

# Policies & Procedures Guide

## Hivos – Organizational Policies & Procedures

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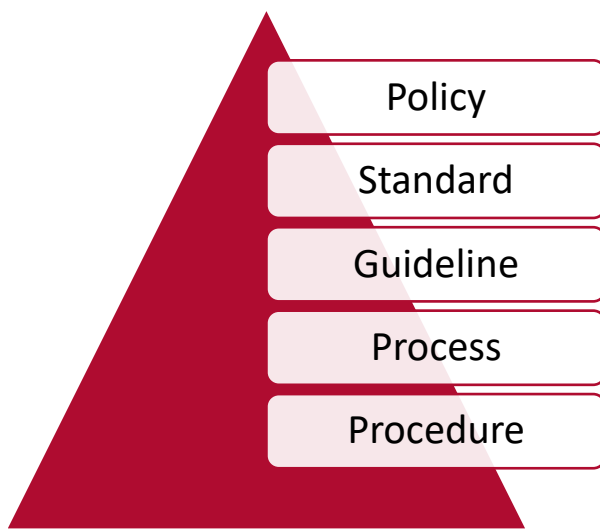
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## Defining the Main Components of Policies & Procedures Documents

The first step in drafting organization-wide standardization and control documents is to differentiate between policies, standards, guidelines, processes, and procedures.



### ***Policy***

A formal, brief, and high-level statement or plan that embraces an organization's general beliefs, goals, objectives, and acceptable procedures for a specified subject area. Policies always state required actions and may include pointers to standards.

Policy attributes include the following:

- Require compliance (mandatory)
- Failure to comply results in a certain action (e.g. disciplinary action)
- Focus on desired results, not on means of implementation
- Further defined by standards and guidelines

### ***Standard***

Standards consist of specific low-level mandatory controls that help enforce and support the policy.

Standards help to ensure consistency across the business and usually contain controls relating to implementation. They should:

- Make a policy more meaningful and effective
- Include one or more accepted specifications for hardware, software, or behavior

### **Guideline**

Guidelines consist of recommended, non-mandatory controls that help support standards or serve as a reference when no applicable standard is in place. They are also referred to as “best practices”.

Guidelines should be viewed as best practices that are not usually requirements but are strongly recommended. They could consist of additional recommended controls that support a standard or help fill in the gaps where no specific standard applies.

### **Process**

Processes clearly define all actionable items within policy documents. They include information on how to deal with different scenarios within the context of a policy, standard, or guideline.

A process identifies the triggers for launching an action and describes the conditions for resolving it. Processes do not dive into specifics on how to perform each task but provide an overview of the different steps that need to be taken.

### **Procedure**

Procedures consist of step-by-step instructions to assist employees in implementing the various policies, standards, guidelines, and processes.

A procedure gets down to specifics, explaining how to implement controls systematically. Here are some characteristics of procedures:

- Procedures define "how" to protect resources and are the mechanisms to enforce policy.
- Procedures provide a quick reference in times of crisis.
- Procedures help eliminate the problem of a single point of failure.
- Also known as a SOP (Standard Operating Procedure)

## Document Management and Version Control

Version control is important when documents are being created, and for any records that undergo a lot of revision and redrafting. It helps us to track changes and identify when key decisions were made along the way. It is particularly important for electronic documents that are being reviewed by a number of different users.

Knowing which version of a document you are looking at is important if you are trying to find out which version of a policy is currently in force, or which version of a policy was in use at a particular time.

### *What is Documented Information?*

Information required to be controlled and maintained by an organization and the medium on which it is contained. Documented information can be in any format and media and from any source.

Documented information can refer to:

- The management system, including related processes
- Information created in order for the organization to operate (documentation)
- Evidence of results achieved

Documented information can be used to communicate a message, provide evidence of what was planned has actually been done, or knowledge sharing.

The following are some of the main objectives of an organization's documented information independent of whether or not it has implemented a formal quality management system:

- **Communication of Information** - As a tool for information transmission and communication. The type and extent of the documented information will depend on the nature of the organization's products and processes, the degree of formality of communication systems and the level of communication skills within the organization, and the organizational culture.
- **Evidence of Conformity** - Provision of evidence that what was planned has actually been done.
- **Knowledge sharing** - To disseminate and preserve the organization's experiences. A typical example would be a technical knowledge, which can be used as a base for design and development of a new service.

