



Setting District Policies

Purpose: The purpose of policies are to protect and steer the supervisors and employees as they fulfill the mission of the organization. They are a reference tool for appropriate action, ethical decision making, and for dealing with potential or actual conflicts.

Policies are statements set to ensure the district performs the tasks set by century code and lay out expectations of programs for conservation. They create a framework within which supervisors and staff can carry out their assigned duties with positive direction. They tell what is wanted.

Why: District employees and board members need to be on the same page for a variety of district operations. Staff are expected to work with limited supervision and guidance. Good policies alleviate stress and result in less *problems*. Through policies, employees will know what is required of them, and expected through the job. Keeping up with a set of policies can improve supervisor's roles and make them more aware of their responsibilities. Once policies are established by the board and made accessible to all involved in district matters, it will be easier to keep them current.

How to organize district policies: Appointing a committee to draft the district policy is recommended to be considerate of supervisor's time. It is also advised to include the district manager on the committee. They will provide suggestions on daily district operations, and can share policies from other districts to assist in the creation or update of the policy. Once the policy is created all employees and board members should review the document. Supervisors will need to take action during a meeting to vote and adopt the policies created.

Suggested Areas for District Policy:

- District office hours and holidays.
- Sick, annual and compensatory leave (usage, pay out, etc.)
- Financial management
- Office logistics (who has keys, who is responsible for asset security)
- Equipment usage and rental
- Assistance to NRCS
- Job descriptions for each employee (including full-time, part-time and seasonal)
- Evaluations (when they will be performed and what the employee will be evaluated on)
- District cost share programs (to ensure fair customer service to all)
- Any other areas where policy is needed to carry out day to day functions or conservation programming

Policy Review: Policies should be reviewed annually to ensure that all staff and supervisors are aware of, and are in compliance with the established policies. Districts should consider a binder that has categories, such as the ones listed above. This will aid when searching for a policy and maintaining policies. Whenever a new policy is established it should be recorded in the board minutes, but also placed in the binder with reference to the meeting approved.

Discussion Questions:

1. Does your district have a policy manual? If so, when was it updated? If not, what is your justification for not establishing the manual?
2. Why is it important for employees to have a manual?
3. What other categories, besides the ones listed above, does your district need policy on?