

Preface

In his book, *Policy Management in the Human Services*, John Tropman defines policy as an idea that is embodied in a written document, is ratified by legitimate authority, and serves as a guide to action. The major policies of a nonprofit organization are created and ratified by its board of directors, are (or should be) written down in a policy manual for easy reference, are (or should be) reviewed frequently to see if they are up to date, and cover every aspect of the organization's business.

While bylaws are the foundation for the organization's structure, policies put meat on the bylaw bones to cover the myriad of situations that are not addressed in the bylaws. Many organizations intentionally make bylaws hard to amend so that fundamental structures cannot be overturned by majority rule. Policies, however, are more flexible so that decision makers can respond to immediate needs and the majority of the board can establish and change policies. Policies are created for programs, financial management, fundraising, personnel management, public relations, and board operations.

Policies are created at different levels and by different individuals or entities depending on their ultimate purpose. The chief executive is responsible for drafting policies to guide operations and manage staff. Financial staff ensures that proper policies are in place to guide accounting practices and investment management. The board establishes policies to coordinate its own affairs and its oversight of the organization. Even if it is not directly involved in drafting the actual policies, the board must ensure that policies exist, comply with the law, cover critical issues, and remain current. Because the board has ultimate responsibility and accountability for the organization, it needs to ensure that organizational policies at all levels are well documented and routinely followed.

The Nonprofit Policy Sampler is designed to help nonprofit leaders — board and staff — advance their organizations, make better collective decisions, and guide individual actions and behaviors. It contains sample policies, codes, committee charters, job descriptions, and other statements that will help boards move forward in the essential governance task of policy-making. Divided into eight broad categories, it contains 241 electronic samples addressing 48 different issues. Each policy issue includes key elements, practical tips, samples, and additional resources on the subject. *The Nonprofit Policy Sampler* — available in print with a companion CD-ROM and online in downloadable format — offers an array of different approaches for each organization to use as a starting point in developing its own policies.

The Nonprofit Policy Sampler, its companion CD-ROM, and the downloadable files are intended for educational and informational purposes only. Nothing contained in them is to be construed as the rendering of legal, financial, or other professional advice for specific cases. Readers are responsible for obtaining such advice from their own professional counsel.