



## **Aspen Public Radio Journalistic Code of Ethics**

### **Introduction**

Aspen Public Radio Mission Statement: To support, nourish and enrich our community by providing informative, entertaining and educational radio and digital programming in a reliable and professional manner.

Aspen Public Radio's journalists work for a publicly-engaged organization. We seek to educate, inform, entertain and help our audience make sense of the world around them. We believe strongly in respect, civility, independence, accuracy, accountability, truth and creativity.

We are an NPR member station, and we have adopted the network's handbook as our own. As stated in the NPR ethics handbook:

"Our news content, whether on the radio, on the web, or in any other form, must attain the highest quality and strengthen our credibility. We take pride in our craft. Our journalism is as accurate, fair and complete as possible. Our journalists conduct their work with honesty and respect, and they strive to be both independent and impartial in their efforts. Our methods are transparent and we will be accountable for all we do."

Every step in the process of reporting, producing and sharing our news stories follows these guidelines. It's these guidelines that make us the reputable, trustworthy news outlet our audience has come to rely on. It's also our duty as journalists to discuss and debate our principles on a regular basis to ensure we are holding the public trust and doing work worthy of Aspen Public Radio's mission, NPR's mission and also the public we serve.

### **Who is Covered**

The principles and policies apply to all journalists, producers and hosts in the Aspen Public Radio newsroom, as well as any independent reporters or producers who create



journalistic content for this organization. Any independent journalists we work with will be made aware of these guidelines.

### **Accuracy, Honesty and Fairness**

In our business, truth is paramount. We take great care and consideration in ensuring all the information presented to the public is accurate and has been put into the correct context. Journalistic rigor allows us to seek the truth from our sources, but also to challenge our own assumptions and biases.

It's important to note that even the best journalists make mistakes, because to err is human. But we've taken on the task of being vigilant with our reporting to root out inaccuracies. Our journalists use [this checklist](#) to review facts before anything is broadcast or posted to our website.

Reporters and editors must be able to explain why the source used in a story is both authoritative and credible. We also must use precise language when we're presenting facts to ensure the information is clear to the public consuming the content. Our journalists must make sure that any edits we make to sound, photos and words stay with the intended meaning. When quoting or paraphrasing anyone, we consider if the source would actually agree with the way we're using their words, and if they're in the proper context. That said, no journalist from the Aspen Public Radio newsroom will share a story with a source for "approval" before it goes to publication.

Teamwork is a key to great journalism. It's not just the reporter who gathers the facts, information and source material. It's also the editor who tests the reporter's work for accuracy, context, clarity and any other details that focus on fairness in the reporting.

### **Conflicts of Interest, Transparency and Independence**

The public's trust is our primary concern as a journalistic organization, and any personal or professional interests that can directly or indirectly conflict with public trust risk compromising our integrity. Information about a potential conflict will either be disclosed directly to our audience, or in more extreme cases, a journalist will recuse themselves from reporting a story.



We do encourage solid, meaningful relationships with sources. But we draw the line at personal friendships with sources whom the journalist could potentially report on. Aspen Public Radio would never prevent a friendship from forming, but the journalist may need to be removed from stories involving that source.

As an organization with board members, donors and underwriting contracts, we make it clear that our journalistic work is free of influence from any who contributes to Aspen Public Radio. Aspen Public Radio's journalists and editorial leaders have sole discretion over the newsroom's editorial agenda, so any stories done about a funder have disclosure language attached to them stating the reporting is free from any influence by the funder.

During our fund drives, the newsroom will be asked to go on the air and talk about the value of their work and its importance to the community. We are not selling what we are doing, we are only pointing out the significance of local coverage in the Roaring Fork Valley. This is also the case for any journalist asked to take part in a community event. They will be there in a professional capacity and only touting the value of the work. There is a firewall between the funding side of Aspen Public Radio and the newsroom. Always.

Our journalists are not allowed to make financial contributions to political organizations or candidates. That could potentially erode public trust and credibility. No Aspen Public Radio journalist or host would ever be discouraged from taking part in an election, but they are not allowed to publicly support or oppose a specific candidate or issue on any platform including social media, editorials, yard signs, pins or buttons, t-shirts, bumper stickers and the like. Our journalists may participate in marches, protests or demonstrations only in a journalistic role. They also must refrain from signing any political or policy petitions. We must always protect our space as one meant for ideas or opinions from all sides, and any participation in political activities could undermine that.

### **Accountability**

We are fully responsible for our work and we must always be prepared and willing to answer for it if there are errors or other issues.



Any corrections that are needed to a reported story will be made in a timely manner on air and, if applicable, on the Aspen Public Radio website. Any mistakes noticed by any member of staff, or the reporter who produced the story, that may have legal consequences will be reported to the News Director and Executive Director.

Anyone who hears or sees a mistake should report it immediately. It is your responsibility as a journalist in this newsroom.

We welcome any comments from the public, whether they are praise or criticism. We can learn from both. But any criticism that turns into harassment must be reported to the News Director.

### **Working with Sources**

What the public hears and reads are quotes from “on the record” conversations with Aspen Public Radio journalists. We identify sources with their names and affiliations. It’s the organization’s strong preference that the majority of our reporting happens on the record. Though, there are times when background conversations are important to our journalism.

These “off the record” conversations may also be used as anonymous sources in our reporting, but this is something we want to avoid because anonymous sourcing can present editorial obstacles when delivering the news to the public. Anonymity can also be abused and harm public trust. In situations where a source must remain anonymous, we will explain to our audience why. A source’s safety or fear of retribution are two of the main reasons for allowing anonymity. Decisions about allowing this require the reporter to discuss it with the News Director, who is allowed to accept or reject.

### **Social Media**

Social media offers another opportunity for public conversation, but Aspen Public Radio journalists must take the same guidelines outlined above with them into this digital environment. They also must keep the core mission values in mind: respect, civility, fairness, independence, accuracy and truth. Journalists must verify any information



before it's shared and avoid any actions that may erode public trust. Journalists still represent Aspen Public Radio with their personal social media accounts.

Our journalists are expected to flag any concerning conversations or posts as well. The reputation of this organization must be protected. Any actions that go in direct conflict with our mission affect the organization and its ability to serve the public.