

The Community Resource Kit

Guidance for people setting up and running community organisations



Section 5

Policies

THE COMMUNITY RESOURCE KIT

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Introduction

Policies are the guiding principles by which an organisation is run. They set out a group's kaupapa and tikanga – the core values and principles, and the processes by which the group operates.

Policies:

- clarify the organisation's mission, values and strategic direction
- provide boundaries and instructions for appropriate action
- provide guidelines to ensure consistent decision-making
- provide a consistent response to commonly occurring events
- define membership priorities and standards
- ensure the group is accountable, safeguarding it from possible legal problems or criticism.

Organisations should have two levels of policy:

1. Governance policies designed, endorsed and monitored by the board
e.g. an organisation's mission statement.
2. Operational policies designed, endorsed and monitored by management
e.g. an organisation's policy on computer use.

What's in this section?

This section covers:

- why policies are needed
- developing policies
- areas that must and should be covered in your policies
- some sample policies and procedures
- how to influence government policy.

Words used

- **policies** set out the kaupapa and tikanga – what needs to happen (or not)
- **procedures** set out the processes for putting policy into action.

Why have policies?

Some reasons for a group to maintain a set of policies are:

- so the people in an organisation have a framework for action that helps them get on with the job
- efficiency – so people in the organisation don't have to discuss the same issues every time they arise. One well thought-out decision can be applied to many similar cases
- to meet legal and other requirements
- to comply with accreditation standards, and
- to keep improving the quality of service and delivery.

Stakeholder	Benefits of having a clear policy framework
Clients/service recipients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • know what to expect and how to address any concerns.
Staff (including volunteers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have clear roles and boundaries • know what is expected of them • can rely on the policies to say 'no' when asked to do something that is outside policy (e.g. that may involve a conflict of interest).
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has a framework for managing the organisation • is provided with a degree of protection when challenged about issues beyond their control where proper procedures have been followed (e.g. if a child is harmed and a community agency working with the family 'blamed').
Committee/board members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a way of setting and communicating the values of the organisation both internally and externally.
Other community members/agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • know where the organisation stands and where other groups may link in with them.
Funders (including potential funders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can see whether (or how) a funding proposal fits in with the organisational mission and values • are provided with a degree of confidence that the organisation is able to undertake the project for which it is seeking funding.
The organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is able to present itself clearly • manages its risks.

Adapted from Paul Bullen Management Alternatives: <http://www.mapl.com.au/policy/tp1.htm>

Developing policies

A healthy, well-run organisation will develop key policies to cover strategic (long-term/high-level) and operational (practical, day-to-day) matters. Policies are created for a definite purpose and linked to the group's mission, culture and values. Once developed, policies should be reviewed regularly to reflect change within the group and within the community. A clear process of reviewing and updating policies will ensure everyone affected by a policy has the latest version and all policies are implemented and communicated throughout the organisation.

Policies should be:

- easily understood and written in plain, jargon-free language
- maintained in electronic and paper formats
- contained in a policy manual with all the organisation's other policies
- available at all board meetings
- accessible at all times to all staff or volunteers
- regularly reviewed and updates notified.

From Family and Community Services: <http://www.familyservices.govt.nz>

Risks arise when policies are:

- developed in a vacuum, without input from all stakeholders
- developed in an unplanned or retrospective way, such as to meet the requirements of a funding proposal or audit
- taken from another organisation without being adapted
- not part of day-to-day operation or are used only when problems arise, or to show funders or auditors
- obsolete because they have not kept up with changes in the group or the community
- version control – policies not updated or notified regularly, so staff (and others) operate from old versions.

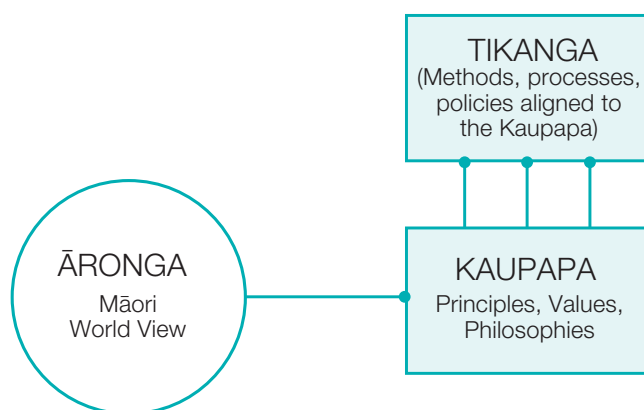
Tikanga framework for developing policies

An example of a Māori framework for setting policies or developing the kaupapa and tikanga of an organisation is provided by Te Wānanga o Raukawa:

Te Wānanga-o-Raukawa Charter: <http://www.wananga.com/>

‘The basic idea is that through Pūrākau, Karakia, Mōteatea, Whakataukū and Whakapapa, our World View is described and a set of Kaupapa are drawn, from which the culture is founded. These are the bedrock, the foundation of the culture. Growing from within the Kaupapa are our Tikanga, just like a tree springs from Papatūānuku. The tikanga are actions, methods, processes, policies, etc, that are aligned and consistent with the foundation Kaupapa. All tikanga purporting to be Māori should find their bases in Kaupapa.’

