Community Ethics Audit Toolkit

A simple checklist and process for communities to review projects against MOS core principles, enabling grassroots evaluation of proposals, policies, and activities to ensure they align with rights-based governance and serve the flourishing of all beings.

Toolkit Overview

Purpose: Empower communities to evaluate ethical dimensions of local decisions and projects
Format: 10-question assessment with scoring guide and action recommendations **Duration**: 2-4 hours for community workshop, 30 minutes for individual assessment **Outcome**: Clear recommendations for project approval, modification, or rejection

The Community Ethics Audit Process

Phase 1: Preparation (30 minutes)

Step 1: Gather Assessment Team Recommended composition for balanced perspective:

- **Community Elder/Leader** (Traditional wisdom and long-term perspective)
- **Youth Representative** (Future generations voice and contemporary concerns)
- **Technical Expert** (Project-specific knowledge and implementation experience)
- **Cultural Keeper** (Indigenous knowledge and spiritual considerations)
- **Community Member** (Grassroots perspective and lived experience)

Step 2: Project Documentation Review

- Collect all available project proposals, environmental impact assessments, and community consultation records
- Identify key stakeholders and affected parties
- Map project timeline and decision points
- Prepare materials for community access and understanding

Step 3: Community Context Setting

- Acknowledge traditional territory and Indigenous authority
- Review community values and priorities
- Identify any previous community decisions relevant to current project
- Establish ground rules for respectful dialogue and decision-making

Phase 2: Core Ethics Assessment (90 minutes)

The 10 Essential Questions Framework

Question 1: Human Dignity and Well-being

"Does this project enhance human dignity and well-being for all community members, especially the most vulnerable?"

Assessment Criteria:

- ☐ Improves living conditions for low-income and marginalized community members
- ☐ Provides economic opportunities without exploitation
- ☐ Respects cultural values and traditional ways of life
- ☐ Includes accessible design for people with disabilities
- ☐ Considers mental health and social cohesion impacts

Scoring:

- **+2 Excellent**: Project significantly enhances human dignity across all demographics
- **+1 Good**: Project benefits most people with minimal negative impacts
- **0 Neutral**: Project has mixed benefits and drawbacks
- **-1 Concerning**: Project benefits some while harming others
- **-2 Harmful**: Project undermines human dignity or exploits vulnerable populations

Question 2: Animal Welfare and Rights

"Does this project minimize harm to animals and respect their capacity for suffering?"

Assessment Criteria:

- ☐ Avoids unnecessary animal testing or exploitation
- ☐ Protects wildlife habitat and migration corridors
- ☐ Uses humane methods if animal involvement is necessary
- ☐ Considers impacts on companion animals and working animals
- ☐ Includes alternatives assessment for activities affecting animals

Scoring:

- **+2 Excellent**: Project actively protects animals and enhances their welfare
- **+1 Good**: Project minimizes animal harm with effective mitigation
- **0 Neutral**: Project has minimal animal impact
- **-1 Concerning**: Project causes some unnecessary animal harm
- **-2 Harmful**: Project involves significant animal suffering or exploitation

Question 3: Ecosystem Health and Rights

"Does this project support ecosystem integrity and the health of local environments?"

Assessment Criteria:

- ☐ Protects or restores native habitats and biodiversity
- ☐ Maintains water quality and natural water cycles
- ☐ Supports soil health and prevents erosion
- ☐ Reduces pollution and waste generation
- ☐ Considers climate change adaptation and mitigation

Scoring:

- **+2 Excellent**: Project significantly improves ecosystem health
- **+1 Good**: Project protects ecosystems with effective safeguards
- **0 Neutral**: Project has minimal environmental impact
- **-1 Concerning**: Project causes some environmental degradation
- **-2 Harmful**: Project significantly damages ecosystems or biodiversity

Question 4: Indigenous Rights and Cultural Respect

"Does this project respect Indigenous sovereignty and Traditional Knowledge?"

Assessment Criteria:

- ☐ Has obtained free, prior, and informed consent from Indigenous communities
- ☐ Incorporates Traditional Ecological Knowledge appropriately
- ☐ Protects sacred sites and culturally significant areas
- ☐ Supports Indigenous economic development and self-determination
- ☐ Avoids cultural appropriation or exploitation

Scoring:

- **+2 Excellent**: Project is Indigenous-led or strongly supports Indigenous sovereignty
- **+1 Good**: Project respects Indigenous rights with meaningful consultation
- **0 Neutral**: Project has minimal impact on Indigenous communities
- **-1 Concerning**: Project inadequately addresses Indigenous concerns
- **-2 Harmful**: Project violates Indigenous rights or exploits cultural knowledge

Question 5: Future Generations

"Does this project consider impacts on children and future generations?"

Assessment Criteria:

- ☐ Uses seven-generation thinking (200+ year impact assessment)
- ☐ Prioritizes renewable and sustainable resource use
- ☐ Avoids creating long-term environmental or social liabilities
- ☐ Includes youth voices in decision-making process
- ☐ Builds capacity for future community self-determination

Scoring:

- **+2 Excellent**: Project significantly benefits future generations
- **+1 Good**: Project considers long-term impacts with adequate protections
- **0 Neutral**: Project has minimal long-term impact
- **-1 Concerning**: Project may create problems for future generations
- **-2 Harmful**: Project significantly burdens or harms future generations

Question 6: Technology and AI Ethics

"If this project involves technology or AI, does it respect consciousness and prevent exploitation?"

