

What are nonprofit bylaws? Where can I find samples?

Bylaws are your organization's operating manual. They define:

- Size of the board and how it will function
- Roles and duties of directors and officers
- Rules and procedures for holding meetings, electing directors, and appointing officers
- How grant monies will be distributed
- Other essential corporate governance matters

State nonprofit laws usually address nonprofit governance matters. However, you can choose different rules, as long as they don't violate state law and are included in your bylaws. If you choose to follow state law, restating them in your bylaws will ensure that all your operating rules are in one document.

Bylaws are not public documents, but making them readily available increases your accountability and transparency and will encourage your board to pay closer attention to them. Your board should review them regularly and amend them accordingly as your organization evolves.

An exempt organization that is required to file an annual return must report name, address, and structural and operational changes on its return. Organizations that do not have to file an annual return may also report these changes to the EO Determinations Office. Some states may also require you to file bylaws and report changes.

Please note that bylaws are very specific for each organization, so if you start with an example from another organization, you will want to change them to meet your own nonprofit's needs.

Examples of Bylaws can be found at your state's Association of Non Profit Organizations. Below is an example from the Minnesota Council for Non-Profits.

http://www.mncn.org/info_start.htm