

Policies and Procedures – Foundations of Good Decision Making

Policies and procedures are designed to influence and determine decisions, actions, and other matters, and are developed to set a course of action that will be adopted by your club/skating school. Policies outline fundamental principles to follow (the “what” and “why”) while procedures outline how policies will be implemented. Developing good policies and procedures will define your club’s/skating school’s values, beliefs and goals, and will contribute to the success of your organization.

The ultimate test of a policy/procedure:

- *Is it clear?*
- *Is it enforceable?*
- *Is it relevant?*
- *Does it meet legal considerations?*
- *Does it follow the human rights code?*
- *Does it include rather than exclude?*

Sports groups, volunteer organizations and non-profits develop policies and procedures to

- manage risk,
- provide transparent processes to members, and
- meet the ever-increasing demand for accountability as part of the due diligence required of well-directed organizations.

The responsibility for developing, maintaining, and updating policies and procedures is an important role for the Board of Directors.

Why do we write policies/procedures?

- To help protect the club’s/skating school’s
 - members
 - board and staff
 - assets
 - reputation
- To create a record of current knowledge and decisions that were made in the past about operational processes
- To provide your members with clear expectations and to help mitigate risk for the club/skating school

It is critical that clubs and skating schools comply with the regulatory requirements of Skate Canada and Skate Ontario, and with provincial legislation (and federal where applicable). Policies will help your club or skating school comply with legislation and will assist with operational alignment to governing bodies. Sometimes situations or incidents may arise that highlight a specific area of the club/skating school that does not have a policy and/or procedure in place. These situations and/or incidents will put the club/skating school into a reactionary mode, compelling the organization to write a policy and procedure to address each circumstance. While it may be necessary at times to write reactionary policies and procedures, it is not a recommended process for club/skating schools to follow. Policies and procedures that are developed in a reactionary response tend to have a limited scope and are inclined to exclude rather than include. Clubs/skating schools should regularly and proactively review and update their policies and procedures.



Policies

Components of a policy

All club/skating school policies should follow the same structure. Creating a policy template for future boards to use will be critical to maintain consistency of documents at the club/skating school. The policy name and number should be listed at the top of the document, and any supporting bylaws or legislation should also be listed. In addition, a policy should have a document control portion for the date of implementation and a date for future review by the board.

There are three main components of a policy: a *purpose statement*, a *scope statement*, and the *main policy statement*.

A *purpose statement* explains why the policy has been created and provides a clear rationale for why the policy is being implemented.

A *scope statement* describes who the policy applies to.

The *main policy statement* includes:

- Date the policy becomes effective
- Language for what the policy is
- Person(s) responsible for implementing the policy and ensuring compliance
- Consequences for noncompliance
- Reference to club procedures, forms, guidelines, instructions, and/or any applicable legislation

Starting the process

When developing a policy for your club/skating school, a three-step process is recommended:

1) Prepare	2) Draft	3) Finalize
a) Plan	a) Outline	a) Final draft
b) Research	b) First draft	b) Final approval
	c) Consult	c) Implement

Prepare

Planning is the first step in the process of developing a policy. Look at your club's/skating school's current documents and identify areas where policies need to be developed. Next, determine why it is essential for a policy to be developed and implemented in the specific topic area(s). From there, timelines and details can be created for each step of the policy writing and implementation process.

Once your club/skating school has a plan in place, the next step is to research the topic area. Look to other organization's policies on the topic and at other sports organizations who have a similar membership structure. Researching policies from other organizations will provide you with sample language to use that can be revised to fit the scope of your policy. Depending on the subject matter, you may wish to consult with committees and staff at your club/skating school. Through consultation, you will be able to gauge the initial reception of the policy topic which can help to drive the policy scope and language later in the process. It is also important to consult with provincial legislation and regulations and with Skate Ontario during this process.



Draft

Once you have completed planning, the next step is to develop an outline for the policy components. Organize your research data into an outline that makes sense for your club/skating school.

Once the outline has been prepared, work may begin on a first draft of the policy. Be sure to keep a standard format across all club/skating school policies so they are easy to use and understand. Remember to keep the content of the draft to the “what” and “why” of the policy topic.

