Resource 11: Policy development

Expectations about behaviour are met: Welcome

What is a policy?

Policies provide overall guidance to ensure that your association's day-to-day activities are coordinated and conducted in ways that are fair, impartial and consistent. Policies reflect and clarify the values and beliefs considered important by your association and outline the rules, boundaries and expectations of behavioural standards to staff, members, volunteers and other stakeholders.

There are three ways in which policy affects behaviour in organisations:

*   Enabling behaviour to occur that would be difficult without policy (e.g. adopting a rule that sets out the hours and days of operation of a sport facility).
*   Regulating behaviour into routine matters (e.g. standardising procedures for receipt of cash). This allows the organisation to concentrate more on major issues and reduces the need for repetitive decision making in areas that can be delegated.
*   Inhibiting behaviour that might be widespread without policy (e.g. verbal abuse of umpires).

What is the difference between a policy and a procedure?

A policy guides the way you operate, outlining to people *what* to do and *why*. A procedure or protocol tells people *ho*w to do it and usually also contains the *where* and the *when*. Policies are generally adopted by your Board whereas procedures or protocols are adopted by senior executive staff or relevant committees. Detailed procedures also tend to flow from policy.

Why are policies important?

Policies are essential for the effective management and governance of your association. They:

*   ensure compliance with legislative requirements
*   ensure continuity, particularly for new boards, committees and staff
*   ensure fairness and equity in the way you interact with members, staff and other stakeholders
*   clarify values and beliefs
*   communicate expectations
*   specify standards
*   state rules
*   improve risk management
*   reduce liability
*   enable good personnel management.

What should be included in a policy?

Policies should be clear and consistent, easy to read and understand and use simple, jargon-free language. While formats differ, policy documents usually include:

*   Policy **title** – The name of your policy.
*   **Rationale** or **purpose statement** – Why the policy is being issued and the benefits or what its desired effect or outcome should be.
*   **A scope** or **coverage** statement – Who is covered or will be affected and who may be exempt under the policy.
*   An **effective date** – When the policy comes into force.
*   A **responsibilities** section – Who is responsible for carrying out individual policy statements.
*   **Policy statement/s** – These are specific regulations, requirements or modifications to organisational behaviour (policy statements are extremely diverse and may take almost any form).

- **Definitions** – Clear and unambiguous definitions for terms and concepts in the document.
- **Related policies and procedures** – The policies and procedures related to the policy topic.
- **Date of endorsement** – The date policy was adopted.
- **Date of review** – When policy will be reviewed.

Policy development

The process of good policy development involves:

1. Issue/needs identification

A policy is usually required when a gap exists between what the association would like to see happen and the current situation. Awareness of the need to establish a policy may come through a number of sources, e.g. through feedback from members about problems or concerns, as result of government policy or laws (e.g. child protection) or because of legal action taken against the association.

2. Policy analysis/context

The overall context in which the policy should be developed needs to be determined. Ask your national body what their policy position is on the particular issue (if any); examine your association's vision, mission, values and goals; check/review your other policies and procedures; identify and analyse relevant government policy and legislation to ensure consistency and compliance; and identify any relevant good-practice policy. This may provide guidance about appropriate policy direction.

3. Consultation

Determine who should take overall responsibility for the process (some associations establish a policy subcommittee), who should be involved and the extent and nature of that involvement.

Collect relevant information from association records, other state associations, your national body, state government departments and community agencies so that those responsible for drafting the policy are sufficiently briefed about the issue. Prepare a draft policy for wider consultation ensuring you seek feedback from those stakeholders (e.g. club members, staff, players, people with a disability) who are likely to be directly affected by the policy. Revise the draft policy based on the feedback and develop a draft implementation plan. (Refer to the Everyone Wins resources on consultation to assist with conducting effective consultation).

4. Decision

Present the final draft along with the implementation plan to the Board or management committee for approval.

5. Implementation

Adequate and appropriate levels and types of resources (e.g. people, time and finance) need to be devoted to support the policy. The following strategies may help with policy implementation and compliance:
- Ensure the wording is appropriate to the audience and is not too complex or ambiguous.
- Ensure stakeholders are aware of the reason for the policy (e.g. wellbeing of participants).
- Ensure stakeholders know where and how to access the policy and that this is easy to do.
- Educate stakeholders about the benefits to them and to the association.
- Enforce consistently.

6. Communication and promotion

Promotion of your policies should be regular and ongoing and made available in different formats and languages (for accessibility). Promote your policies as broadly as possible. Places and ways to do this include:
- meetings – staff, Board, committee, council, AGM
- internet – e-bulletins, email, twitter, facebook

- publications – newsletter, Annual Report, fact sheet, magazine
- inductions – staff, Board, volunteers
- registration/membership – include on or attach to registration forms or include in an information pack
- functions – presentation events, award nights, sponsorship dinners, season launch
- competitions – event programs, pa announcements, ticketing
- website – establish a specific, easy-to-find and accessible section for all your policies
- signage – office, facilities/venues
- player, captain, coach, referee events – clinics, seminars, forums, training sessions
- promotional material and activities – posters, brochures, come & try days
- media – media releases, media kits/launches.

7. Review and evaluation

The policy needs to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis, usually annually. It is good practice to have the dates for when each policy will be reviewed and evaluated included in a board governance calendar and the operational plan. Policy evaluation usually consists of three basic activities:

- Examining the basis of the policy (is the rationale still sound, is it still relevant, is it still best practice, does it reflect the current social climate and expectations, does it take account of new or changed laws and government policy).
- Comparing expected changes and behaviours with actual outcome (what has worked, what hasn't worked, what other/unexpected changes occurred).
- Taking corrective action if required (e.g. revise policy, allocate more resources or rescind the policy).

Developed in collaboration
Collaboration leader: