

# CREATING POLICIES FOR RESULTS

FROM *CHAOS* TO  **CLARITY**

Presented for the  
Metrowest Massachusetts Regional Library System  
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# Creating Policies for Results From Chaos to Clarity

## When you leave here today:

- You will be able to explain to your colleagues and board members why current, accurate, and effective policies are important.
- You will be able to recognize the difference between practice and policy in your library, and you will be able to define and identify the four elements of a policy: policy statements, regulations, procedures, and guidelines.
- You will have created an outline of the policy environment in your library.
- You will know how to develop and apply criteria to evaluate existing policies.
- You will have revised a policy and learned to recognize the unique conditions in your library that may affect the development of specific policies.
- You will be able to use the *Creating Policies for Results* process to begin the process of reviewing and revising the policies in your library.

## AGENDA

Policy Problems? What Policy Problems?

Policies *Do* Make a Difference...: Functions of Library Policies

... But They Need To Be *Effective* Policies: Characteristics of Effective Policy Manuals

Words Matter: Policy Definitions

Every Library Is Different: Policies in Your Library

What Does a Good Manual Look Like: Sample Policy Manual

*Lunch*

Not All Policies are Created Equal: Evaluation Criteria

Practice Makes Perfect: Write a Policy

The Process: Tasks and Steps

The Challenges: It's Not Easy, But You Can Do It

## WHAT IF...?

Mr. Johnson, an investment manager, asks to use the meeting room at the Oak Branch to present an investment seminar. He is told that library meeting rooms can only be used by non-profit organizations. Mr. Johnson's competitor, Ms. Anderson, asks to use the meeting room in Elm Branch to present an investment seminar and is allowed to do so. What problems might arise from this situation?

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Sam Smith wants to get a library card. During registration process the staff member who is helping Mr. Smith discovers that he lives in the local homeless shelter, the Tree County Rescue Mission. The staff member refuses to issue the card, saying that previous people from the mission have checked out materials and not returned them. Father Francis, the priest who runs the Rescue Mission, comes to the library to get a card and gives the Rescue Mission as his address. He, too, is refused a card. What problems might arise from this situation?

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# FUNCTIONS OF LIBRARY POLICIES

**Library Policy:** The generic term used for the policy statement, regulations, procedures, and guidelines (if any) that apply to a specific issue.

- Library policies provide a mechanism for library managers and staff to translate the library's service priorities into actions.
- Library policies serve as the primary tool for ensuring that all staff have the information they need to do their jobs effectively.
- Library policies provide a way to ensure that all members of the public know what they can expect from the library and that they are treated equitably.
- Library policies provide support for the library staff and members of the library's governing body in the event of legal action.

# CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE POLICY MANUALS

**Policy Manual:** A collection of library policy statements. Policy manuals may include regulations, procedures, and guidelines. Policy manuals are normally available in print format and may be available electronically as well.

- Effective policy manuals define current practice.
- Effective policy manuals reflect the library's priorities.
- Effective policy manuals are current, comprehensive, and consistent.
- Effective policy manuals can be accessed easily by all staff and are user-friendly.
- Effective policy manuals are in compliance with all local, state, and federal regulations.
- Effective policy manuals are developed and reviewed by all staff who will be affected by the policy statements, regulations, procedures, and guidelines.

# DEFINITIONS

**Practice:** The way things are actually done in your library. Practice may or may not be supported by policy statements, regulations, and procedures. Practice is generally conveyed via oral tradition as a part of a new staff member's orientation and it can become very subjective.

*The cash handling procedure says that one staff member should count the cash and another should verify the count, but we are small branch so the clerk takes care of it alone.*

**Policy Element:** The term used to refer to the four components of a policy: *policy statements, regulations, procedures, guidelines.*

- **Policy Statement:** A brief, written statement that describes **WHY** the library does something. Policy statements are written from the customer point of view and approved by the library's governing authority.

*To facilitate the management of the library and enhance service to the public, all library units will collect and report statistics on a regular schedule.*

- **Regulation:** Specific, written rules that further define the policy, describing **WHAT** must be done to support the policy. They are normally approved by the library's governing authority.

