

# What is the difference between a policy and a procedure?

Policies and procedures promote efficient and effective operations and communicate the **values** and **vision** of the organization. They ensure that everyone understands what is expected of them in certain situations. Well-documented and policies and procedures allow the organization to operate with more autonomy by providing the guidance necessary to empower decision-making and reduce managerial workflow bottlenecks.

Policies and procedures are usually written into separate documents that align with each other.

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Versus</b>	<b>Procedure</b>
Looks at the big picture		Looks at individual processes
Typically a rule or regulation		Set of steps that must be executed to ensure compliance with a policy
Has widespread application		Has a narrow focus
Addresses major functions		Provides a detailed process
Generally non-negotiable		Subject to change
Changes infrequently		Continuously improves
Written at a high level		Describes tasks or a series of tasks
States what and/or why		States how, when, what, and who

For example, the organization may have a policy that a fire drill is to be held once a month. This is a broad statement, and will be unlikely to change. The fire drill procedure state where each Program/Unit should go in the case of a fire drill, noting specific routes and offering alternatives. Over time, the procedure is likely to change and improve based on practice and changes to interior spaces, but the policy will stay the same.

# What is a Policy?

## Purpose

It is a formal written communication of expected behaviors for staff. When policies are clear and well documented, everyone will know what is expected or acceptable. Clear policy direction strengthens the organization by establishing and communicating the business standard, reducing misinterpretation, and improving the work product and work environment. Effective policies include a rigorous vetting process, allowing for stakeholder input.

They support ***informed decision-making*** and answer the following questions:

### Informed Decision Making

- Who is the primary audience or who needs to follow the policy?
- In what situation(s) does the policy apply or not apply?
- What are the major conditions or restrictions?
- What are the restrictions?
- Are there requirements aligned with the policy (i.e., court rulings, administrative directives, Federal laws, etc.)?

Policies ***add value*** to the organization by:

### Added Value

- Influencing behavior and supporting ethical, consistent decision-making
- Fostering credibility and trust with internal and external stakeholders
- Providing a management tool for supervisors
- Improving performance and productivity
- Meeting legal and regulatory standards and requirements

## What is a Procedure?

It is written as a “how to” document for conducting work functions and ensures the same outcome every time a task or series of tasks are performed. Procedures translate policies into action by providing clear and concise operational processes and major and/or required steps that can be easily understood and followed. Well-written procedures take the guesswork out of how to implement or follow a policy. They are a source of institutional knowledge and improve performance and productivity.

Procedures **add value** to the organization by:

### Added Value

- Supporting operational continuity
- Supporting transfer or institutional knowledge
- Acting as a training tool
- Increasing operational accuracy and efficiency
- Reducing costly errors