



# **Conflict of Interest in a Feasibility Study (adapted from NSPE Case No. 88-1)**

## **Year**

1999

## **Description**

An engineer is in a position to decide the outcome of a feasibility study to her personal advantage.

## **Body**

Lindsay, an engineer, is retained by the County government to perform a study and recommend the best location for a new County power facility. The choices have been narrowed down to two parcels of land. The first parcel is undeveloped and is owned by a person who plans to build a second home there. The second parcel, a developed piece of land, is owned by Lindsay. Lindsay informs the County of her ownership of the second parcel of land, then goes on to recommend that the County build on the first parcel for the following reasons: (1) it is a better location from an engineering standpoint, and (2) it would be cheaper to acquire the land.

Should the County accept Lindsay's recommendation, knowing of Lindsay's property ownership? Did Lindsay act ethically in agreeing to do the study? Once Lindsay determined that her land was appropriate for the new facility should she have removed herself from the study? Does Lindsay's disclosure of her ownership of the land prevent a conflict of interest? Would anything change your judgment of the

scenario?

[NSPE Code of Ethics](#) An earlier version may have been used in this case.

## **Notes**

See the original NSPE case at: [Feasibility Study - Case No. 88-1](#).

## **Rights**

Use of Materials on the OEC

## **Parent Collection**

Professional Ethics in Engineering Practice: Discussion Cases Based on NSPE BER Cases

## **Topics**

Conflict of Interest

## **Discipline(s)**

Engineering

## **Publisher**

Online Ethics Center

Authoring Institution

Online Ethics Center