Robogals Policy on Policies

Owner	Approver	Approved	Next review
Finance & Governance Committee	Board	28 Nov 2019	Nov 2022

All Robogals policies and procedures shall be:
- Concise
- Easy to implement
- Flexible
- Evidence-based
- Developed with consultation
- Available online
- Approved appropriately; and
- Reviewed periodically.

Concise
Keep it simple! Short policies are more likely to be read, understood and followed. Policies should stick to the most important points, be written in plain language and avoid repetition.

Easy to implement
Policies that are clear, straight-forward and easy to follow are also the policies that will have the highest level of compliance. Robogals volunteers' time is best spent delivering programs, rather than dealing with bureaucracy and red tape. Any administrative burden must have a substantial, positive impact on the organisation that makes it worthwhile.

As a policy writer, always consider how you can make compliance easier and more time-efficient. Perhaps include a checklist as an appendix to the policy, so compliance is simply a matter of working through the list. If you want to collect information, send out an online form, rather than asking people to fill out a Word template and email it back. Don't ask twenty questions if five questions would suffice.

Flexible
Robogals is a diverse, global organisation. The best innovations often come from the chapter level. They are also best placed to adapt ideas and initiatives to suit local conditions such as cultural considerations, resource constraints and university regulations. Placing trust in our chapters and volunteers and granting them the autonomy to do their best work is fundamental to their motivation and retention. Binding policies should therefore avoid being overly prescriptive, except where necessary to mitigate a compelling organisational risk. Often, a set of principles or high-level guidelines will suffice.

Processes and procedures might be more systematic and methodical, but will typically be used within the teams that wrote them, and should be constantly evolving. Documenting our institutional knowledge in this way is encouraged to ensure that knowledge and experience is passed on when people leave the organisation.

Evidence-based

Policies and procedures must be grounded in real-world experience. Avoid simply articulating your own intuition on how something ought to be done. Consult widely with the broader organisation to incorporate the lessons learned on a particular issue. Seek advice from experts in the relevant field: Robogals partners and board members can be a valuable resource, both in their own right and through their contacts.

Developed with consultation

All Robogals policy writers must consult with the stakeholders affected by a proposed policy change and give due consideration to all feedback received. Consultation can take a variety of forms: asking for emailed feedback on a draft policy, holding a "town hall" style meeting using a video chat application, seeking feedback from chapters via the REOs, or even holding a workshop at SINE, to list just a few possibilities!

Available online

For a policy to be widely known and implemented, it needs to be easily accessible. Robogals policies should therefore be available online, with a Master Policy List serving as the single source of truth that links to the authoritative latest version of each policy. While the target audience is primarily internal, policies should nonetheless be accessible without any requirement to log in, so that they are still accessible to Robogals volunteers who may not have the relevant account set up, or who have forgotten their password. Some policies may be hidden from public view if a compelling reason exists, but this should be the exception rather than the norm.

Internal procedures and processes (as distinct from policies) used within the global and regional teams will be stored in Google Drive, with read access available to anyone with a @robogals.org Google account, unless a compelling reason exists to restrict access more tightly. A master procedure list will serve as the single source of truth, linking to the authoritative latest version of each procedure.

Approved appropriately

The Master Policy List shall state the owner and approver for each policy. The owner is responsible for implementation of the policy. The approver is responsible for approving the policy. No changes to a policy shall take effect until approved by the approver.

The owner and approver for a new policy shall be determined by the Finance & Governance Committee (FGC). Any change to the owner and approver for an existing policy shall also be determined by the FGC, unless the approver for that policy is the Board, in which case any change to the approver must be approved by the Board.

Reviewed periodically

The Master Policy List shall state the review date for each policy. The owner is responsible for conducting a review of the policy by that date and recommending changes to the approver. The FGC shall review the list at least annually to remind policy owners of impending review dates.