel able to speak up and raise concerns, and complaints procedures are clearly communicated to them.

In the event a Board Member has a concern about possible breach of ***This Code***, a concern that the latter or any staff of the Council are being asked to act in contravention of their own code of conduct, or a concern about misconduct or wrong doing in any other areas, then the Board Member has a responsibility to raise that internally with the Chairperson of the Council.

3.2.5 Interaction with Social Media and the Public

Social media is a public forum and the same considerations, including the provisions of ***This Code***, apply as would to speaking in public or writing something for publication, either officially or in a personal capacity. When engaging with social media, the Board Member should at all times respect confidentiality, financial, legal and personal information. Where any personal social media accounts used by a Board Member make reference or link to his/her public role, the latter should take care to ensure that it is clear in what capacity he/she is acting.

3.2.6 Political Activity

Board Members are expected to be politically impartial in all spheres of activities undertaken at their personal level or at the level of the organisation and shall not:

- (i) Be engaged in a paid party political post;
- (ii) Hold a particularly sensitive or high profile role in a political party;
- (iii) Make political statements on matters related to the work of the organisation;
- (iv) Engage in any other political activity unless the Board is informed, but should at all times remain conscious of their responsibilities as Board Members and exercise proper discretion; and
- (v) Not allow themselves to become embroiled in matters of political controversy that may be incompatible with their role as Board Members.

3.2.7 Employment and Appointment

Board Members shall not seek, apply for, or take up appointment or any other paid assignments in the organisation while serving as Board Members or for a period of six months following the end of service as Board Members.

26TH NOVEMBER 2025

ANNEX

Declaration of Compliance with the Code of Conduct for Board Members of the National Women's Council

I,, holder of NIC Card No
..... hereby undertake to fulfilling my
duties in accordance with the principles and standards of conduct set out
in ***The Code of Conduct*** for Board Members of the National Women's
Council.

Name and Signature of Board Member

Date