Venture Southland
Enterprise, Tourism & Community Development

Policies and Procedures

When your organisation was first established, a set of formal rules would have been developed which outline your goals and objects. These rules are often called a 'constitution' or 'trust deed' depending on your organisation's structure *(see sheet 9 for more information on Constitutions and Trust Deeds)*. However, these rules do not usually address your day to day operations and functions so it is useful to develop these details in a separate set of policies and procedures.

These policies and procedures will typically function on two levels:

Level 1: Governance – high level policies about your organisation's mission, values, and strategic direction.

Level 2: Operational – functional level policies such as daily office procedures.

Policy: What needs to happen (or not).

Procedure: Steps to follow to put the policy in action.

WHY HAVE POLICIES?

Policies are valuable to both your group and the external people you deal with or your stakeholders as it lets everyone know where they stand:

STAKEHOLDER	BENEFITS OF CLEAR POLICY FRAMEWORK
Clients/service recipients	• Know what to expect and how to address any concerns they may have.
Staff/volunteers	• have clear roles and boundaries • know what is expected of them • can rely on policies to say "no" when asked to do something that is outside policy (e.g. may involve a conflict of interest)
Management	• have a framework for managing the organisation • are provided with a degree of protection when challenged about issues that are beyond their control and where people have been following proper procedures (e.g. if a child is harmed and a community agency working with the family may be "blamed").
Committee/board members	• have a way of setting and communicating the values of the organisation both internally and externally.
Other community members/agencies	• know where the organisation stands and where other groups may link in with them.
Funders (including potential funders)	• can see whether (or how) a funding proposal fits in with the organisational mission and values are provided with a degree of confidence that the organisation is able to undertake the project for which it is seeking funding.
The organisation	• is able to see and present itself clearly risks are reduced.

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DEVELOPING YOUR POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Steps:

1. Describe the issue the policy needs to address.
2. Consult any key stakeholders – who will be affected by this policy or issue?
3. Identify possibilities of policy options.
4. Consider internal (e.g. your vision statement) and external (legal requirements e.g. Health & Safety) environments.
5. Write a draft of your policy, using clear unambiguous language and try to use a set format for all your policies.
6. Present to the board for consultation and adoption.
7. Set up systems to ensure the policy is applied on an ongoing basis – i.e. it is communicated to staff & volunteers and understood, and there is an up to date policies and procedures manual available for them to view.
8. Review policy at an agreed date and update if required.

(adapted from the Community Resource Kit, Family & Community Services – Ministry of Social Development – Crown Copyright 2006)

TYPES OF POLICIES

The structure and complexity of your organisation, as well as the types of things you undertake will dictate the types of policies that you may need. For example – do you employ someone? Are you responsible for property?

Below is a list of the sort of areas your group may like to include in your policies and procedures:

POLICY	DETAILS
Health & Safety	• Fire, earthquake, accident procedures • Smoke free policy • Workplace injury prevention policy
Employment	• Remuneration policy • Time in lieu policy • Wage and time recording policy • Leave recording policy • Parental leave policy
Provision of Services	• Internet/email/phone use policy • Vehicle policy • Travel, use of credit cards
Governance	• Board/committee structure • Protection of assets • Reporting to the board • Treatment of staff
Financial Management	• Expenditure and receipting • Petty cash & reimbursement
Staff	• Personal grievance • Annual performance review • Supervision • Volunteer policy

POLICIES YOU MUST INCLUDE

Health & Safety

By law you must comply with the Health & Safety in Employment Act 1992. It requires employers to maintain safe working environments and implement sound practices by:

- identifying and remedying any hazards
- providing emergency supplies and equipment
- ensuring evacuation and emergency procedures are made available to employees and users of the premises.

For a sample Health & Safety policy and procedure go to the Community Net website (see links box at bottom of page) and go to section 5 (policies) of the Community Resource Kit – under How to guides.

For more information go to *www.keepingitlegal.net.nz*.

Complaints

All community organisations should have a written complaints procedure, especially if you are dealing with members of the public. It should state that:

- the client has a right to complain;
- any complaints will be taken seriously;
- both parties in the complaints procedure will be given a full and fair hearing;
- there is a system in place to deal with complaints that must be followed;
- an independent mediator can be called in if needed;
- confidentiality of the complaint will be maintained – only the parties involved and the designated committee/managers will be notified.

Volunteers

As volunteers usually play a significant role in any community organisation it is also a really good idea to have policies and procedures in place for them as well. It may include things like having a job description, signing a volunteer contract, and the process for recruitment. *For a full list of things you could include see sheet 13 – Volunteers.*

TEMPLATE FOR WRITING POLICIES

STAKEHOLDER	BENEFITS OF CLEAR POLICY FRAMEWORK
Policy area	(e.g. governance, employment).
Policy title	(e.g. Recruitment).
Policy detail	The policy statement – value or position that the organisation is taking.
Procedures	The actual steps to take to put this policy into place.
Context	Not always necessary but can be useful to give some background information about the policy.
Effective date	
Version/Review date	
Links	If applicable - e.g. legislation that provides framework for the policy.
Definitions	Where applicable include an explanation of terms and abbreviations used.

NEED MORE HELP?

The Southland Community Law Centre is available to help community organisations with their policies and procedures. All their services are free. Contact:

Denise Lormans
Southland Community Law Centre
5 Tay Street
Invercargill
03 214 3180 (ext 4)

Denise can also come and talk to your organisation about putting together your policies and procedures.