Assessment Criteria:

- ☐ Ensures human control over AI decision-making affecting community
- ☐ Protects community data sovereignty and privacy
- ☐ Prevents surveillance or monitoring without community consent
- ☐ Includes bias prevention and cultural sensitivity measures
- ☐ Supports rather than replaces human wisdom and relationships

Scoring:

- **+2 Excellent**: Technology actively serves community empowerment and rights

- **+1 Good**: Technology is well-governed with strong ethical safeguards
- **0 Neutral**: Minimal technology involvement or neutral impact
- **-1 Concerning**: Technology raises some ethical concerns
- **-2 Harmful**: Technology threatens community autonomy or exploits consciousness

Question 7: Economic Justice and Distribution

"Does this project support economic justice and equitable distribution of benefits and burdens?"

Assessment Criteria:

- ☐ Creates local economic opportunities and ownership
- ☐ Prevents wealth extraction by external corporations
- ☐ Supports regenerative rather than extractive economic activity
- ☐ Includes benefit-sharing agreements with affected communities
- ☐ Reduces rather than increases economic inequality

Scoring:

- **+2 Excellent**: Project significantly advances economic justice
- **+1 Good**: Project creates shared prosperity with equitable distribution
- **0 Neutral**: Project has minimal economic impact
- **-1 Concerning**: Project benefits some while burdening others economically
- **-2 Harmful**: Project increases inequality or enables economic exploitation

Question 8: Democratic Participation and Consent

"Does this project respect community self-determination and democratic decision-making?"

Assessment Criteria:

- ☐ Includes meaningful community consultation and consent processes
- ☐ Provides accessible information in appropriate languages and formats
- ☐ Respects community authority to modify or reject proposals
- ☐ Includes ongoing community oversight and evaluation mechanisms
- ☐ Builds local capacity for democratic participation

Scoring:

- **+2 Excellent**: Project exemplifies democratic participation and community control
- **+1 Good**: Project includes adequate consultation and consent processes
- **0 Neutral**: Standard consultation with some community input
- **-1 Concerning**: Limited consultation or weak consent processes
- **-2 Harmful**: Project imposed without meaningful community consent

Question 9: Conflict Resolution and Peace

"Does this project contribute to community harmony and peaceful conflict resolution?"

Assessment Criteria:

- ☐ Addresses root causes of community tensions
- ☐ Includes mediation and restorative justice approaches
- ☐ Builds bridges between different community groups

- ☐Prevents or resolves conflicts over resources or territory
- ☐Supports healing from historical traumas or injustices

Scoring:

- **+2 Excellent**: Project significantly contributes to community healing and peace
- **+1 Good**: Project includes conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms
- **0 Neutral**: Project has minimal impact on community relations
- **-1 Concerning**: Project may create or exacerbate community tensions
- **-2 Harmful**: Project generates significant conflict or community division

Question 10: Alignment with Community Values

"Does this project align with and strengthen our community's deepest values and aspirations?"

Assessment Criteria:

- ☐ Reflects community vision and long-term goals
- ☐Strengthens cultural identity and community pride
- ☐Supports spiritual and meaning-making aspects of community life
- ☐Builds on community strengths and assets
- ☐Advances community resilience and self-reliance

Scoring:

- **+2 Excellent**: Project perfectly embodies community values and vision
- **+1 Good**: Project aligns well with community values with minor adjustments needed
- **0 Neutral**: Project is compatible with community values
- **-1 Concerning**: Project conflicts with some important community values
- **-2 Harmful**: Project fundamentally contradicts community values and identity

How to Calculate and Use the Score

The scoring process is designed to be a tool for facilitating a structured, ethical dialogue, not just to produce a final number. The score helps the community pinpoint specific areas of strength and concern.

The Process:

1. **Score Each Question:** For each of the 10 questions in the audit, the assessment team assigns a score based on the five-point scale, from **-2 (Harmful)** to **+2 (Excellent)**. This should be done through discussion and consensus.

2. **Sum the Scores:** The total score is the sum of the scores from all 10 questions. The final score will be in the range of **-20** (most harmful) to **+20** (most beneficial).

3. **Analyze Both Scores:** It is crucial to look at two things:

- **The Total Score:** This gives an overall impression of the project's ethical alignment. Use the "Scoring Interpretation Guide" to see the recommended action.

- **The Individual Scores:** Pay close attention to any question that scored a -1 or -2. Even a project with a high total score might have a critical flaw in one area (e.g., it's great for the economy but violates Indigenous rights). These individual low scores must be addressed.

The ultimate goal of the scoring is to create a clear, evidence-based foundation for the community's recommendations.

