

**Mountaineers Suggestion to Change an Existing Policy or Process or to Add a New Policy or Process**

**Background:** Several times a year, Mountaineers members and/ or volunteers write to the board or staff requesting a change in an existing policy or practice. It is the Mountaineers desire to consider the views of its members, but these views must be balanced with the views of all other members, and the governing documents, mission and strategic plan of The Mountaineers as well as state and federal laws. Further, the existing governance structure of The Mountaineers empowers volunteers and branches to influence policy and practices *within a range of acceptable practices*. Consequently, the volunteer or member proposing a change has not always had a clear avenue for getting their request considered. This process is an attempt to provide a clear pathway for volunteer or member suggestions for policy or practice changes to be heard and responded to.

**Application:** This process applies to suggested changes in volunteer leader, member, course or activity policies or practices made by volunteers, members or leaders. As a default, questions, complaints or suggestions by volunteers or members related to activity, course, membership or volunteer leader policies or practices will first be routed to their branch and committee chairs and resolved there if possible. If a proposal has potential implications for other branches, then it should be raised with other branch contacts and, if necessary, the Managing Committee, for resolution. The branch has the primary responsibility for resolution and response within the scope defined below; if the topic is outside the scope of branch authority such items should be raised to staff, executive leadership or Board of Directors. For example:

* Suggestions, questions or complaints related to financial policy or Organization level financial operating practices should be routed through the branch treasurer first, and if not resolved there, then forwarded to the Board Treasurer and the Chief Operating Officer for consideration, following the processes outlined in the [financial policy handbook](https://www.mountaineers.org/volunteers/leader-resources/financial-policies-procedures-forms).
* Suggestions, questions or complaints related to or requiring changes to bylaws or board policy should be routed through the branch and Managing Committee first, and if not resolved there, then forwarded to the Executive Committee for consideration.
* Suggestions, questions, or complaints related to central/program center administrative policies or procedures that impact branch or volunteer operations will be routed through the branch contact(s) first and resolved there through discussion with the appropriate staff[[1]](#footnote-1). If the matter cannot be resolved there, or if the issue has potential cross-branch significance, the matter may be raised to the Managing Committee with engagement by the appropriate staff, and, if necessary, from there to the board.

**Process for Considering a Suggested Change to Policy or Practice**

* First contact the committee chair and branch chair of the branch and committee that you would like to sponsor the idea. Propose your modification and discuss it with the volunteer leadership. Often issues/ideas can be resolved through discussion at this level. If you are unsure who your appropriate contact is, the Leadership Development Manager can advise you. Prompt and courteous acknowledgement of the initial communication is essential even when resolution may take more time. If resolution would require staff to take the lead, then the handoff will be acknowledged in writing, with an estimated timeline for resolution. If the issue is resolved by either branch or staff, resolution should be documented via email and recorded by the Leadership Development Manager (Chris Williams).
* If you are unable to gain a satisfactory answer from the committee, staff or branch chair you approached AND you feel that the issue involves a critical risk management issue,[[2]](#footnote-2) please contact the Leadership Development Manager, who will triage the issue with the Executive Director. These requests may go to the Managing Committee, be aware that they will be more difficult to get approved due to a lack of support from the volunteer leadership.
* **If the issue has potential cross-branch or club-wide implications, or requires significant staff time to address, then the matter needs to be raised to the Managing Committee and, from there if necessary, to the board with a “c.c.” to the Leadership Development Manager**.
* Once you have the support of your branch/ committee leader then you can fill out the change in policy form and submit it to the Leadership Development Manager (LDM). An individual must be a current member to submit a request. As noted above, in order for the request to be considered it must be sponsored by member’s branch leadership.
* LDM and Executive Director (ED) review form to ensure request does not violate existing state, federal, local laws, existing governing documents, GAAP or general accepted HR principles and can be achieved with available resources. If ED finds request is in conflict with above she will review with Board President and both will deny request in writing.
* If request is appropriate for consideration by the Managing Committee, LDM will pass request to sponsoring branch chair and managing committee chair for consideration at upcoming Managing Committee meeting.
* The request will be presented at the earliest possible Managing Committee meeting. Managing Committee may gather information, discuss and consider the request and then may vote on request at meeting presented or ask for time to review request with representatives at their branches and vote at a subsequent meeting. Managing Committee may choose to alter or change the language of the proposal prior to a vote with approval of the sponsoring chair and a majority vote will decide if the proposal is approved. Decisions must be consistent with state and federal laws, club bylaws and generally accepted accounting and human resource principles.
* Managing Committee chair will communicate the decision in writing to Executive Director and Board President along with the final language for the policy change. If the final language is not provided it will be sent back to Managing Committee for finalization. MC Chair will notify proposal owner of decision.
* If a board action is required, the Managing Committee will forward the proposal to the Executive Committee for inclusion in an upcoming board meeting agenda.
* If the change is approved, the Managing Committee will inform the sponsoring Branch Chair who is responsible for communicating and explaining the decision to the member or volunteer who raised the original proposal. Appeals should be processed through the Managing Committee. The decision can be appealed once to the Board President whose decision is final.
* The Executive Director will ensure that any relevant policy and procedure documents are updated to reflect change and posted on the website and that staff are informed and trained on the changes.

