

POLICY WRITING

As many PSOs elect their Board at this time of year, it becomes evident that the Board's role is to ensure that it carries out its governance of the sport. The governing documents of an organization are often considered boring and ignored, but they determine how decisions are made and affect the people in the organization. They are essential to everything a PSO is and does. A large part of the Board's role is to determine policy.

What is policy?

Policy is rules or guidelines; policy is the organizations principles; policy sets out the way that things are done; policy creates a framework for the way you do your work; policy sets the standards for the organization; policy arises from best practice.

The reasons PSOs have policy is:

- To provide framework for action that helps deal with things that need to done.
- To apply decisions to similar cases so the same issues don't need to be discussed every time they arise – thereby being more efficient.
- To meet legal and other requirements.

Guidelines to writing policy:

1. Be clear, concise and use simple language – use minimal words
Make it a practice of having an outsider review a draft of a written policy, to see if they understand it.
2. Be consistent – define terms and phrases up front and use them the same way throughout the document.
3. Be complete - the policy must anticipate every circumstance and must cover every aspect of an issue. The policy must cover procedural steps from the beginning to the end.
4. Be friendly to the reader. Use titles, headings, subheadings, and bullet point lists wherever possible.
5. Policy is written to address what the rule is rather than how to implement the rule.
6. Policy statements are readily available and their authority is clear.

A Good Policy Inspires the Reader

- Concise, minimum verbage
- Factual – double check accuracy!
- Don't include information that may be quickly outdated - i.e. names
- If you use an acronym, spell it out the first time you use it.
- Not too technical – simple enough to be understood by a new employee or volunteers.

What should be included in a policy?

1. **Purpose of the policy** - this is a brief statement of the reason for the policy.
2. **Scope and application of the policy** - this is a clear statement of the jurisdiction of the policy: that is, what activities, what situations and what individuals the policy applies to.
3. **Exclusions from the policy** - where appropriate, it may be useful to reinforce the jurisdiction of the policy by stating what activities, situations and individuals the policy does not apply to.
4. **The policy "scheme"** - this is the most important part of the policy and sets out in logical, rational and step-by-step detail who does what, when and how. When writing this component of a policy, presume nothing - the scheme should be absolutely seamless with no gaps, omissions or surprises.
5. **Review and approval of the policy** - the date the policy was approved should be noted, and the timelines, responsibilities and procedures for reviewing the policy should be included.
6. **Lastly, if a policy is complex** - it might be useful to include a list of definitions. Defining terms just once, at the beginning, can save space and improve the internal consistency of the policy.

Design and Layout Tips

- Generous use of white space.
- Presentation is structured so user can easily find what they are looking for
- Use of a flexible outline to make the document easy to modify and keep up to date
- Use labels to introduce key points, headings and labels, numbered and dated

Preparing written policies is the most important thing that a governing board will do. Boards should therefore consider their policy development and policy-writing process. Furthermore, no policy is a static document simply taking up space in a binder or manual - policies are to be used, reviewed and revised as needed.

When developing new policy or revising existing policy, policy owners have an obligation to identify those who will be directly affected by the new or revised policies. Consider some discussion from constituents and make sure that members are aware of the changes set out by the policy

SOURCES:

<http://www.mapl.com.au/policy/tp.htm>

<http://www.sportlaw.ca/policyW.htm>

<http://www.ucsc.edu/ppmanual/pdf/guide.pdf>

Corbett, Rachel and Findlay, Hillary, Good Policies, Good Governance: A Guide for Sport Organizations (1999), Centre for Sport and Law.

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