Once your first draft has been created, it is time to consult with key club/skating school members. Consider having the Board of Directors review the first draft document. And depending on the content/context of the draft, you can also seek advice from professional sources, such as an HR specialist for staff/volunteer policies or an accountant for financial policies.

Finalize

After the consultation process is complete, you may need to rework the policy to incorporate the feedback you received. This step may take several rounds of editing before arriving at a final policy document. Remember that the policy should clearly outline the “what” and “why” of the topic area.

Next, the policy needs to be presented to the board for approval. The board may have additional revisions prior to providing final approval.

Once the board has approved the final policy and its date of implementation, the club/skating school needs to inform the membership of the new policy. It is recommended that policies be housed on your club's/skating school's website for easy access for members. Your club/skating school should consider direct communication to members in the form of an email to notify members of the policy and its date of implementation.

Policies to consider implementing

- Board policies, including items like conflict of interest, confidentiality and code of conduct
 - these may be extended to other members of the club/skating school like staff, volunteers, contractors, etc.
- Financial policies that describe limits of financial power, including things like:
 - who can sign cheques (including the specified monetary amount)
 - cash handling (at events or registration)
 - refunds
 - fee structures
- Operational or program policies
 - these will support effectiveness and efficiency of programs
 - registration policies
- Personnel policies that relate to staff, contractors or volunteers who need to be informed of requirements and expectations for their position
 - **It is strongly recommended that an HR expert or employment lawyer be engaged in this process to review these policies and any employment contracts/agreements*

Procedures

Like policies, procedures are essential for your club/skating school. Procedures guide the process of how a policy will be enforced or implemented. Think of a procedure as a recipe to be followed.



Ensure your procedure:

- Is specific and precise
- Describes the process to be performed in sequential order
- Is written in simple language
- Includes the consequences for noncompliance of the associated policy

Well written procedures describe the process for which the associated policy will take. It is also important that the procedure addresses all parties involved in the process to ensure members have a clear and concise process for which to follow.

Components of a procedure

All club/skating school procedures should follow a similar outline structure. Creating a template for future boards to use will be critical to maintain consistency of documents.

Club/skating school procedures will include a name and procedure number that correlates with the corresponding policy. The associated policy and any other linked/referenced bylaws or legislation should also be listed. In addition, procedures should have a document control portion for the date of implementation and a date for future review by the board.

Similar to club/skating school policies, the central component for procedures is the *main purpose statement*.

Main purpose statements will outline

- why the procedure is needed,
- what the action to be taken is,
- who will perform the action, and
- where and when the action will occur.

Measurable actions like quantity, quality and time can also be included in your procedure.

**An example of a measurable action is setting a timeframe for a certain operation or activity.*

The structure for the main purpose statement should be designed in an easy to understand format so that members will know what needs to be done and how it will be achieved. Using charts and bullet points in the structure of a main purpose statement will make a procedure clear and user-friendly for members.

The process for creating and implementing procedures is the same process used to create policies. Consistency is key to ensure fair and transparent processes are being executed at your club/skating school.

Implementation of policies and procedures

Once the board has approved the final version of a policy and/or procedure, the next step is to ensure the entirety of your membership has access to the documents. For current members, an email communication could be sent to notify them of the new policy and/or procedure and instructions about where it can be located. For new members, direction on where to find all existing policies and procedures should be provided.



Electronic vs hardcopy storage

Clubs/skating schools should strive to house all policies and procedures on the club website. Storing policies and procedures on a website allows members to have easy access to these documents and ensures they are viewing the most up-to-date versions.

**It is recommended that a disclaimer be added to the bottom of all policies and procedures stating that it is the responsibility of the user to confirm they are viewing the most up-to-date versions.*

In conclusion

Documented policies and procedures provide principles and organizational consistency, and verify responsibilities and boundaries for staff, volunteers and members. Policies and procedures construct a framework for good decision-making and draw attention to what is important to the club/skating school.

Sources:

Charity Village – [Writing Effective Policies and Procedures](#)

Kathleen Douglass – Principal at [Douglass Leadership Group](#)



SAMPLE Policy Framework**Policy #****TITLE/NAME OF POLICY:****Document Classification:** Policy**Related By-Law(s):****Related Legislation (if applicable):****Related Procedure:****Document control:**

Implementation	Date:
Next review by board	Date:

POLICY purpose:**POLICY scope:****POLICY statement:**

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