*All library fines, fees, and overdue materials must be cleared before a library user may renew his or her card.*

- **Procedure:** Written step-by-step descriptions of **HOW** the staff will carry out the policy and regulations. Procedures are more flexible than regulations and will change as the tools available to staff change. Frontline staff may be allowed to modify procedures in certain circumstances. Procedures are developed by staff and approved by library managers. They are not reviewed by or approved by the library's governing authority.

*The library staff member who books a tour will: (1) Complete the Tour Request Form; (2) Place it in the branch manager's in-box.*

- **Guideline:** A description of **BEST PRACTICES** that provides suggestions for staff on the most efficient ways to implement policy statements, regulations, and procedures. Guidelines are more philosophical than policy statements, regulations, or procedures and often are developed by staff committees. Guidelines are always approved by the library director but are rarely reviewed by the library's governing authority. Typical guidelines include reference guidelines and guidelines for serving people with special needs.

*Library staff assigned to provide information services will promptly and courteously greet all customers.*

# POLICY ELEMENTS

A. Example	B. Element
1. A user may not have more than 25 items on loan at any given time.	
2. After the application to use the meeting room has been completed: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. file the white copy in the Meeting room notebook</li> <li>2. give the yellow copy to the individual reserving the meeting room</li> <li>3. place the green copy in the mailbox in the staff room designated Custodial services.</li> </ol>	
3. The XXX Public Library must maintain an accurate and current record of user addresses. An applicant for a library card must, therefore, present valid verification of identity and residence to obtain a borrower card. The proof of address is particularly important to support the library's efforts to encourage the return of borrowed county property.	
4. Meeting rooms will be available for use only during the hours the library is open to the public. Exceptions may be made by the Library Director.	
5. Search the patron database to establish that the applicant is indeed a new borrower.	
6. Successful Pre-School Storytimes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When planning a storytime, keep the age of your intended audience in mind.</li> <li>• Select books that you enjoy.</li> <li>• Practice a few days before the presentation.</li> <li>• Greet the children as they enter the storytime area. Let them know that you are really glad to see them.</li> <li>• Hold the book in such a way that the children can see the pictures</li> </ul>	
7. A library user who has forgotten or temporarily misplaced his or her library card may charge up to 10 items if he or she can show valid proof of identity and current address.	
8. Processing fees will not be charged for damaged uncataloged items.	
9. The XXX Public Library is the community living room of XXX County. Therefore, the library provides meeting rooms in all of its facilities to enable community residents to share ideas and to learn from one another.	

<p>10. Send the completed Request for Reconsideration form to the Collection Development department in the next interagency delivery.</p>	
<p>11. Tours are presented by staff members or volunteers who have completed Tour Guide Training offered by the Library Volunteer Coordinator.</p>	
<p>12. Customer Behavior Expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Courteous behavior towards other library customers and staff members is expected.</li> <li>• The Library is not responsible for unattended children and expects that children under the age of eight will be accompanied by a parent or an adult responsible for them.</li> <li>• Customers are requested to either turn off (or place on vibrate) their cell phones and pagers when they are in the reference area of the library.</li> </ul>	
<p>13. To renew an item which a customer has brought to the library, the circulation clerk will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Choose the renew function from the circulation menu.</li> <li>2. Scan the barcode on the borrower's library card</li> <li>3. Scan the barcode on the item the customer wishes to renew</li> <li>4. Stamp the new due date on the item</li> <li>5. Inform the customer of the new due date</li> <li>6. Return the item to the borrower</li> </ol>	
<p>14. Library users will be limited to one hour of computer use if others are waiting to use the PCs.</p>	
<p>15. The XXX Public Library supports access to basic services and materials, without individual charge, whenever possible. The Library Board of Trustees annually establishes fees and fines for the Library. These charges are intended to ensure maximum availability of materials and to support the Board's philosophy of charging for value-added services.</p>	
<p>16. Each morning maintenance staff will check all meeting rooms to be sure that the tables and chairs have been stored appropriately and that the meeting rooms are clean and ready for use.</p>	
<p>17. Library DVDs have a loan period of 7 days.</p>	



