



# ERSC Building Integrity Programme Workshop

Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford

3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> May, 2018

## Summary

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of May, 2018, world-leading experts on anti-corruption and public integrity gathered at the University of Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government to discuss building integrity in public institutions. The workshop convened a diverse and dynamic group of practitioners from organisations such as Transparency International UK, Integrity Action, the UK Home Office, the World Bank and the OECD. The event also involved academics from a number of British universities, whose combined expertise covered a range of disciplinary perspectives including philosophy, law and political science. The aim of the workshop was to gather constructive feedback on the Building Integrity Programme's work so far.

The primary goal of the Building Integrity Programme is to develop relevant research that can be used to promote the building of public institutional integrity. Reflecting the nascent stages of the Programme, the two days had distinct focuses: Day One focused primarily on the conceptual development of public integrity; Day Two focused on measurement of the concept and how academic research can help inform the *practice* of building integrity in public institutions.

These discussions presented a rare opportunity for practitioners and academic researchers to share their experiences and help guide the development of the Building Integrity Programme. Attendees were enthusiastic about the Programme's capacity to engage with systemic issues of integrity, to produce evidence-led and policy-relevant research and to play a critically important role in creating educational opportunities for the promotion of public integrity.

## Day One

The workshop launched with a presentation articulating the Building Integrity Programme's conception of public integrity. During this presentation, the key elements of Building Integrity's conception of public integrity were laid out, with a particular emphasis on why an institution-first approach to defining public integrity is most appropriate, and what this implies for defining integrity at the level of an individual public officer.

The second focus of the session was distinguishing integrity from anti-corruption. This involved articulating the need to move the discourse of public integrity away from a 'minimum standards' approach—away from a list of 'do nots'—towards a positive and conceptually rigorous definition that is aimed at creating a sustainable institutional environment that is both worthy of public trust and robust against corrupting influences over time.

The second session of the day featured presentations about definitions of integrity that are currently used by the attending expert practitioners in their work, and a discussion of practitioner perspectives on the Building Integrity Programme's new conception of public integrity. The latter explored the sticky issues around how, in practical terms, to define critical elements such as 'legitimate purpose', which is a central part of the Building Integrity Programme's conception of public integrity. Attendees agreed that dealing with such issues is crucial to deploying the new concept across diverse contexts.

After lunch, the workshop presentations focused on case studies of national integrity systems assessments in Cambodia and the UK. Both of these case studies explored difficulties in applying Transparency International's guidelines for the assessments in contexts with unusual constitutional arrangements and in non-Western cultures. The conversation then considered these points in reflecting back on the new conception of public integrity.

## Day Two

The second day of the workshop was designed to evaluate the possibility of creating reliable integrity measures that can be deployed by practitioners and researchers alike. The day began with presentations from several practitioners who shared their valuable experiences of working in the area of good governance promotion, anti-corruption and integrity-building in institutions. These discussions tackled the challenges of implementation 'on the ground,' and provided important insights and lessons for the Building Integrity Programme to take forward into the next stages of development.

The day began with presentations highlighting methodological challenges to measuring public integrity, and offered potential solutions to some of these complexities. The key message that emerged from this session was that any actor concerned with developing a new index, or even developing a new approach to qualitative integrity assessment, should consider in advance how other actors are likely to use the outcome of these efforts.

The presentations were followed by discussions about experiences of promoting anti-corruption and public integrity systems across governmental departments, intergovernmental organisations and NGOs. This session was centred around how integrity initiatives can be monitored and measured in an outcomes-based manner. Where direct indicators are unavailable, attendees suggested proxy measurements that could be used to capture key elements of public integrity.

Day two of the workshop concluded with a ‘blue sky’ brainstorming session with all participants. This open discussion enabled workshop participants to engage with the Programme’s core agenda, by suggesting future avenues for development. There was fruitful dialogue about many of the opportunities and challenges identified over the course of the workshop, and three takeaways were particularly prominent in the discussion.

First, there was a real desire for the Programme to generate new research-led initiatives to buttress the empirical value of its conception of public integrity. Second, practitioners reaffirmed their desire for more applied evidence-based research; by continuing to implement and by further developing its empirical research framework, the Programme would help establish a robust corpus of knowledge to guide public integrity-building in a wide variety of institutions. Finally, there was much enthusiasm for the Building Integrity Programme’s potential future role in helping to create educational opportunities for the promotion of public integrity in practice.