

Developing Policies

Description:

This tool provides a guide to developing policies and a checklist of essential questions.

How it can be used:

Policies are:

- Sets of decisions made by a governing body around a given issue
- Guides that regulate the conduct of board members and their staff
- Frameworks for action presenting goals, how they will be achieved and by whom

One major purpose of policies is to clarify roles and procedures. Although policies do not explain everything that occurs in practice, they do provide guidelines. Organizations adopt policies for various reasons, including saving time, establishing consistency, and minimizing risk and liability. An effective policy clarifies who is responsible for what, establishes a mechanism for appeal or redress in case of complaints, and provides a framework for evaluating progress.

Review the guidelines for comprehensive policy-making below. Do your policies need to be reviewed and refreshed? Do you have policies that govern the key areas of your health centre? Complete the checklist as part of the policy creation process. Be sure to follow up on any 'no' responses.

All policies, regardless of their type, generally contain the following five elements:

1. What the policy is trying to accomplish
2. How the objective will be accomplished
3. Who will implement the policy
4. How complaints will be handled
5. How and when the policy will be evaluated

Policies should be drafted in clear, precise and easily understandable language, yet be able to withstand potential legal challenges. A board should ensure that all its key policies are scrutinized by legal counsel before the policies are passed.

Use the following steps to create or review policies for your health organization.

1. Issue Definition
 - a. Recognize the issue
 - b. Analyze the situation
 - c. Define the issue
 - d. Set the priority
2. Goals and Values Clarification
 - a. Consider your values and goals
 - b. Position the issue within your values and goals
 - c. Describe how addressing the issue will support your values and goals
 - d. Develop indicators that will demonstrate whether you are addressing the issue
3. Stakeholder Involvement
 - a. Consider whether stakeholders are involved
 - b. Identify the stakeholders
 - c. Establish a forum for input and feedback
 - d. Provide stakeholders the opportunity to review and validate their input
4. Option Generation
 - a. Develop options and alternatives

- b. Demonstrate how each option will support your values and goals
- 5. Option Selection
 - a. Evaluate the options considering your values and goals
 - b. Identify the potential impacts of each option
 - c. Consider and discuss alternatives
 - d. Choose the most appropriate option
- 6. Policy Creation
 - a. Draft the policy elements
 - b. Circulate for comment (if required)
- 7. Policy Implementation
 - a. Determine how to implement policy – with whom, where, when
 - b. Assign responsibility for monitoring the implementation and ongoing compliance
 - c. Decide on a method for circulating and announcing the policy (if appropriate)
- 8. Policy Evaluation
 - a. Monitor the implementation of the policy and obtain feedback
 - b. Assess the results of the policy using the indicators previously identified
 - c. Revise the policy if necessary
 - d. Review the policy on a regular basis (1-5 years, depending on content of policy)

Ask yourself the following questions and address any that have a ‘no’ response.

Essential Questions	Yes	No
Is the policy consistent with our plans and strategic direction?		
Have all the relevant issues and stakeholders been identified?		
Are there prior or similar policies that will need adjustment as a result of the new policy?		
Have we reviewed the possible barriers to implementation of this policy?		
Are the policy objective and implementation procedures clear and do they address the barriers?		
Have those with relevant knowledge been consulted?		
Has a communication plan been developed that will facilitate a successful implementation?		
Is it clear how this policy will be monitored? Have all the accountability aspects been considered?		
Have we benchmarked this type of policy with similar organizations?		
Have we assessed the liability, financial and human resource impacts?		
Will this policy be combined with other policies in an organization policy manual?		
Is the policy in compliance with other statutory requirements (e.g., Band requirements)		
Has a date been identified when the policy will be reviewed?		

Source:

First Nations Health Managers – Governance, Strategy, Policy and Decision-Making Toolbox
 First Nations Health Managers Association