This Māori framework is represented as follows:



Policy and procedures development process

1. Set overall policy objectives

These are the overall objectives, or guiding principles, that underlie your policies and need to be kept in mind when developing the details of your policies. They link to the mission and values of the organisation.

For example, the objectives of Xxxx group's policies are:

- Xxxx's services are accessible and appropriate to its community
- Xxxx supports the Treaty of Waitangi and the rights of Māori as tangata whenua
- Xxxx is accountable and responsive to its community

- Xxxx has effective management and governance arrangements
- Xxxx has co-ordinated, planned and reliable services
- Xxxx values the role of its various stakeholders, including staff, volunteers, clients, and community members
- Xxxx will represent and, where appropriate, advocate on behalf of its community
- Xxxx welcomes feedback, including complaints, which it will address in a timely, fair and equitable manner.

2. Develop detailed policies

Step	Tips
1. Describe the issue the policy needs to address.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keep it simple.
2. Consult key stakeholders, experts or conduct research as appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • who will be/may be affected by the policy, or the issue? • what do they have to say? • don't just consult the professional experts.
3. Identify the ranges of policy options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keep this practical.
4. Consider the internal and external environment (e.g. vision statement, government rules).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consider legal requirements (such as health and safety) and any relevant standards (e.g. Child, Youth and Family (CYF) Standards for Approval).
5. Draft policy (in written form).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use clear, simple and unambiguous language have a set format for your policies.
6. Present to board for consultation/adoption.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • board (governing body) is responsible for approving the policies.
7. Set up systems to ensure policy is applied on an ongoing basis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it is management's responsibility to make sure procedures are in place so that the policy is communicated, understood and followed • have an up-to-date policies and procedures manual • include policies for staff (including volunteer) and induction training.
8. Review at an agreed date.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set an achievable review cycle e.g. three years, unless circumstances change and an earlier review is required • some policies may need to be reviewed more frequently than others due to changes in the external environment.

3. Develop/review procedures

Procedures are the steps that put a policy into effect and let everyone in the organisation know how that should be done. In practice, the procedures are often developed at the same time as the policies and need to be reviewed at the same time as the policies. Management should be responsible for developing and circulating the procedures.

Checklist of policies and procedures

A group may need to have any or all of these policies and procedures:

Governance

- Board/committee terms of reference
- Conflict of interest
- Cultural responsiveness
- Treaty of Waitangi
- Board
- Cost of governance
- Board committees
- Chief executive performance evaluation
- Board delegation to the chief executive
- Protection of assets
- Financial management
- Reserves
- Investments
- Treatment of staff and volunteers
- Reporting to the board
- Protection of intellectual property
- Public affairs/relations
- Compliance with legislation

Recruitment and employment

- Recruitment and appointment policy
- Remuneration (wages or salary) policy
- Wage and time recording procedures
- Time in lieu policy
- Disciplinary procedures
- Leave recording procedures
- Parental leave policy
- Equal employment opportunity policy

Staff

- Employee code of conduct
- Anti-harassment policy
- Supervision policy
- Volunteer management policy
- Training and development policy (including study support)
- Employee personal grievance procedure
- Annual performance appraisal procedures

Provision of services

- Organisational monitoring policy
- Privacy and confidential information policy
- Internet/email and phone use policy
- Vehicle policy
- Travel policy (including use of credit cards and reimbursement)
- Client complaint procedure
- Child protection policy and abuse notification procedures

Health and safety

- Health and safety policy
- Health and safety procedures, e.g. fire, earthquake, accident
- Smoke-free policy
- Workplace injury prevention policy

Financial management

- Financial management policy
- Misappropriation of funds policy
- Expenditure and receipting procedures
- Petty cash and reimbursement procedures

Template for writing policies

Below is a useful template for actually writing the policies for your organisation.

