Generic Policies Needed

Where can you find samples of policies for your board?

Q: I'm writing to request your insights into a project I'm working on for a group interested in nonprofit governance. We're compiling resources for nonprofit governance-related policies with the idea of collating them in the form of an annotated resource list or bibliography. The types of policies we're looking for are generic models of:

- whistle-blower policies
- document-retention policies
- conflict-of-interest policies (particularly focusing on non-financial conflicts, such as multiple board membership)
- Internet/listserv/message-board usage policies
- board confidentiality policies
- board training policies
- periodic legal/governance audit policies
- executive compensation policies
- committee charges for key governance-related committees, such as nominating, governance, by-laws, audit, budget, and finance.

Some nonprofit service organizations, such as Board-Source and American Society of Association Executives, have published policy form books. Commercial governance experts include some model policies in their books, and many forms are available on the Internet. Can you suggest additional resources?

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A: First, thank you for your efforts to provide a resource list where people can find basic templates from which to design policies on such a comprehensive list of topics. Too many of these topics are overlooked by nonprofits, with potentially disastrous consequences.

You've clearly done your homework. You've already identified the few key resources where a number of these policies may be found in one place. For instance, I often refer clients to *The Policy Sampler: A Resource for Nonprofit Boards* by **BoardSource**, which you've

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named. I like this booklet because it often gives several versions of a given policy, and it comes with a disk that allows for easy customization. However, this isn't the only good resource.

I have some favorite sites on the Internet to which I turn, headed by **Carter McNamara's Free Management Library.** If your committee hasn't already found this incredible resource, head immediately to http://www.managementhelp.org/boards/boards. htm#anchor1322914; do not pass go. Carter not only has sample policies, he also has articles that point out factors to consider when customizing these policies. Unfortunately, some of the links are dead, which is true on a couple of these sites. However, the majority are still good and worth the visit.

The *National Council of Nonprofit Associations*, which exists to build capacity in the sector, has a variety of sample policies. Check out the menu under "Nonprofit Resources" at www.ncna.org. You'll find sample policies regarding whistle-blower protection, codes of ethics, audit-committee roles, document destruction, and conflict of interest. Also, many of NCNA's state affiliates have developed their own sample policies. For instance, the **Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofits** has a policy on advocacy that can be found at www. pano.org/documents/sfxpublicpolicysamples.doc.

Independent Sector makes policy samples available at www.independentsector.org. These include policies on financial responsibilities (http://www.independent sector.org/about/finresp.html) and ethics (http://www. independentsector.org/about/code.html).

CoreStrategies for Nonprofits, Inc., which interweaves governance, board development, fund development, PR, marketing, and public policy to strengthen organizational capacity, includes a code of ethics and other sample polies on its Web site at www.corestrat egies4nonprofits.com.

Idealist.org, the "global clearinghouse of nonprofit and volunteering resources," has several samples of conflict-of-interest statements at http://www.idealist. org/npofaq/16/59.html.

Board Café, the popular publication of **Compass Point**, dealt with conflict of interest in one of its monthly issues. Its sample policy statement can be found at http://www.compasspoint.org/boardcafe/details.php?id=54.

A book published by the **Alliance of Artists Communities** to help nonprofit artist groups function at optimum levels, *The Ultimate Residency Resource Guide*, has insights and sample policies applicable for most nonprofits. While smaller nonprofits may find it too costly for their budgets, those that do wish to order it can do so at http://www.artistcommunities.org/publications.html#URRG.

A number of sources also discuss issues you should consider when writing policies. These include the **Panel on the Nonprofit Sector** and its *Supplemental Report* (http://www.independentsector.org/panel/main.htm), the **Urban Institute** and its *Nonprofit Governance within the United States* (http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411479_Nonprofit_Governance.pdf), *A Desktop Guide for Nonprofit Directors, Officers, and Advisors* by Jack Siegel (available at most bookstores), and of course the **Society for Nonprofit Organizations** and *Nonprofit World* (see, for example, the following

articles at www.snpo.org: "Do You Need a Record-Saving Policy?", Vol. 19, No. 6, "The Ethics Audit: A Tool Whose Time Has Come," Vol. 13, No. 6, "Conflict of Interest in the Board Room," Vol. 17, No. 2, "Nonprofits without Audit Committees Risk Disaster," Vol. 22, No. 2, and "The Need for Anti-Bias Policies: New Developments," Vol. 22, No. 5). Also be sure to read "33 Keys to Building a Trustworthy Organization" on page 19 of this issue.

The important thing is that with the help you're providing, nonprofit organizations can write incredibly strong policy statements. However, such policies will be meaningless if, once written, they're put on a shelf. Nonprofit board members must ensure that the organization's policies are followed. ■

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