Phase 3: Scoring and Recommendations (45 minutes)

Scoring Interpretation Guide:

Total Score	Recommendation	Action Steps
15-20	Enthusiastic Approval	Proceed with strong community support and celebration
10-14	Conditional Approval	Proceed with minor modifications and enhanced safeguards
5-9	Major Revision Required	Significant changes needed before community approval
0-4	Substantial Concerns	Major redesign required to address ethical problems
Below 0	Community Rejection	Project fundamentally incompatible with community values

Detailed Recommendations Framework:

For High-Scoring Projects (15-20):

- Identify specific aspects that exemplify community values for celebration and replication
- Develop community ownership and leadership opportunities
- Create monitoring systems to ensure benefits are realized as promised
- Document success factors for application to future projects

For Moderate-Scoring Projects (5-14):

- Identify specific questions with low scores for targeted improvement
- Require project modifications addressing community concerns
- Establish enhanced monitoring and community oversight mechanisms
- Create opportunities for community benefit enhancement

For Low-Scoring Projects (Below 5):

- Require fundamental project redesign before reconsideration
- Address core ethical violations through alternative approaches
- Consider whether project goals can be achieved through different methods
- Provide feedback to project proponents about community values and requirements

Phase 4: Community Action Planning (30 minutes)

Implementation Pathway Development:

For Approved Projects:

- **Community Oversight Committee**: Establish ongoing monitoring and evaluation body
- **Benefit Tracking**: Create systems for measuring and ensuring promised community benefits
- **Adaptive Management**: Build in mechanisms for project modification based on actual impacts
- **Community Celebration**: Plan recognition of project approval and community participation

For Rejected or Delayed Projects:

- **Feedback Communication**: Provide clear, respectful explanation of community concerns to project proponents
- **Alternative Exploration**: Identify alternative approaches that could meet community needs
- **Value Clarification**: Use process as opportunity to clarify and strengthen community values
- **Capacity Building**: Develop community capacity for future project evaluation and decision-making

Cultural Adaptation Guidelines

Indigenous Community Protocols

- **Traditional Authority**: Ensure elder council or traditional leadership guides assessment process
- **Ceremonial Elements**: Include appropriate traditional practices for decision-making
- **Language Use**: Conduct assessment in Indigenous languages with cultural concepts
- **Sacred Considerations**: Address spiritual and sacred dimensions of project impacts
- **Relationship Focus**: Emphasize relational impacts rather than just individual benefits

Multi-Cultural Communities

- **Inclusive Representation**: Ensure assessment team reflects community diversity
- **Translation Services**: Provide materials and discussion in multiple community languages
- **Cultural Mediation**: Include cultural bridge-builders to facilitate cross-cultural dialogue
- **Value Integration**: Find common ground while respecting diverse cultural perspectives
- **Consensus Building**: Use appropriate decision-making processes for multicultural context

Urban Community Adaptations

- **Neighborhood Scale**: Adapt questions for urban neighborhood rather than rural community context
- **Stakeholder Complexity**: Address multiple overlapping jurisdictions and authorities
- **Economic Diversity**: Account for diverse economic interests and housing situations
- **Environmental Justice**: Emphasize pollution, gentrification, and environmental racism concerns
- **Transportation Access**: Ensure assessment process is accessible via public transportation

Toolkit Resources

Quick Reference Cards

Individual Assessment Card (printable wallet-size):

```
COMMUNITY ETHICS QUICK CHECK
Rate each area from -2 (Harmful) to +2 (Excellent):

□ Human dignity and well-being
□ Animal welfare and rights
□ Ecosystem health
□ Indigenous rights
```

```
☐ Future generations
☐ Technology ethics
☐ Economic justice
☐ Democratic participation
☐ Conflict resolution
☐ Community values

Total Score: \_\_\_ / 20
Action: Approve / Modify / Reject
```

Meeting Facilitation Guide:

- **Opening Circle**: Community acknowledgments and intention setting (10 min)
- **Project Overview**: Clear presentation of proposal and context (15 min)
- **Assessment Process**: Systematic evaluation of 10 questions (60 min)
- **Scoring and Discussion**: Community dialogue about results and recommendations (30 min)
- **Action Planning**: Next steps and follow-up commitments (15 min)
- **Closing Circle**: Appreciation and commitment to implementation (10 min)

Digital Tools

- **Online Assessment Platform**: Web-based tool for individual and group evaluations
- **Community Dashboard**: Real-time visualization of assessment results and community input
- **Mobile App**: Smartphone-accessible version for broader community participation
- **Reporting System**: Automated generation of assessment reports and recommendations

Training Materials

- **Facilitator Workshop**: 4-hour training for community leaders in ethics audit facilitation
- **Community Education**: Public workshops introducing ethics audit concepts and processes
- **Youth Leadership**: Special training for young people in ethical assessment and community organizing
- **Elder Engagement**: Culturally appropriate approaches for involving traditional knowledge keepers

This Community Ethics Audit Toolkit empowers communities to evaluate projects and policies against comprehensive ethical standards, ensuring that local decisions serve the flourishing of all beings while respecting community values, Indigenous sovereignty, and future generations. Through systematic assessment and community dialogue, the toolkit transforms ethical evaluation from expert-driven process to grassroots empowerment and democratic participation.