**Relevant Board Policies**

Board Policy: Organization Bylaws, Minimum Activity Standards, Clubwide Activity Standards, Board Policy on Activities, Whistleblower etc.

**Relevant Documents for Applying this Process**

Mountaineers Proposed Change in Policy or Practice Form (attached)

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**Mountaineers Proposed Change in Policy or Practice Form**

**Name and Contact Information of Person Submitting Request**:

**Date of submission**:

**Requested Change or New Policy**:

**Can you locate an existing policy that relates to this request?** Y/N

Please include the title of the policy and a link to it:

**Facts that support the need for change**:

**What is the specific wording of the suggested change or policy? Please include/attach a draft policy with language that reflects the change you’d like to see**:

**Would any other** [**board policy**](https://www.mountaineers.org/about/board-of-directors) **need to be changed in order to implement your proposal?**

**Do you have confidence that the suggested change conforms with all existing state, federal and local governing laws, Mountaineers governing documents and policies, generally accepted accounting and human resources principles? If you have doubts or concerns, please describe them here to allow more efficient consideration and research of the proposal**.

**How does the suggested change support The Mountaineers** [**strategic plan and mission**](https://www.mountaineers.org/about/board-of-directors/strategic-plan)**?**

**Scope of impact**

**Please explain who (what group) is affected by the current practices and how your solution would benefit that group? *(please provide actual estimated #s of people impacted if possible)****.*

**How do you think the *current* practice affects Branches and Committees? Does it affect all branches and committees, or focus on particular ones? How would they be affected by your proposed change of policy**?

**Please give some thought to actions and resources that would be required to make the change**:

* What steps would be required to make the change?
* What resources and/or costs would be involved?
* What tasks would be required of volunteers or staff to implement your proposal?

**Which Branch Chair and Committee chair is sponsoring your request for a change? Please include a statement of support from Branch Chair and your sponsoring committee chair – an email is fine**.

**Please describe any other steps you’ve taken to date to review the proposal with other members, volunteers or staff.**

Who are the other members who support the requested change? Please provide names and email contact information. Please show that a minimum of 7 supporters exist for consideration to ensure that valuable time and resources are invested in your proposal.

Are you aware of any other members/ volunteers/ others who oppose this proposed change? Do you know why? Please state your best responses to any anticipated opposition.

**What’s next?**

The proposal is reviewed by Executive Director and Chair of Managing Committee (Managing Committee is comprised of the chairs of all branches) to ensure it is legal and consistent with existing policies. On these grounds, they will determine if it can continue to Managing Committee for consideration as proposed. If “yes,” your proposal will be submitted to Managing Committee. The sponsoring branch chair must present the proposal to the Managing Committee. The Managing Committee will then discuss and consider the proposal and may decide to gather input from their branch leadership before deciding whether to adopt it. They may also, under the scope of authority granted by their charter, choose to alter the language of the proposed change. After gathering input, the Managing committee will decide by majority vote or, if necessary, pass the issue on to the Board of Directors. The Managing Committee’s decision of what to do with the proposal can be appealed once to the Board President, whose decision is final.

*To be completed by Executive Director and Board President (if needed):*

**Is proposal appropriate for consideration by Managing Committee?**

Date Reviewed:

*To be completed by Managing Committee*

**Date of Decision**:

**Decision of Managing Committee**:

1. This is necessary because changes to central administrative policies/procedures must reflect the needs and concerns of more than just a single member or even a single branch. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Please understand that if you cannot gain support from other committees of volunteers, it will be difficult for staff to do so on your behalf. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)