Writing Policies and Procedures

What are policies and procedures?

Policies and procedures are the documents that govern the operations of your organisation. Whilst we often refer to 'policies and procedures' together, they serve two separate and distinct functions.

A policy is a guiding principle used to set direction. A policy is the what and why and usually remains static over time.

A procedure is a series of steps or processes to be followed to deliver a consistent approach to achieve a specific outcome. Procedures are the how, when and who, and usually iterate over time.

In many instances, policies and procedures are combined for efficiency. However, your organisation may choose to separate them where a policy statement requires, for example, endorsement from your Board of Governance.

Why does my organisation need policies and procedures?

Policies and procedures are important because they govern the activities of your organisation and form part of your broader risk management framework. They provide a standard for staff to follow and ensure everyone is on the same level of information on key processes. Policies and procedures are important documents as they convey why your organisation does something and how to do it.

What policies and procedures does my organisation need?

The policies and procedures required for your organisation will be dictated by the types of programs and services you deliver. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to creating, implementing and reviewing policies and procedures. Volunteering Australia recommends considering the following policies and procedures:

Foundational Policies

Legislation

The following Commonwealth legislation may apply to your organisation:

- *Age Discrimination Act 2004* (Cth)
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth)
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth)
- *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth)
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth)
    - *Note: Victoria and Western Australia have not signed up to the uniform WHS laws and have their own legislation*

Ensure you factor in relevant state and territory legislation. More information on jurisdictionally based legislation that may apply to your organisation can be found on the Not-for-profit Law website - www.nfplaw.org.au.

National Standards

The following National Standards may apply to your organisation:

- *Aged Care Quality Standards (2018)*
- *Charities and Not-for-Profit Governance Standards – ACNC (2013)*
- *Community Legal Service Standards (2001)*
- *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (2019)*
- *National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards (2017)*
- *National Standards for Disability Services (2014)*
- *National Standards for Mental Health Services (2010)*
- *National Standards for Out of Home Care (2011)*
- *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement (2015)*

The above list is not exhaustive and as with legislation, it is your responsibility to make your own investigations about any further standards that may apply to your organisation.

Workplace Responsibilities

Your organisation could consider implementing policies on the following topics to guide the behaviour of staff, including volunteers:

- Code of Conduct
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Diversity and Equality
- Alcohol and Other Drugs
- Media and Communications
- Child Protection
- Risk Management
- Feedback and Complaints
- Grievance and Disputes
- Harassment and Bullying
- Honorarium and Reimbursement
- Acceptance of Gifts and Benefits
- Conflicts of Interest
- Working with Vulnerable People
- Incident Reporting
- Notifiable Data Breaches (NBD) scheme
- Fraud and Financial Management
- Whistleblower procedures

As above, these procedures are not an exhaustive list and do not replace the need for your organisation to seek specific legal, insurance or risk advice about the policies and procedures you need to have in place.

Procedures

Your organisation could consider implementing procedures on the following topics to guide the behaviour of staff, including volunteers. Some comments and questions have been provided to prompt your thinking about what to include however, these are not exhaustive and are intended to provide a starting point for your thinking.
- Rights and Responsibilities
- Insurance
  - o *Provide a copy of the policy to volunteers. State what is and is not covered.*

- Dress Code

- Intellectual Property
  - *Are you asking volunteers to assign over their rights to their intellectual property?*
- Recruitment and Selection
  - *Young People*
  - *Working with Vulnerable People*
- Volunteer Agreement
  - *Do you have a standard volunteer agreement?*
- Induction
- Training and Support
- Supervision and Peer Support
  - *What mechanisms are in place for volunteers to network and debrief with others?*
- Coaching and Mentoring
  - *Will volunteers have access to coaching and mentoring?*
- Wellbeing Plan
  - *Do volunteers have access to your Employee Assistance Program?*
- Risk Management
  - *Security*
    - *If you have volunteers working remotely or offsite, how are they protected? What are their obligations? What is covered by insurance? What is not covered by insurance?*
  - *Incident and Injury Reporting*
    - *What incidents need to be reported? How are they reported?*
- Reimbursement
  - *What out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed?*
- Media and Communications
  - *Media Interviews*
  - *Use of Social Media*
- Use of Private Motor Vehicle
  - *Insurance*
    - *Do volunteers need comprehensive car insurance? Does your organisation cover a volunteer's excess if they're involved in an accident on the way to or from volunteering?*
- Records Management
  - *Are volunteers required to do any reporting?*
  - *How are volunteer personal records stored?*
  - *Archiving*
- Performance Appraisal
  - *Will volunteers have access to performance appraisal?*
- Continuous Improvement
  - *Quality Management*
  - *Feedback Mechanisms*
- References/Statements of Service
  - *Do you provide them? If so, are they any qualifying factors required to obtain one?*

-   Ending the Volunteer Relationship
    o Includes information on the what will happen if your organisation needs to end the relationship with a volunteer due to performance or other issues.

How do I write policies and procedures?

When writing policies and procedures it is first worth considering the depth and breadth of documents required to cover your volunteering program, and how program-specific policies and procedures will coincide with broader organisational policies and procedures. When writing a policy, consider if it needs to be endorsed by your Board of Governance. Further, consider how the policy must reference any legislation or standards that would apply to your organisation and/or your volunteering program.

Once you have drafted the policy statement, the accompanying procedure should detail the steps a person needs to take to comply with the policy and to enact the procedure. The procedure itself should provide enough information that any member of staff could pick it up and understand how to enact it. You may choose to provide a summary of information, list of instructions/tasks, or checklists, depending on the content of the procedure. Not every task in your organisation will require detailed procedures, so consider where you need to be prescriptive and where you can be more general. Ensure you write procedures in plain and clear language so they are understood by all staff and there is no room for confusion.

Your policies and procedures are governing documents that provide direction on how different functions in your organisation should be performed. Consider how relevant staff can be involved in the writing and review of procedures to ensure they are simple and functional. Ensure your organisation has a regularly scheduled review for your policies and procedures. The regularity of review should be dictated by the inherent level of risk associated with the policy or procedure.

Conclusion

Policies and procedures are critical documents in any organisation as they dictate the required standard of behaviour/process and provide guidance on how staff are expected to implement and carry out various functions or tasks in the organisation. The above list of policies and procedures is not an exhaustive list but covers off basic aspects of volunteer involvement your organisation may wish to consider having policies and procedures on. You may choose to create a volunteering program specific policy and procedure document or embed volunteering related processes into existing policies and procedures.