



County of Sonoma - Administrative Policy Manual

Administrative Policy Manual Preface

Adoption Date:	7/27/04
Adopted by:	County Executive
Revised Date:	10/28/25
Revised by:	Administrative Policy Steering Committee
Authority:	County Executive
Issuing Department:	County Executive's Office

Purpose

The purpose of this Administrative Policy Manual is to establish clear, consistent, and legally compliant guidelines for administrative functions that apply across County departments. It serves as a centralized repository for countywide policies issued by the Board of Supervisors, County Executive Office, and other Independently Elected Offices.

This manual aims to:

- Promote consistent and equitable practices;
- Strengthen internal controls;
- Improve organizational communication and transparency;
- Reduce Legal and financial risk;
- Ensure compliance with laws, regulations, and standards; and
- Facilitate efficient use of County Resources.

This preface defines administrative policy, outlines the process for developing, revising, and maintaining policies, and assigns roles and responsibilities.

Definition of Administrative Policy

An administrative policy is a formal, ongoing directive that governs the County of Sonoma's business operations. These policies are designed to guide decisions and actions, ensure compliance, and support fair, equitable, efficient, and coordinated public service delivery.

Criteria and Structure of Administrative Policies

1. Policy Criteria

Administrative policies must:

- Apply broadly across departments, not just one;
- Be written clearly, concisely, and in plain language;
- Focus on achieving appropriate outcomes without creating unnecessary complexity or administrative hurdles;
- Align with legal requirements, countywide goals, and other policies;

- Improve practices or reduce risk

2. Required Structure

All administrative policies must include the following components:

- Purpose: The objectives and intended public benefit;
- Statement of Policy: Core rules and guiding principles;
- Roles and Responsibilities: Which departments or individuals are accountable for implementation;
- Procedures: Where to find step-by-step or referenced implementation guidance. Complex procedures should be attached or linked.

3. Review Requirement

Each policy must be reviewed at least every five years by its designated department to ensure accuracy, relevance, and legal compliance.

Policy Development, Review, and Approval Process

1. Initiation

Policy proposals may originate from any department. All new or substantially revised policies must be submitted to the Policy Steering Committee for initial review and prioritization.

2. Policy Steering Committee

The Steering Committee provides strategic oversight and ensures administrative policy alignment. Membership includes the Director or designee from:

- Human Resources
- Office of Equity
- Information Services Department
- Auditor-Controller-Treasurer-Tax Collector
- Public Infrastructure
- County Counsel
- County Executive's Office (Chair)

Responsibilities include:

- Reviewing and prioritizing proposals;
- Assigning drafting responsibility;
- Ensuring consistency with county goals and standards;

- Reviewing final drafts before submission to the Board of Supervisors, County executive Office, or other Independently Elected Offices.

3. Drafting and Review

The Department with delegated or regulatory oversight will serve as the lead department to draft the policy. This department must:

- Collaborate with departments impacted by the policy;
- Connect with the Office of Equity to integrate equity considerations into policy development, and;
- Seek feedback from the Policy Review Committee, composed of Administrative Services Officers (ASOs) from each functional group, or key departments, to ensure operational feasibility and consistency.

4. Human Resource Review

After drafting, the policy must be reviewed by Human Resources to identify and assess any labor impacts and impacts to employee experience.

5. Legal Review

Upon completion of the Human Resources review, the policy must be reviewed by County Counsel for legal sufficiency, risk mitigation, and compliance.

6. Labor Relations Review

Following legal review, the drafting department for any policy with labor impacts shall partner with Human Resources to conduct the meet and confer process with all impacted bargaining groups.

Any proposed changes resulting from the meet and confer process will be reviewed with the issuing department and followed up on with the requesting bargaining group.

7. Final Review and Approval

After legal and labor reviews:

- The draft returns to the Policy Steering Committee for endorsement;
- The County Administrator determines whether Board of Supervisors approval is required. A policy must go to the Board if it:
 1. Directly impacts Board operations;
 2. Has significant legal, financial, community, or political implications;
 3. Changes an existing Board policy;

4. Is requested by one or more Supervisors.

If Board approval is required, the responsible department submits the policy as a Board Agenda Item.

8. Publication and Communication

Once approved:

- The County Executive's Office will publish the policy on the County intranet;
 - Independently elected offices will be responsible for posting their own policies. The County Executive's Office will provide links to all countywide adopted policies in a single hub.
- All department heads and members of the Policy Review Committee will be notified;
- Departments must communicate applicable policies to staff and ensure proper integration into local practices.

Roles & Responsibilities

1. County Executive's Office (CEO)

The CEO is responsible for managing the Administrative Policy Manual. Duties include:

- Determining which policies within the CEO's authority belong in the manual;
- Maintaining the accuracy and currency of policies;
- Assigning departments to lead or maintain policies;
- Deciding when Board approval is required;
- Notifying departments of changes;
- Chairing the Policy Steering Committee.

2. Independently Elected Official's Offices

Independently Elected Officials are responsible for:

- Determining which policies within the office's authority belong in the manual;
- Maintaining the accuracy and currency of policies;
- Assigning responsibility within their office to lead or maintain policies;
- Deciding when Board approval is required;
- Notifying departments of changes;

3. Policy Steering Committee

The Steering Committee ensures that administrative policies:

- Align with legal, fiscal, and operational standards;

- Are prioritized based on strategic value;
- Are consistent across departments and with each other.
- The Committee approves final drafts for submission to the Board of Supervisors, County Executive’s Office, or other Independently Elected Offices.

4. Policy Review Committee

Composed of each department’s Administrative Services Officer (ASO), this committee:

- Reviews all draft policies for legal risk and compliance;
- Advises on statutory references and enforceability;
- May request changes prior to adoption.

7. Human Resources

- Reviews draft policies for potential risk management and/or labor relations impacts;
- Coordinates meet-and-confer when required;
- Advises the CEO and Steering Committee on employee-related implications.

8. Department Heads

Department heads are responsible for:

- Ensuring compliance with relevant administrative policies;
- Ensuring department specific policies align with adopted county-wide policies;
- Updating and reviewing policies under their authority;
- Ensuring departmental staff are informed and trained;
- Maintaining up-to-date operational procedures that align with countywide policies.

Authority

Each policy includes an “Authority” section on its cover page, identifying the department responsible for drafting, maintaining, and reviewing the policy.

Revision History

Version	Date	Summary of Changes
2.0	10/28/25	<i>Revised to reflect the County’s updated policy review framework including the Policy Review Committee and Policy Steering Committee.</i>
3.0		
4.0		
Etc.		