# SAMPLE POLICY MANUAL

## PUBLIC SERVICE POLICY CATEGORIES AND SUBJECTS

### Governance and Organizational Structure

- GOV-1. City/County organization chart
- GOV-2. Locations and hours
- GOV-3. Library board bylaws
- GOV-4. Library board standing committees
- GOV-5. Library organization chart
- GOV-6. Staff association activities

### Management Policies

- MNG-1. Confidentiality of library records
- MNG-2. Statistics
- MNG-3. Petty cash
- MNG-4. Fund raising and donations
- MNG-5. Reconsideration of library materials
- MNG-6. Building maintenance
- MNG-7. Emergencies and disasters
- MNG-8. Meeting room use
- MNG-9. Exhibits and displays
- MNG-10. Bulletin boards
- MNG-11. Distribution of non-library materials
- MNG-12. Staff committees and staff task forces
- MNG-13. Inclement weather and closing

### Customer Services

- CUS-1. Customer service
- CUS-2. Customer behavior
- CUS-3. Unattended children

### Circulation Services

- CIR-1. Library cards for residents
- CIR-2. Library cards for non-residents
- CIR-3. Loans period and loan limits
- CIR-4. Renewals
- CIR-5. Reserves
- CIR-6. Claims returned/never had
- CIR-7. Lost or damaged materials
- CIR-8. Fines and fees
- CIR-9. Borrowing materials by staff

### Information Services

- INF-1. Priorities for reference service
- INF-2. Interlibrary loan
- INF-3. Internet use
- INF-4. Use of Library-Provided Personal Computers

### Group Services

- GSV-1. Programs in the library
- GSV-2. Co-sponsored programs in the library
- GSV-3. Community presentations
- GSV-4. Special events
- GSV-5. Tours
- GSV-6. Computer training for the public

# NOT ALL POLICIES ARE EQUAL

## **A. Evaluation Criteria for Policy Statements - Tree Co. Public Library**

1. An excellent policy statement is brief. (All)
2. An effective policy statement describes why the library does something. (All)
3. An excellent policy statement is written from the customer's point of view. (All)
4. An excellent policy statement has been approved by the library's governing authority. (All)
5. *An excellent library policy is easily understood by the staff and the public. (Tree Co.)*
6. *An effective library policy is on that supports the library's goals and objectives. (Tree Co.)*
7. *An excellent library policy is one that is up-to-date and reflects the library's current environment. (Tree Co.)*
8. *An effective library policy reflects all applicable federal, state, and local statutes. (Tree Co.)*

## **B. Evaluation Criteria for Regulations - Tree Co. Public Library**

1. An effective regulation is one that derives from the policy statement and is supportive of the library's goals and objectives. (All)
2. An excellent regulation is specific. (All)
3. An effective regulation further defines the policy. (All)
4. An excellent regulation supports the policy statement. (All)
5. An effective regulation tells what must be done to support the policy. (All)
6. An excellent regulation has been approved by the library's governing authority. (All)
7. *An excellent regulation is specific. (Tree Co.)*
8. *An excellent regulation is written in lay terms that the public can understand. (Tree Co.)*
9. *An effective regulation would be considered to be reasonable by the typical library user. (Tree Co.)*

## **C. Evaluation Criteria for Procedures – Tree Co. Public Library**

1. An excellent procedure is a step-by-step description of how the staff will carry out the policy and regulations. (All)
2. An effective procedure may be modified by staff under certain circumstances. (All)
3. An effective procedure has been developed by staff who are familiar with the task to be performed. (All)
4. An excellent procedure has been approved by library managers. (All)
5. *An effective procedure states explicitly when it may be modified by a staff member. (Tree Co.)*
6. *An effective procedure provides samples of forms as well as instructions about how to complete them. (Tree Co.)*
7. *An effective procedure presents activities, tasks, and steps in logical order. (Tree Co.)*
8. *An effective procedure is written in a style and using a vocabulary that the typical staff member will understand. (Tree Co.)*

# DISTRIBUTION OF NON-LIBRARY MATERIALS

**Policy Statement:** The Tree County Public Library will limit the distribution of non-library materials within its facilities to items produced by library advocacy associations and governmental entities.

