

Bylaws and Policies and Procedures for Service Bodies: An Overview

Why is a bylaws or a summary of purpose (SOP) document needed?

Either bylaws or a summary of purpose is required by OA Bylaws, Subpart B to register a service body with Overeaters Anonymous.

What is useful about having bylaws and policies?

At the intergroup, service board, region, and world services levels, there are agreed-upon practices that work best if they are clearly defined and recorded. We have elected officers and committees with ongoing responsibilities to be carried out. We have agreed-upon budgeting and spending practices. Bylaws and documented policies and procedures provide a set of guidelines for how our individual service bodies have agreed to operate. Bylaws and a policies and procedures manual can help new service position holders learn how to carry out their duties as well as inform the membership how the group has agreed to do things, such as define job descriptions, fund delegates, plan events, assist new groups, and more. Bylaws and policies and procedures help us convey a unified and consistent message of recovery and are a way to share our collective experience, strength, and hope.

How do you create bylaws or a SOP?

1. Check the [oa.org](https://www.oa.org) website for sample documents. You may check with your region or virtual services trustee (VST) about which of the following you need:
 - a. Intergroup Bylaws https://www.oa.org/pdfs/sample_ig_bylaws.pdf
 - b. Summary of Purpose https://www.oa.org/pdfs/sample_summary_of_purpose.pdf
 - c. Service Board Bylaws https://www.oa.org/pdfs/sample_sb_bylaws.pdf
2. Form a committee of three to four members to develop the document. Enter information into the sample.
3. Add additional sections or items to ensure the document covers what your service body feels is necessary. Avoid including policies or procedures for tasks that may be temporary or change frequently. Such items are more appropriate to include in a policies and procedures manual.
4. Throughout the development process, present sections of the document to the entire service body for group-conscience guidance on how your service body wants to conduct its business.
5. Present the document as a whole to the entire service body for review, final edits, and group-conscience approval.
6. Submit a copy of the completed and signed document to your region or virtual services trustee for review. An electronic file is preferred.

What is a policies and procedures manual?

Policies and procedures are a set of agreed-upon practices that amplify the information contained in your bylaws. For example, your bylaws may say that you elect officers and committee chairs. Your policies and procedures manual may then cite the basic requirements of each job.

Policies and procedures can be changed more easily and quickly than bylaws.

Policies and procedures explain *how* a policy or bylaw is to be implemented and practiced. This helps with long-term consistency.

Note that, unlike bylaws, policies and procedures do not need to be submitted to your region or virtual services trustee or the World Service Office (WSO).

What does the region or virtual services trustee do with the bylaws you submit?

Your region or virtual services trustee will review the document to be sure it is not in conflict with OA, Inc. Bylaws, Subpart B prior to the registration of your service body with the WSO. Your trustee may make suggestions in accordance with the Twelve Traditions, the Twelve Concepts of OA Service, or for reasons such as clarity. Your

service body is encouraged to seriously consider incorporating the suggestions. If changes are made, follow numbers 5 and 6 above.

After your trustee confirms that your bylaws are in agreement with OA, Inc. Bylaws, Subpart B, your trustee will forward the approved copy to the WSO and your service body. The trustee will also keep a copy of your bylaws on file.

What happens next?

It is good practice for your service body to review your bylaws and policies and procedures manual annually to ensure that any pertinent changes made at the World Service Business Conference (WSBC) as well as possibly changing local needs are reflected in the documents. An annual review will help ensure that your documents are consistent with your current practices. Your updated bylaws then need to be submitted to your trustee and the WSO.

OA Board-approved

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