Writing Policies

Monica Struck, Public Library Specialist

Mary Soucie, State Librarian

Before We Begin…

- We are still breaking ground using Microsoft Teams as a conference platform. Please be patient as we work through any kinks.

- If you were placed in this session in error, please hit the return button and let Cindy know which session you are meant to be in.

- Let's go learn stuff!

What makes a good policy?

- Concise
- Adaptable
- Plain Language
- Specific
- In line with the law
- Separate from procedure

Before you start writing a policy…

Make sure it is actually needed.

Investigate how other libraries are handling the issue.

Consult stakeholders.

Review existing policies in your organization to ensure that your policy will not be in conflict.

Drafting a Policy

- Don't reinvent the wheel!
- Include staff who will be enforcing the policy in the process.
- Define the purpose and scope of the policy.
- Identify responsibilities and procedures (but keep them separate!).
- Keep it professional. Use consistent format.
- Use plain language.
- Make it last! Use position titles instead of names.

After you draft

Read it through for grammatical errors.

Invite stakeholder feedback.

Revise!

Get your policy approved and published through your organization's process.

Policy vs. Procedure

- Sets the what and why for library operations
- Broad overview
- Provides a framework
- Reviewed every 1-3 years

- Sets how the library operates
- Very specific, step-by-step
- Written by the library director with staff input (when applicable)
- Can be changed as needed
- Reviewed and updated constantly

4 Measures of Legally Enforceable Policies

1. Is the policy reasonable, including reasonable penalties?

2. Could there be discriminatory application of the policy?

3. Is the policy measurable?

4. Does the policy comply with current statutes?

Credit: New York State Library
https://nyslibrary.libguides.com/publiclibrarystandards/policies

External vs. Internal policies

External: Any policy that applies to patron use of the library

Examples:

- Circulation
- Computer Use/Social Media
- Patron Privacy (aka Patron Confidentiality)
- ILL
- Collection Development & Reconsideration

Internal: Any policy and procedures that apply to staff

Examples:

- Staff handbook (pay, benefits, schedules, dress code, etc.)
- Social media guidelines
- Personal use of equipment such as a copier
- Workplace safety
- Programming and events

Common Library Policies

- Circulation
  - May include ILL or ILL may be separate
- Collection Development & Reconsideration
  - may be one or separate policies
- Computer Use/Internet Use
- Disaster/Emergency Preparedness
- Guest users
  - Including library card access

- Patron Behavior Policy
- Patron Privacy (Patron Confidentiality)
- Personnel Policy/Employee Handbook
- Programs
- Social Media
- Unattended Children and Vulnerable Adults

Resources

North Dakota State Library

ACRL/EBSS Resources for Curriculum Materials Professionals

ACRL guidelines for the preparation of policies on library access

BYU Tips for Writing Policies and Procedures

Questions?

Mary Soucie

msoucie@nd.gov

(701)328-4654 (O)

(701)516-6166 (C)

Monica Struck

mcstruck@nd.gov

701-328-4680