## Regulations

The Assistant Director will review materials and determine whether or not they meet the requirements for distribution.

The Library has the right to determine how long materials will be made available for distribution.

The Library has the right to determine how many copies of each item will be accepted for distribution.

## Procedures

- I. Assistant Director will:
  - A. Review materials that agencies wish to have distributed
  - B. Determine whether or not materials may be distributed at branch libraries.
    1. If materials can be distributed, the Assistant Director will prepare a "Distribution Approved" form and give it to the Administrative Assistant who will then send materials to each branch in accordance with the previously determined percentages.
    2. If materials can be distributed, the Assistant Director will inform the Administrative Assistant who will call the contact person for the entity that wished to have the material distributed.
- II. Branch managers will designate a staff member to manage the handouts in accordance with this policy.
- III. Staff member assigned to manage the handouts will:
  - A. Place handouts in the appropriate place within 24 hours of receiving them from library administration.
  - B. Keep the handout area neat.
  - C. Restock the handout area when necessary.
  - D. Remove out-of-date or unauthorized material from the handout area.

# POLICY ELEMENT REVIEW SUMMARY

Policy Category: *Public Services*

Subject: *Distribution of Non-Library Materials*

A. Element	B. Revision Level Required*
1. Policy Statement <i>Observations</i>	
2. Regulations <i>Observations</i>	
3. Procedures <i>Observations</i>	
4. Guidelines <i>Observations</i>	

**\*Use the following scale to identify the level of revision required for each element of a policy:**

Level of Revision Required for an Element
0 No revision needed to meet criteria
1 Minor revision needed to meet criteria
2 Moderate rewrite necessary to meet criteria
3 Total rewrite necessary to meet criteria
4 Does not exist-needs to be written
NA Not applicable-refers only to guidelines

Adapted from Workform 7: Policy Element Review Summary in *Creating Policies for Results: From Chaos to Clarity* (ALA, 2003).

# MEETING ROOM USE - TEMPLATE

## POLICY QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS

1. Why does the library have a meeting room or meeting rooms?
2. What is the primary purpose of the meeting room(s)?
3. How does the use of the meeting room(s) support the library's goals and objectives?

## REGULATIONS QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS

1. What events or programs may occur in the meeting room(s)?
2. What events or programs, if any, are prohibited in the meeting room(s)?
3. What is the occupancy code limit for the meeting room(s)?
4. Who may reserve the meeting room(s)? Adults only? Young adults? Children?
5. Is there a fee for the use of the meeting room(s)? If more than one room is available, does the amount of the fee depend on which room which is reserved?
  - a. If there is a fee, must it be paid at the time the meeting room is reserved?
  - b. Under what circumstances, if any, are the fees waived? For example, are they waived if another city or county department is using the room for official business or if the library is co-sponsoring the program?
  - c. If the meeting is canceled, will the fee be refunded? If so, under what circumstances?
6. May the meeting room be used when the library is closed? If so, is there an additional fee to cover the cost of staff who must stay until the event is over?
7. May the individual or group that is using the meeting room charge a fee for people to attend a program they are offering in the meeting room? If so, may fees be collected on library premises?
8. Will the individual or group that is renting the meeting room be expected to sign an agreement that states the terms and conditions of the usage of the room?
9. How far in advance may meeting rooms be reserved? Does this vary depending on the user? For example, may the library staff reserve the meeting room with more lead time than community organizations are allowed?
10. Who is responsible for meeting room set up and clean up?
11. May food and beverages be consumed in the meeting room? May alcohol be consumed in the meeting room?

12. May the individual or group using the meeting room borrow or rent the library's audiovisual equipment or supplies? If so, is there a fee? If equipment may be rented, must a library staff member operate it?
13. May an individual or group that is using the meeting room on a regular basis store any of their literature or equipment at the library? If so, under what terms and conditions?
14. May an individual or group using the meeting room offer items for sale to the attendees of an event or program that is being held in the meeting room?
15. May an individual or group using the meeting room post or distribute a flyer in the library about the upcoming event or program? Will the library advertise or announce the event in its Calendar of Events?
16. If the library has more than one meeting room, are the regulations the same for all of the rooms? If not, which regulations apply to which rooms?
17. If the library has a Friends of the Library, library foundation or other group of advocates and supporters, are they bound by the same regulations that apply to other community organizations? If not, which regulations apply and which do not?
18. Under what circumstances, if any, will the library co-sponsor an event or program? If the library does co-sponsor an event or program, which regulations apply and which do not?
19. If there is a complaint about the meeting room policy or how it was implemented,
  - a. to whom is that complaint submitted?
  - b. what process will be followed to address the complaint?
20. If there is a complaint about the content of a program presented in the meeting room?
  - a. to whom is that complaint submitted?
  - b. what process will be followed to address the complaint?