## *Document Versions*

There are various options you can adopt to version control your records. Use the most appropriate option depending on the number of iterations you expect, and the number of individuals involved in the process. Some documents will only need the simpler techniques, such as the use of naming conventions, but some complex and formal documents will need a version control table.

## *File Naming Conventions*

At the simplest level you can use file naming conventions to identify the version of a document. Use the file name of the document to determine both the version and status alongside the subject, for example:

- Sexual Harassment Policy\_Draft\_v0.1
- Sexual Harassment Policy\_Final\_v2.0

Remember to update the version number on the file name as well as the header (or footer) of the document itself. It is easy to update a document and forget to rename the version number on either the file name or the document which can lead to confusion.

Unless you don't need to keep previous versions of the document, always save updated versions as "Read-only" to ensure you are forced to create a new version the next time you need to update it.

File naming conventions alone will not tell you who made the change and what the change was. If it is important to record this information using a version control table.

## *Version Numbers*

Version numbering helps to distinguish one version of a document from another. For some documents, you may decide that a simple numbering system consisting of consecutive whole numbers is sufficient to help you keep track of which version you are working on. However, documents that go through numerous stages of development before a final version is reached, and for those that are developed through input by multiple individuals, you may decide to adopt version numbers to keep track of both minor and major changes to that document.

### Minor Revisions

Minor revisions are small changes made to a document such as spelling or grammar corrections, and other similarly simple changes. Minor revisions to a document are reflected by making increments to the decimal number.

### Major Revisions

Major revisions are changes to a document that require the document to be re-approved (either by an individual or a group). Major revisions are reflected by incrementing the whole number by 1.

Version	Examples
A minor change to draft document is reflected by increasing the decimal figure incrementally. This may include the file name "Draft" if preferred.	Draft_v0.1 (first version of draft) Anti-Discrimination Policy_ 0.2 (second version of draft) Strategic Plan_0.3 Draft (third version of draft)
A major change to a document, such as when it is approved, is reflected by increasing the whole number by 1. This may include the file name "final" if preferred.	Final Version 1.0 (first approved version) Anti-Discrimination Policy 2.0 (second approved version) Strategic Plan_v3.0 Draft (third approved version)
A minor change to an approved document (a change that does not require the document to be re-approved) is reflected by increasing the decimal number consecutively.	Document Version 1.0 (first approved version) Final_v1.1 (minor amendment of first approved version) Policy 2.1 (minor amendment of second approved version)

### Version Control and Document Control Tables

Version control tables provide historical data about each update made to a document. It is useful to include the author, date, and notes about each change made so you can refer back to what these changes were.

Version Control			
Version	Author	Date	Changes
0.1	Nahed Khairallah	26-03-2018	First draft
0.2	Nahed Khairallah	11-04-2018	Changed dates in section 2
0.3	Nahed Khairallah	10-05-2018	Minor changes to Table of Contents
1.0	Nahed Khairallah	01-06-2018	Approved by BOD

In addition to a Version Control Table, it may be useful to include additional information in a Document Control Table which might include the following relevant information:

Document Control	
Document Title	
Version Number	Author(s) (name, job title, and division)
Date Approved	Document Status
Effective Date	Approved By
Superseded Version	Date of Next Review

Version control tables are useful to have at the start of a document whilst the document is being developed. Alternatively, they can be created as a separate document to that document and filed in the same electronic folder for reference purposes only. Document Control Tables if used should be inserted on the front page of a document.

### *Best Practice Considerations*

#### *Document Owner*

If there are numerous parties involved in drafting a document, it is good practice to have a single person nominated to manage the overall version control. This may require the collation of numerous versions of a document with track changes or other changes suggested.

#### *Keeping Draft Versions*

Once you have finalized a document, a decision should be made on whether the drafts now need to be kept or whether they can be deleted.