Policy area	(e.g. governance, employment)
Policy title	(e.g. recruitment)
Policy detail	The actual policy statement – the kaupapa, value, or position that the organisation is taking.
Procedures	How the organisation will give effect to the policy – the actual steps to take.
Context	Optional – sometimes it is useful to give some background about the policy.
Effective date	
Version/review date	
Links	e.g. professional body standards, CYF Standards for Approval, ACC guidelines.

Tip: For more sample policies and templates, visit Our Community's Policy Bank: http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/boards/boards_article.jsp?articleId=1453#4 .

Adapted from Family and Community Services: <http://www.familyservices.govt.nz>

Important policies

Health and safety

All organisations **must** comply with the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992. This Act promotes the prevention of harm to all people at work and to others who are in, or in the vicinity of, workplaces. It requires employers and others to maintain safe working environments and to implement sound practices.

The essential responsibilities of a community group under the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 are to:

- identify and remedy any hazards
- provide and maintain emergency supplies and equipment
- ensure evacuation and emergency procedures are made available to employees and users of the premises.

Employees and volunteers have a responsibility to ensure they are aware of the evacuation and emergency procedures for the premises. An emergency warden should be appointed who is responsible for evacuating the building in case of emergency. Wardens need to be aware of any people with disabilities present on the premises.

Tip: For details of all the health and safety policies an organisation **must** have by law, refer to *Keeping it Legal – E Ai Ki Te Ture*: <http://keepingitlegal.net.nz/learn-more/health-and-safety/> and the Department of Labour's Health and Safety site: <http://www.osh.dol.govt.nz/>

Sample health and safety policy

Rationale:

The Community Centre and employed staff must take all practicable steps to ensure the safety of everyone on the premises.

Purposes:

- To provide and maintain a safe working environment.
- To ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, any hazards are corrected, repaired, removed or made inaccessible.

Procedures:

1. The co-ordinator must perform monthly hazard checks in the building.
2. Employees and community centre users are to notify the co-ordinator/committee immediately of any hazard so that action can be taken to eliminate or reduce the hazard.
3. Any hazards not dealt with immediately are to be reported and discussed at the earliest monthly committee meeting and steps taken to eliminate, isolate or minimise the hazard.
4. Emergency evacuation plans must be clearly displayed in the community centre, and the emergency and evacuation procedures followed.

Tip: The Department of Labour's Health and Safety site has forms and checklists available for download. Visit: <http://www.osh.dol.govt.nz/order/catalogue/forms.shtml>

Complaints

All community organisations need a complaints policy and procedures for their users. Ideally, complaints will be resolved between the parties without involving others. However, a written procedure for the resolution of complaints made against employees, or the organisation itself, is essential.

The complaints policy and procedure should be displayed on the wall of your organisation and, if you have one, on your website. Written copies should also be made available to anyone who requests it. The policy should state that:

- the client has a right to complain
- any complaints will be taken seriously
- both parties in the complaints procedure will be given a full and fair hearing
- an independent mediator can be called in if needed
- confidentiality of the complaint will be maintained – only the parties involved and the designated committee/managers will be notified.

The procedure should outline, step-by-step:

- what the complainant needs to do to make a complaint
- what the organisation will do in response to the complaint
- what the independent mediator will do, if required.

Sample complaints policy and procedure

Rationale:

The ABC Community Centre recognises the importance of having a policy and set of procedures relating to any complaints that are made against it or the people working for it.

Purpose:

To have a fair policy and set of procedures for situations where complaints cannot be resolved between the parties themselves.

Procedures:

The grievance procedure will be exercised in a way that will ensure any person/organisation complaining has the opportunity to be heard and treated fairly, and that the complaint will remain confidential to the parties involved.

The procedures are to be worked through step by step. The procedures can be ended at the completion of any step, so long as both parties are satisfied. If not, continue to the next step. At any point of intervention, all parties have the right to have their supervisors and/or advocate and/or whānau/family support present.

Step 1

Approach the person/organisation directly about the problem in the first instance.

Step 2

If you are not satisfied, give a written description of the grievance to the chairperson of the ABC Community Centre's committee. Note: This written grievance is a private document

and will be seen only by the committee, the independent mediator and the person/organisation the complaint is directed at.

Result: The chairperson will notify the person/organisation making the complaint that the complaint has been received.

Step 3

The committee reads and discusses the complaint at their next meeting.

Step 4

The person/organisation that the complaint is about is notified of the complaint and given an opportunity to read the written complaint and respond to the committee.

If the committee is unable to resolve the complaint at this stage, it moves to Step 5.

Step 5

The committee brings in an independent mediator to hear from the person/organisation making the complaint and the person/organisation the complaint is against. The person/organisation making the complaint will be given two dates to choose from, and a meeting will take place within two weeks of the committee meeting.