# EXHIBITS AND DISPLAYS - TEMPLATE

## POLICY QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS

1. Why does the library create or authorize the creation of exhibits or displays?
2. What types of items may be included in an exhibit or display?
3. How do exhibits and displays support the library's goals and objectives?

## DEFINITIONS

1. What is an *exhibit*?
2. What is a *display*?

## REGULATIONS QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS

1. Are exhibits or displays created only by library staff or are other organizations and individuals authorized to mount exhibits or displays in the library?
2. If other organizations and individuals are authorized to mount exhibits or displays,
  - a. how do they indicate their interest in mounting an exhibit or display?
  - b. what criteria are used to determine which exhibit or displays will be accepted and who is responsible for enforcing the criteria?
  - c. are there rules for signage, size, content, and the like that must be observed?
  - d. must a release from liability form be signed that describes and limits the library's responsibility in the event that an exhibit or display is damaged or items become lost?
  - e. may an exhibit or display contain items (such as art work or crafts) that are for sale?
  - f. may an exhibit or display contain the name, address and phone number of the person or group that created it?
3. Who is responsible for the content and quality of exhibits or displays produced by library staff?
4. How are exhibits or displays scheduled and by whom?
5. Where does the library allow exhibits or displays to be mounted?
6. If there is more than one exhibit or display area, do the regulations vary from area to area? If so, which regulations apply to which area?
7. Is there a maximum, minimum or fixed period of time for exhibits or displays?

8. Under what circumstances, if any, are library materials used in exhibits or displays?
9. If library materials are used in exhibits or displays, are the materials available for circulation? If they are not available for circulation, may reserves be placed on them?
10. If there is a complaint about the Exhibit and Display policy or how the policy was implemented,
  - a. to whom is that complaint made?
  - b. what process will be followed to address the complaint?
11. If there is a complaint about the content of an exhibit or display,
  - a. to whom is that complaint made?
  - b. what process will be followed to address the complaint?



# TASKS AND STEPS

## A. Policy Audit Inventory Tasks and Steps

### Task 1: Identify

- Step 1.1: Refine the scope of the inventory.
- Step 1.2: Prepare a list of all official policy statements, regulations, procedures, and guidelines that fall with the scope of the inventory.
- Step 1.3: Prepare a list any other (unofficial or quasi-official) policy statements, regulations, procedures, and guidelines that fall with the scope of the inventory.

### Task 2: Collect

- Step 2.1: Prepare instructions for the staff.
- Step 2.2: Inform staff and collect the documents.
- Step 2.3: Keep a log of documents collected.

### Task 3: Organize

- Step 3.1: Identify the policy categories to be used to organize the documents you received.
- Step 3.2: Review and define each item received.
- Step 3.3: Group items by category and subject.

## B. Policy Audit Assessment Tasks and Steps

### Task 1: Create

- Step 1.1: Assign responsibility for the assessment phase of the policy audit.
- Step 1.2: Develop draft evaluation criteria for policy statements, regulations, procedures, and guidelines.
- Step 1.3: Obtain approval of evaluation criteria.

### Task 2: Evaluate

- Step 2.1: Design the review process.
- Step 2.2: Learn how to use criteria to evaluate policies.
- Step 2.3: Evaluate the policies.
- Step 2.4: Discuss the evaluations with the Policy Audit Review Committee.

### Task 3: Conclude

- Step 3.1: Develop a list of all needed policies.
- Step 3.2: Summarize the committee's recommendations.
- Step 3.3: Thank the members of the Policy Audit Review Committee.

