



How to Develop a Policy Tip Sheet

What is a policy? What is the purpose of a policy?

A policy is a set of guiding principles, an acceptable practice, or a rule intended to influence organisation decision-making. Policies typically support management philosophies and help to communicate regulations that apply to all personnel. Policies are formal in nature, broad in their application, and rarely change unless a regulation, law, or code of practice changes in the industry. While policies are typically written and defined by management, policies are commonly reviewed, approved, and maintained by the Board of Directors (or the administrative authority in the case of public agencies) at periodic and specified intervals and whenever legal requirements or regulations change. The board, through policy, delegates authority to and through the chief executive to manage the organisation. The CEO and staff are responsible for reasonably interpreting board policy, as well as other relevant laws and regulations that govern the organisation. Also, many Canadian organisations work with a Carver-model Board. A Carver-model Board ensures that policies set by the organisation fit with the organisation's vision and mandate.

What are the core elements of policy?

Policies can differ in their format and design from one organisation to the next however a good policy contains, at a minimum: the name or title of the policy; the adoption or approval date; the date it is effective; any date(s) of revision; and the policy, itself. Policies can also contain information on the domain it covers (e.g. Human Resources, Finance, Services, etc.); its location (e.g., Board Policies Manual); a common numbering system (e.g., 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, etc.); who approved the policy (e.g., signature of the Board President); who is affected by the policy (e.g., all staff, clients, etc.); and references to other relevant policies or procedures.

The following information is typically contained somewhere on a policy along with the actual policy statement, itself.

Policy Name:	Employee Grievance Policy (1.1)
Domain:	Employee Relations (1)
Policy Location:	C:\Policies\Employee_Relations\Employee_Grievance_Policy.pdf
Date of Adoption:	July 15, 2002
Effective Date:	July 15, 2002
Date(s) of Revision:	May 22, 2005
References:	Employee Grievance Procedure, Employee Rights Form

Employee Grievance Policy goes here...

Policy Name:	Internet/E-mail Policy (2.4)
Domain:	Technology (2)
Policy Location:	C:\Policies\Technology\Internet_E-mail_Policy.pdf
Date of Adoption:	January 10, 2005
Approved by:	John Smith, Board President and the Board of Directors
Effective Date:	February 1, 2005
Date(s) of Revision:	
References:	None

Internet/E-mail Policy goes here...



How do you write a policy?

1. Identify which organisational policies should be developed. Work with your Board of Directors to identify relevant policies that need to be developed.
2. If you haven't already done so, develop a policy template.
3. Identify the principle, practice, or rule that you wish to communicate and draft a policy statement. Ensure that the policy:
 - a. Reflects the organisation's mission and goals;
 - b. Is expressed as a broad statement;
 - c. Includes statements of "what" and/or "why;"
 - d. Addresses major operational issues;
 - e. Is clear and concise; and
 - f. Meets current regulations, laws and best practices (you can site relevant laws, regulations, or codes of practice in the body of the policy if necessary).

How do you implement a policy?

Once a policy is drafted, the CEO should ensure that it is reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors. If there are no formal changes to the policy following Board approval, then staff should be informed of the new policy and should be trained on the relevant procedures needed to carry out the intent of the policy, as necessary.

Approved or updated policies should then be placed in a central location where all personnel have access to them.

What is the difference between a policy and procedure? How are they connected?

A policy is a statement of guiding principles to be followed; procedures are more detailed, step-by-step descriptions of the actions required to carry out and implement those principles. The following chart highlights some of the differences between policies and procedures.

Policy	Procedure
Broad application	Narrow application
General guiding principle	Describes in detail specific processes or protocols
Statements of "what" and/or "why"	Statements of "how," "when" and/or sometimes "who"
Rarely changes	Prone to change
Approved by the Board	Does not need Board approval

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