Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Inc

Developing Policies

The process for writing a policy

Step 1: Needs analysis

Consider why you need to review an existing policy or develop a new policy. Perhaps your regular review cycle is coming up or you have identified policy gaps because of changes in the way your House is operating or changes in the law.

Step 2: Research

Find out what other organisations have done and what examples are available. For example, find out what NHT or other Houses can offer or look to other similar organisations, or website such as Our Community (www.ourcommunity.com.au). Identify who you should consult, and how revising policies or creating new ones will impact on your other policies and how your administration and systems will be affected.

Step 3: Drafting

Compile a draft in the format you prefer. An example template is provided on the next page.

The purpose sets out what the policy intends to accomplish e.g. a health and safety policy may have a purpose of ensuring a safe and healthy workplace for all who work in or visit the House. It can also outline to whom the policy applies.

The policy states what your position and standards are on the subject.

The procedure gives step-by-step instructions for carrying out the policy, including, as appropriate, who is accountable to do certain things, and any other responsibilities of the people to whom the policy applies. It may be a section of the policy or a separate document that the policy refers to.

In some cases, you made need to provide definitions to give concise explanations of any terms used within the policy. This helps ensure that everyone is clear on what the policy means.

It is as good idea to record the date on which the policy was approved by the Management Committee, and came into effect.

All policies should be reviewed on a regular cycle, so record the date the policy is due to be reviewed.

Step 4: Review of the policy

Seek feedback within your House, and more widely as necessary, from those affected by the policy. In some cases, you might need to consult with external stakeholders for some policies.

Give careful consideration to how you will implement the policy and the practical steps you will need to take.

In some cases, your policy will have legal implications so seek professional advice where required.

Step 6: Approve the policy

Have the Management Committee formally adopt the policy and record in the minutes that the policy was adopted and the date that this happened. Also set a scheduled review date.

Step 7: Implement the policy

Make sure everyone who needs to know about the policy is informed and made aware of their responsibilities under the policy. Also make sure that everyone can easily get a hold of the policy when needed.
Give some thought to how you might publicise your policies (notice board, electronic, hard copy etc.)

Sample Policy and Procedure template

[Name of House]

Name of Policy

PURPOSE
The purpose of the policy is stated here; also includes any background information.
Who the policy applies to (scope).

POLICY
The policy statement is stated here; this is the policy.

PROCEDURES
Procedures are outlined here. Responsibilities can also be outlined here, or in some cases in a separate section.

DEFINITIONS
If necessary, include any terms that need explaining and their definitions

ADOPTION AND REVISION HISTORY
Include policy versions, approvals, review dates etc. here.

Practical tips for writing policies

- Use everyday language that is clear.
- Avoid jargon and acronyms.
- Organise the policy into clear and logical sections.
- Sequence in a logical manner.
- Structure to progress from the general to the specific.
- Use informative headings and sub-headings.
- Use short sentences.
- Use short paragraphs.
- Use a clear, user-friendly design.
- Use tables and flowcharts where applicable.
- Be concise.
- Avoid ambiguity.
- Use plain English and the active voice.
- As far as possible, avoid unnecessary technical or legalistic expressions. When you do need to include them, explain them.
- Avoid inappropriate language.
- Ensure consistency from one policy to another.
- Create a central maintenance source for all policies.