If mediation is not successful, the complaint moves to Step 6.

Step 6

Three members of the committee, including the chairperson, meet with both parties together with an independent mediator as facilitator, within two weeks of the previous meeting. From this meeting the three committee members will make a final decision and direct any action to take place. The person/organisation making the complaint will be able to choose from two dates for the meeting.

Step 7

The three members will report the decision to the committee, the person/organisation making the complaint and the person/organisation complained against, within one week of the previous meeting.

Tip: For more guidelines on developing a complaints policy, visit the Ministry of Consumer Affairs: <http://www.consumeraffairs.govt.nz/for-business/dealing-with-consumers/developing-a-complaints-policy>

Volunteers

Volunteers play a major role in community groups – 90 per cent of New Zealand not-for-profit organisations rely solely on volunteer labour and more than one million New Zealanders are involved in some form of voluntary work.

A volunteer policy

- acknowledges the contribution volunteers make to the organisation
- sets out procedures that guide the recruitment of volunteers
- describes how volunteers are managed, and
- defines the roles and responsibilities of volunteers.

Sample volunteer policy and procedures

Rationale:

The XYZ Group Trust recognises the valuable contribution to the service made by volunteers and actively encourages their participation, which:

- enables volunteers to contribute to their community
- provides volunteers an opportunity for work experience and the development of new skills
- enhances the range of services available through the XYZ Group Trust
- allows for wider community participation in the service.

Volunteers will not be used to replace paid workers in the service.

Purpose:

This policy aims to ensure that volunteers working at the XYZ Group Trust have work that is safe significant and satisfying, and that their contribution is appreciated.

Procedures:

- all volunteers will be provided with a job description
- all volunteers must sign a Volunteer Agreement before starting work.
- volunteers are expected to conform to the XYZ Group Trust's Code of Ethics.

Volunteer Recruitment Process:

1. Requests for volunteers will be widely advertised in the region and amongst the cultural group/s of the consumers as required.
2. Interested volunteers should complete an Application for a Volunteer Position. (A copy should be included).
3. The XYZ Group Trust will arrange an interview with the volunteer, which will cover the following areas:
 - name, address, telephone number
 - other languages
 - area(s) of interest
 - experience
 - current driver's licence, insurance and vehicle registration if volunteer driver
 - health record (in case of emergency)
 - times available
 - commitment
 - policy for reimbursement for expenses
 - names and contact details of two referees
 - police clearance
4. The XYZ Group Trust will inform the volunteer as soon as possible of the decision.
 - If the application is accepted, the volunteer should be given a copy of the Volunteer Worker's Agreement, the relevant job description and an induction package.
 - If the volunteer's application is rejected, they will be given the reasons why.

5. Sufficient time should be allowed for the volunteer to read the information and ask questions before signing the Agreement.
6. The co-ordinator will match the volunteer with appropriate consumer(s), where possible, taking into account the consumer's wishes and their language spoken, culture and interests.

Tip: Volunteering NZ and Volunteering Canterbury have some useful resources and links to current volunteer policies and guidelines. Visit:

- http://www.volunteeringnz.org.nz/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=104&Itemid=64
- <http://www.volcan.org.nz/resources.html> .

Te Tiriti o Waitangi – Treaty of Waitangi

Recognising and actively promoting the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi – The Treaty of Waitangi (the Treaty) is an important part of being an effective community organisation in New Zealand. Understand the contents and principles of the Treaty. Involve the Māori community and other experts at the start of the process.

Writing a Treaty policy – some focus questions:

- what does the Treaty of Waitangi mean to the organisation?
- why do we want a Treaty of Waitangi policy?
- what will be achieved by having this policy?
- who will benefit from it?
- what is the purpose of our organisation?
- what are the main issues on which we need to consult with Māori?
- who are the iwi in our area?
- how would we go about consulting with local iwi?
- what is the local Māori kaupapa (needs, plans) for our organisation?
- what services already exist for Māori in our area?
- how can we work alongside these services to benefit our community?

