Implementation Tips
for USAID Partners

Sharing Resources and Knowledge Among the Global CSO Community

Definitions

Human Resources (HR)—The people who staff and operate an organization. The term is also used to describe the function within an organization responsible for implementing policies related to the management of employees.

HR Policies—A set of rules or guiding principles that define how an organization addresses personnel-related matters.

HR Procedures—Specific steps needed to implement an HR policy.

HR Practices—How policies and procedures are actually designed and implemented.

Employee Handbook—A written guide outlining an employer's policies, procedures, working conditions and behavior expectations governing employee conduct in the workplace. It may also contain information on the organization's history, its goals and its commitments to beneficiaries and the community. (Also called an Employee Manual, HR Handbook, HR Manual, or Personnel Policy Manual.)

References

**Mandatory Standard Provisions:
U.S.-based Organizations**

Non-U.S.-based Organizations

Putting Human Resources (HR) Policies into Practice

Q. Why develop an employee handbook?

A. The employee handbook is one of the most important communication links between your organization and your employees. Although organizations have policies and procedures for managing employees, they are not always written down and understood by everyone. By documenting the rules and policies of your organization in a handbook or manual, you are communicating what the organization expects from its employees and what they can expect from the organization in turn. This helps to eliminate any confusion and makes it easier to enforce the policies, if necessary.

The following offers an overview of HR policies and procedures that complement those required of USAID grantees and should be captured in your employee handbook.

Key Elements of an Employee Handbook

No two employee handbooks are exactly alike. Each organization needs to develop policies that are relevant to its particular operations. However, there are some key policies that belong in every handbook. These include the following:

1. **Introduction**
   Every employee handbook should start with an explanation of its purpose and how to use it. It may be helpful to define common terms and include an organizational chart or organogram.

2. **Policies, including:**
   * *Recruitment Policies and Procedures.* The rules surrounding hiring, including how job descriptions are developed, positions advertised, candidates vetted and offers made, and what the organization's policy is on hiring relatives.

   * *Employment Categories.* The types of employment supported by the organization, such as regular fulltime, regular part-time, consultant, temporary or other and whether these categories are entitled to full, partial or no benefits. You may need to check on your country's labor laws because "full time" can be defined as different numbers of hours.

Keep It Practical

Having more policies and procedures is not always better. Develop a manual that is comprehensive enough to serve your needs, safeguard your organization and guide and protect your staff but is not so extensive that it is unusable or so mired in detailed procedure that it places excessive demands on staff, making them feel they are not trusted by the organization to do the right thing.

* *Employment Conditions.* The conditions the organization adheres to in employing staff, including employment at will and equal employment opportunity. Employment conditions may also include policies on outside employment, disability accommodation, overtime, conflicts of interest and termination, among others.

* *Other Employment Policies.* Additional conditions of employment, including, but not limited to, introductory or probationary periods.

* *Administration and Benefits:* Organizations should clearly define policies on employee compensation and benefits. This does not mean that the organization should include its salary scale in the employee manual, but it should state what employees are entitled to in terms of compensation and benefits and how promotions are managed. Examples of compensation and benefits policies include:

* *Salary Administration.* Information on salary scale or the rationale for determining salaries and conditions for pay increases.

* *Timekeeping and Payroll.* Timekeeping requirements and pay days.

* *Leave Benefits.* The benefits surrounding paid or unpaid time off, including vacation, holiday, sick leave, bereavement leave, leave without pay, maternity and paternity leave, home leave, time off to vote and jury duty. National labor laws are usually very explicit on leave, so make sure your policies comply with local law. If your organization has offices in different countries, you may have to establish different leave policies in each country to ensure compliance with national laws.

* *Other Benefits.* Additional kinds of compensation that an organization can offer, such as health insurance or medical compensation, workers compensation insurance, death benefits, pension/retirement plans, professional development benefits, termination pay and bonuses, among others.

3. **Work Conditions and Hours**
   Policies on work conditions and hours set standards for the work schedule/office hours, flextime and overtime, as well as use of office equipment and Internet, safety, transportation, telecommuting or business meals, among others.

4. **Employee Conduct and Disciplinary Action**
   Policies related to employee conduct and disciplinary action cover a wide range of topics from how employees are expected to dress for work to the organization's policy toward whistle-blowers. This is also the section where organizations would include a drug-free workplace policy, HIV/AIDS policy or child protection policy.

Other important policies that can be included in this section are sexual harassment, bribes or payoffs, attendance and punctuality, problem resolution and disciplinary action procedures.

Six Steps to Effectively Implementing HR Policies

1. **Involve.** Involve staff and give them a voice in the development of HR policies by getting their input or feedback.

2. **Disseminate.** Print the employee handbook and distribute to all staff; have copies available in a central place in the office and/or post it on computer(s) or the Intranet (if you have one) so they are readily accessible to staff.

3. **Notify.** Notify staff, in writing, of key policy changes; post updates for everyone to see.

4. **Orient.** Integrate an overview of HR policies and procedures into employee orientation processes and continue to inform staff with refreshers.

5. **Require Signature Statements.** Require staff to sign a statement verifying that they have received, reviewed, and understand the contents of the employee handbook and have had an opportunity to ask questions about personnel policies and procedures.

6. **Be Open to Change.** Sometimes policies seem good when they are designed but do not work in practice; sometimes the policy is good, but its implementation is not. Assess your policies, procedures and practices periodically to determine whether they are followed and useful. Listen to staff complaints and take them seriously. Do not be afraid to change or adjust a policy, procedure or practice if it is not working.