In the majority of cases it should be possible to delete drafts once the final version of a document has been agreed to. This will help to reduce the confusion caused by the duplication of documents and means that there is less danger of earlier versions being accidentally used.

You should keep drafts if you think it is necessary to preserve a record of the process of developing the document. This may be, for example to maintain a record of why particular changes were made or to help when the document is redeveloped at some future date.

## **Effective Implementation of Policies and Procedures**

To implement effective policies and procedures at your workplace, follow these steps to get the best results:

### ***Step 1: Consultation***

When developing your policies and procedures, you must consult with all relevant stakeholders, especially those who are directly affected by the policies and procedures.

Consultation should ensure that every person in your workplace understands the importance of organizational policies and procedures and why they need to be implemented effectively. It will also ensure that the policies and procedures are realistic and actionable on a daily basis.

Consultation helps to achieve more effective policies and procedures and is a greater motivation for employees to follow them.

### ***Step 2: Tailor the Policy to your Company***

The policies and procedures you adopt need to be tailored to the needs of your business, not just lifted straight from a generic manual, or adopted because they are common in your industry.

If you use policies and procedures from another source, it is essential that you adapt them to your organization's operations.

### ***Step 3: Be Specific***

All policies should be short and succinct. All procedural steps should be set out in clear and plain English.

This will create an "auditable standard", meaning that you create a standard that can be used to measure whether your compliance obligations are being met or not. The obligations outlined in an auditable standard should be defined in enough detail that persons in your workplace understand exactly what is expected of them.

Specifically state what actions should be taken. For example, don't say "store documents safely", but state how this should be done, e.g. "documents must be stored in filing cabinets with a combination lock".

#### ***Step 4: Make the Policy Realistic***

Make sure your organization has the time, resources, and personnel to implement the policy.

There is no point in adopting a policy which aspires to the best practice possible if your business cannot realistically adopt the procedures set out.

#### ***Step 5: Publicize the Policies and Procedures***

Put your policies and procedures in writing and make them available to your entire workforce.

If possible, keep all your policies and procedures in a single manual, and make copies readily available to all employees. Publish the documents on the organization's intranet for easy access.

#### ***Step 6: Train all Employees in Policies and Procedures***

You have an obligation to provide adequate information, instruction, supervision, and training to your employees.

Ensure that new employees are trained and familiar with organizational policies and procedures, and that existing staff receive appropriate training, e.g. annual refresher courses.

Policies and procedures should also be reiterated and discussed with staff regularly at team meetings to ensure that employees remain aware of the importance of the policies and procedures.

It is a good idea to have all employees sign off after they have read, understood, and agree to comply with your workplace policies. You should also keep records of training and induction. Make sure that you record attendees and details of training content in case an employee fails to sign a training record.

### ***Step 7: Be consistent in Your Policy Implementation***

Supervision of your workplace to ensure that the policies and procedures are being properly implemented by all employees is essential.

Follow-up to ensure that any failure to follow the policy or procedure is addressed.

All supervisors and managers must lead by example in implementing policies and procedures.

If managers condone practices which do not fall within the policy, it could be argued that disciplinary action against an employee who fails to follow the policy is unfair. The consequence of any deliberate breach should be appropriate to the severity of the breach, whether it be:

- Counselling
- Disciplinary action (e.g. a warning)
- Dismissal (in serious circumstances)

### ***Step 8: Review All Policies and Procedures Regularly***

Policies and procedures must be reviewed periodically.

When any changes occur, ensure your policies and procedures remain relevant and effective. For example, a change may occur when a business purchases and implements new technology or when new compliance requirements emerge. Any such changes mean that relevant procedures should be reviewed.

The review cycle will depend on the circumstances and document type, but it is a good idea to review policies at least every 2 years.

Implement a document management system that:

- Triggers reviews
- Notes the dates of change
- Involves interactive revision

All employees need to be made aware of the changes to policy and procedure when they occur.

### ***Step 9: Enforce the Policies and Procedures***

Once your policies and procedures have been implemented, they need to be enforced. Make sure that you approach this consistently as this is an important factor in being able to discipline a worker for a breach of policy.

The simpler the system, the easier it is for workers to understand and for employers to enforce policies and procedures.