From the Hutt City Council's Community Development Good Practice Guidelines: <http://www.huttcity.govt.nz/Council-Services/Community-Development/Good-Practice-Guidelines/>

Understanding the principles of the Treaty

Principle	What it means to your group
Kawanatanga – the First Article gives the Crown the principle of governance or the right to make laws and to govern in accordance with its constitutional process on the condition that appropriate priority is given to the interests of Māori, as set out in this Article.	Responsibility to consider the interests of Māori in the decision-making process.
Rangatiratanga – the Second Article guarantees iwi the principle of self-management or Māori control and enjoyment of those resources and taonga they wish to retain.	Responsibility to actively protect Māori rights to rangatiratanga in your actions and decisions.
The principle of equality (Article 3) – guarantees legal equality between Māori and all other New Zealand citizens, essentially ensuring equal access to resources and participation in systems and processes.	Responsibility to ensure Māori have equal access to your service and in your decision-making processes.
The principle of co-operation – the Treaty establishes New Zealand as a bicultural country and values cultural differences while encouraging the development of a common purpose and co-operation.	Responsibility to consult and ideally to work in partnership with Māori, to create shared understandings and work together for common goals.
The principle of redress – the Crown has accepted the responsibility of providing a process for the resolution of grievances arising from the Treaty through the Waitangi Tribunal and Māori Land Court.	Responsibility to provide opportunity for redress of past injustices through current actions, in particular, by ensuring no further injustice occurs.

Tip: For further discussion of the Treaty of Waitangi and its application in practice, see New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO's Treaty of Waitangi Web Resource: <http://www.unesco.org.nz/index.php/priority-areas-/inclusivity-and-diversity/treaty-of-waitangi-web-resource> .

Where to go for more information

Online resources

1. **Keeping it Legal – E Ai Ki Te Ture** – <http://keepingitlegal.net.nz/learn-more/> . See *Laws you need to know about – People, activities, premises and environment* to learn about the legal areas that need to be covered in policies.
2. **Family and Community Services (FACS)** – <http://www.familyservices.govt.nz/working-with-us/programmes-services/early-intervention/family-start/child-youth-and-family-approvals.html> . Policy information for organisations including a checklist of suggested policies and procedures.
3. **New Zealand Institute of Chartered Accountants' Not-for-profit sector** – http://www.nzica.com/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Governance_policies . See *Governance policies*.
4. **Volunteering NZ Policies & Guidelines** – http://www.volunteeringnz.org.nz/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=104:volunteering-info-and-guidelines&catid=62:resources&Itemid=64 . Links to useful current policies and guidelines.
5. **Volunteering Canterbury Resources** – <http://www.volcan.org.nz/resources.html> . Offers various sample policies: health and safety, financial, complaints, etc.
6. **Community Development Good Practice Guidelines, Hutt City Council** – <http://www.huttcity.govt.nz/Council-Services/Community-Development/Good-Practice-Guidelines/> . See Section 1: Building the foundations.
7. **Te Wananga-o-Raukawa Charter** – <http://www.wananga.com/?q=node/113> .
8. **Our Community's Policy Bank (AUS)** – http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/boards/boards_article.jsp?articleId=1453 . Free policies and procedures for not-for-profit boards and committees and the organisations they govern. See also: Tips for Developing and Using Policies – http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/boards/boards_article.jsp?articleId=1521 .
9. **Paul Bullen Management Alternatives (AUS)** – <http://www.mapl.com.au/policy/tp1.htm> . This tool kit, *Writing policy and organisational manuals*, will be useful to NZ groups.
10. **People First Total Solutions (AUS)** – <http://www.pfts.com.au/resources.htm>, See *Policies* (features article items from their *E-news for the not-for-profit sector*).
11. **KnowHow NonProfit's Policies and procedures (UK)** – <http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/legal/policies/policies> . Information and suggestions about types of written policies an organisation should have.

Other resources:

7. **Simple Policy and Procedures Manual**, North Shore Community and Social Services – <http://www.nscss.org.nz/publications/resources> . Outlines why policies are necessary, their value to your organisation, and contains many examples of policies and procedures.
8. **Mana Mahi**, Workplace Wellbeing Project – <http://www.communitycentral.org.nz/workplace-wellbeing> . Employment relations resource designed specifically for tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector organisations, with extensive information and useful samples and checklists.
9. **Treaty of Waitangi and Community Development** – <http://www.volcan.org.nz/papers.html> . Paper given by Mairehe Louise Tankersley to 'The Big Day In' Community Development Conference, 2004.
10. **Non-Profit Policies and Procedures Supplement (US)** – <http://store.bizmanualz.com/Non-Profit-Policies-and-Procedures-Supplement-p/abr235dwd.htm> . This downloadable supplement includes prewritten policies, procedures and forms for non-for-profit organisations.
11. **Model Policies and Procedures for Not-for-Profit Organizations (US)** – http://www.nonprofitguru.com/bookwin/Model_Policies_Procedures.htm . The guide focuses on accounting, tax, and reporting requirements with many sample policies and procedures. (Note: the book is from the US so the legal requirements may differ to those of NZ.)