



Mains Practice Question

Case study

You are a senior civil servant in the Ministry of Rural Development. The Ministry is responsible for implementing various welfare schemes for rural areas such as employment guarantee, housing, and sanitation programs. Your personal values and beliefs are aligned with the objective of the Ministry to bring about positive change in the lives of rural citizens.

One of your close friends, Tarun, who is a successful businessman, approaches you with a proposal to start a joint venture. Tarun wants to bid for a rural sanitation project that is currently being tendered by the Ministry. The project involves the construction of toilets in rural areas and is part of the government's larger mission to improve sanitation facilities in rural India.

What would you do in this situation?

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Approach

- Start your answer by briefly explaining the case.
- Discuss about various stakeholders and ethical issues & dilemmas involved in the case.
- Discuss the options available in front of senior civil servant.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction

- The case involves an ethical dilemma for a senior civil servant in the Ministry of Rural Development. The dilemma involves a proposal from a close friend, Tarun, who wants to bid for a rural sanitation project being tendered by the Ministry. The senior civil servant has to make a decision based on his values and beliefs aligned with the objective of the Ministry to bring about positive change in the lives of rural citizens.

Body

- **Stakeholders involved:**
 - Tarun, the businessman.
 - The senior civil servant.
 - Ministry of rural development.
 - The rural citizens who will benefit from the project.
 - Other bidders for the project.
 - Society at large.
- **Ethical issues involved:**
 - **Conflict of Interest:** The proposal is from a close friend, which creates a potential conflict of interest.
 - **Responsibility to public welfare:** The senior civil servant is responsible for implementing welfare schemes for rural areas, and the decision must be taken keeping public welfare in mind.

- **Transparency and impartiality:** The decision must be taken in a transparent and impartial manner to ensure fair bidding for the project.
- **Ethical dilemmas involved:**
 - **Personal relationship v/s professional responsibility:** The senior civil servant must weigh his professional responsibility against his personal relationship with Tarun to ensure public welfare.
 - **Integrity v/s compromise:** The senior civil servant must decide whether he is willing to compromise his integrity by accepting the proposal from his friend or he will remain impartial and make a decision based on merit.
- **Options available:**
 - **Reject Tarun's proposal:** The senior civil servant can reject Tarun's proposal of joint venture to avoid any potential conflict of interest, as it may seem like the senior civil servant is using his office to benefit his friend.
 - **Merits:**
 - Avoids any potential conflict of interest.
 - Maintains the integrity of the senior civil servant.
 - Ensures transparency and impartiality in the bidding process.
 - **Demerits:**
 - May damage personal relationship with Tarun.
 - May result in loss of good opportunity, which could have created impact in rural area.
 - **Approve Tarun's proposal:** The senior civil servant can approve Tarun's proposal if he believes that Tarun will provide the best services to the rural citizens.
 - **Merits:**
 - May result in better services for rural citizens if Tarun's proposal is the best.
 - Maintains personal relationship with Tarun.
 - **Demerits:**
 - Creates a potential conflict of interest.
 - May raise questions about the impartiality and transparency of the bidding process.
 - May damage the reputation of the senior civil servant.
 - **Recuse from the bidding process:** The senior civil servant can recuse himself from the bidding process to avoid any appearance of impropriety.
 - **Merits:**
 - Avoids any appearance of impropriety.
 - Ensures transparency and impartiality in the bidding process.
 - **Demerits:**
 - May not provide an opportunity for the senior civil servant to influence the decision in favor of public welfare.
 - May not provide the best outcome for rural citizens.
 - Running from problem is not a solution, it will hamper decision making skill of the civil servant.
 - **Consult with superiors:** The senior civil servant can consult with his superiors to seek guidance on how to proceed with the proposal.
 - This can help ensure that he is following the code of conduct of the Ministry and avoiding any potential conflicts of interest.
 - **Merits:**
 - Ensures impartiality and transparency in the bidding process.
 - Provides a decision based on merit and the potential impact on rural citizens.
 - **Demerits:**
 - May result in a lengthy process.
 - May not provide a solution that is in line with the senior civil servant's personal values and beliefs.
- **Course of action:**
 - As a civil servant I will opt for fourth option, i.e., to **consult the situation with senior**, Firstly I will explain the situation to them and provide details about the proposal from your friend, Tarun, and the potential conflict of interest involved.
 - Further, by keeping them in loop about the situation, I will **go ahead with the bidding**

process as prescribed in code of conduct of the ministry, without any fear or favor and upholding the transparency and integrity of the project.

- Finally, implement the decision that is in line with the values and beliefs of the Ministry and the best interest of rural citizens. Monitor the implementation of the project to ensure that it is meeting the desired outcomes.

Conclusion

The senior civil servant must make a decision that is in line with their values and beliefs, while ensuring that the decision is taken in a transparent and impartial manner. In this situation, the best course of action would be to consult the matter to senior members and explain the scenario, to avoid any potential conflict of interest and ensure impartiality. This way, the senior civil servant can ensure that the project is awarded to the best bidder, providing the best services to the rural citizens and bringing about positive change in their lives.

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