## **C. Policy Development Tasks and Steps**

### **Task 1: Schedule**

Step 1.1: Determine level of effort.

Step 1.2: Determine priority

Step 1.3: Develop master schedule

### **Task 2: Write the policy statement and regulations**

Step 2.1: Identify who needs to be involved.

Step 2.2: Identify and evaluate current practice in your library and in other libraries.

Step 2.3: Write.

Step 2.4: Review and revise.

Step 2.5: Obtain approval.

### **Task 3: Write procedures**

Step 3.1: Identify who needs to be involved.

Step 3.2: Identify and evaluate current practice in your library and best practices in other libraries.

Step 3.3: Write.

Step 3.4: Review and revise.

Step 3.5: Obtain approval.

### **Task 4: Write guidelines (if needed)**

Step 4.1: Identify who needs to be involved.

Step 4.2: Identify and evaluate current practice in your library and best practices in other libraries.

Step 4.3: Write.

Step 4.4: Review and revise.

Step 4.5: Obtain approval.

## **D. Policy Implementation Task and Steps**

### **Task 1: Communicate with internal audiences**

Step 1.1: Organize policy manual.

Step 1.2: Publish and distribute policies internally.

Step 1.3: Train staff.

Step 1.4: Obtain needed supplies, forms, etc.

### **Task 2: Communicate with library support groups and external audiences**

Step 2.1: Inform library support groups.

Step 2.2: Inform other external audiences.

**Task 3: Monitor implementation**

Step 3.1: Observe implementation.

Step 3.2: Modify policies as needed.

**Task 4: Update and maintain the policy manual**

Step 4.1: Initiate development on next category or type of policy.

Step 4.2: Schedule regular review cycle for existing policies.

Step 4.3: Schedule annual review of master category list.

# POLICY DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

## Understanding the Process

- The unknown is scary.
- *Creating Policies for Results* provides the blueprint.

## Getting Motivated

- First, you have to *believe* that policies are important.
- Then you have to *act* on your belief.

## Finding the Time and Energy

- Time and energy come from understanding the difference between *urgent* and *important*
  - *Urgent* means "calling for immediate attention"
  - *Important* means "marked by or indicative of significant worth or consequence; valuable in content or relationship"

## Building Staff and Board Support

- You can't sell what you don't believe in.
- Staff and board need to know what they will get from the policy process.
- Staff and board expect different things from policies.
- Ignoring potential problems usually backfires.

## Making Decisions

- The four steps in the decision-making process are:
  - Defining the *problem*
  - Collecting *data*
  - Identifying the *options*
  - Selecting the *best option*

## Building Staff Consensus on New or Revised Policies

- Consensus is the process of finding a mutually acceptable resolution to an issue.
- Consensus does not mean that everyone believes the resolution is the best of all possible options.

## Disseminating and Enforcing New or Revised Policies

- Staff can't follow policies that they don't have.
- Policies that are not enforced are worse than no policies at all.

# RESOURCES FOR RESULTS

## **E-LEARNING@PLA:** *Creating Policies for Results*

This course, developed by Sandra Nelson, is based on the popular American Library Association (ALA) publication *Creating Policies for Results: From Chaos to Clarity*. Participants will work with each other and June Garcia to discuss and resolve real library policy problems. During the course, participants will learn to evaluate their libraries' existing policies, determine what additional policies are needed, revise and develop policies, and establish a process to implement the new or revised policies. The curriculum features interactive exercises, collaborative work, threaded discussions, and online chats with instructors and colleagues. Each participant will have approximately three months to finish the course, and then another nine months access to the system. For more information about this innovative training program, log on to the PLA website at <http://www.pla.org>.

## **BOOKS NOW AVAILABLE**

Nelson, Sandra and June Garcia. *Creating Policies for Results: From Chaos to Clarity*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2003.

Mayo, Diane and Jeanne Goodrich. *Staffing for Results: A Guide to Working Smarter*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2002.

Nelson, Sandra. *The New Planning for Results: A Streamlined Approach*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2001.

Nelson, Sandra, Diane Mayo, and Ellen Altman. *Managing for Results: Effective Resource Allocation for Public Libraries*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2000.